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Introduction

Sue Doe and Lisa Langstraat

The Army wants its trainees to know how to read, how to recite well in class, and how to write simple and correct English without too much flourish or attention to technical details. Let us teachers again bestir ourselves to aid these boys who are fighting many battles of mind and soul.
—H. Adelbert White

Veterans have sacrificed much to attend our institutions of higher education, and our college must assume a responsibility toward each veteran accepted as a student, or there may be dangerous repercussions in the years to come from the cynicism of alumni veterans.
—Edward C. McDonagh

The excerpt from H. Adelbert White's (1944) essay "Clear Thinking for Army Trainees" appeared in *College English* in the same year that the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the GI Bill of Rights, was ratified. Only three years later, when McDonagh's (1947) comments appeared in *the Journal of Higher Education*, the United States was at the peak of GI Bill college enrollment with veterans representing nearly 50 percent of all college students. By 1956, when the original GI Bill was terminated, 7.8 million World War II veterans had used GI Bill benefits for college or vocational training programs ("History and Timeline," US Department of Veteran Affairs 2013). This influx of veterans on college campuses dramatically influenced postsecondary instruction, including composition curricula. Now, over sixty years later, the 2009 Post-9/11 GI Bill, one of the most generous social programs in US history, has enabled a new generation of veterans to pursue higher education. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* reports Department of Defense statistics showing that the number of veterans enrolled in colleges and universities increased from just under 35,000 to over half a million between 2009 and 2011 ("Who Benefits from the Post-9/11 GI Bill?" 2012). The Pat Tillman Foundation (2013) reports that over 900,000 veterans had used the new GI Bill benefit by 2012. It seems clear that we are experiencing the largest influx of a unique student group since

World War II, and it is probable that veterans will substantially transform postsecondary classroom dynamics, relationships across campus and in the community, and our understanding of the kinds of literacies students bring to our courses. Also, at this writing, members of Congress have introduced over a dozen bills, including the Military and Veterans Educational Reform Act, designed to protect student-veterans from the predatory recruitment practices of and insufficient student support services at a number of for-profit colleges and universities (Sander 2012b). Since much of this legislation will affect national policy, not only for student-veterans but for all postsecondary students and institutions, it is safe to say that the post-9/11 GI Bill will shape higher education for decades to come.

A burgeoning body of research in student services addresses postsecondary institutions' efforts to identify and reduce barriers to veterans' educational goals, to assist veterans as they transition from active duty to college life, and to provide timely and accurate information about veterans' benefits and services. Literary studies similarly has a long tradition of scholarly inquiry into war fiction and veterans' memoirs. However, rarely does student-services scholarship address veterans' literacy practices or rhetorical strategies, and rarely do literary studies address student-veterans' presence in our classrooms and the pedagogical approaches that may facilitate their learning. Certainly, with the development of institutes and centers for the study of veterans and their families, such as Purdue University's Military Family Research Institute and Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families, we are likely to see vital, longitudinal research emerge in upcoming years. And the CCCC-sponsored research project by Alexis D. Hart and Roger Thompson (2013) has provided new and essential information about veterans' programs across the nation. Their surveys and site visits found that the majority of faculty are not aware of campus services for student-veterans and have not had training regarding teaching and learning with veterans. Most faculty report being aware of greater numbers of student-veterans on campus but also report that their institutions do not provide classes arranged especially for them. Describing such classes as veteran only, veteran focused, and veteran friendly, Hart and Thompson imply that these designations suggest directions for additional research. Despite these important but relatively rare contributions to the literature, including the invaluable *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* (2009) special issue on student-veterans, composition studies has only begun to wrangle with the implications of working with and learning from this new generation of students.

Composition studies can offer great insights into the pedagogical, rhetorical, and programmatic implications of working with student-veteran populations. Just as student-veterans are changed by their college experiences, post-9/11 universities will be changed by student-veterans' presence. Given the numbers of veterans entering writing courses, we face the exciting and challenging prospect of teaching and learning new forms of rhetorical agency that promise to alter our social and political lives. Composition courses, particularly first-year courses, play an integral role in the retention of student-veterans in part because most composition courses are smaller in size than other core, first-year courses, and in part because newly enrolled veterans often take writing courses in their first semesters of college, often as they are "transitioning" from military to civilian life. Similarly, many composition curricula foster or even require personal writing, and student-veterans may find themselves writing about traumatic experiences that may, in turn, pose ethical and pedagogical challenges for writing instructors. At the very least, writing courses are probable sites of significant cultural exchanges—even clashes—as veterans, whether they have been in combat or not, bring to our courses the values, rhetorical traditions, and communication styles they have learned in the military. These perspectives will likely challenge the values and beliefs of not only traditional college students but faculty as well.

Questions of citizenship, subjectivity, disability, activism, community-campus relationships—all come to the fore as we work with veterans in writing-intensive courses and community contexts, and all demand well-researched rhetorical, pedagogical, and programmatic responses. *Generation Vet: Composition, Veterans, and the Post-9/11 University* contributes to the conversation about these issues. Our title is a nod to two competing representations of post-9/11 veterans, representations that this volume complicates and critiques. On the one hand, referencing Tom Brokaw's (1998) book, *The Greatest Generation*, *Time* magazine featured the cover story "The New Greatest Generation" (Klein 2011). This issue of the magazine garnered significant national attention; its optimistic depiction of wounded warriors clearly resonated with readers searching for confirmation that a nation cannot only heal from the losses of war, but can become better precisely *because* of those losses. Author Joe Klein claims, "A new kind of war meant a new set of skills. Now veterans are bringing their leadership lessons home, where we need them most" (Klein 2011, 26). Klein characterizes Iraq and Afghanistan combat veterans as more practical, more likely to problem solve, less "whiney," and more inclined to public service than the average civilian. While "The

New Greatest Generation" is compelling and features the stories of extraordinary individuals and veterans' advocacy organizations, it also tends to romanticize warfare, military training, and the hero combat veteran. It is such idealized representations that this collection attempts to challenge; repeatedly, the authors in this collection insist that, while all veterans, including noncombat veterans, have earned our gratitude and deserve the respect conferred by GI Bill benefits, idealizing veterans is, at best, irresponsible. To that end, our title, *Generation Vet*, also references Evan Wright's 2011 book, *Generation Kill: Devil Dogs, Iceman, Captain America, and the New Face of American War.* "For the past decade," Wright explains in an interview,

> We've been steeped in the lore of *The Greatest Generation* . . . and a lot of people have developed this romanticism about that war. They tend to remember it from the *Life* magazine images of the sailor coming home and kissing his fiancé. They've forgotten that war is about killing. I really think it's important as a society to be reminded of this, because you now have a generation of baby boomers, a lot of whom didn't serve in Viet Nam. Many of them protested it. But now they're grown up, and as they've gotten older I think many of them have grown tired of the ambiguities and the lack of moral clarity of Viet Nam, and they've started to cling to this myth of World War II, the good war. (Matera 2008)

Although *Generation Kill* has been criticized for glorifying violence and hypermasculinity, and for compromising journalistic integrity by venerating the practice of embedded reporting (Wright was embedded with the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion of the US Marine Corps during the 2003 invasion of Iraq), it does challenge sanitized versions of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), particularly in a period of changing combat terrain and strategies. Our title, *Generation Vet*, thus reflects a desire to acknowledge the contributions of all veterans, combat and noncombat, and to resist idealizing or homogenizing veterans who enter and contribute to scenes of writing in the university and beyond. The term *Generation Vet* also references the profound ways in which this generation of GI Bill students will influence college curricula, writing programs, and pedagogical practice. Exemplifying the leadership skills garnered in their military experience, veterans have actively promoted changes, at both national and local levels, in postsecondary policies and politics. The Student Veterans of America (SVA), for example, has deployed its political sway to spark investigations about unethical and predatory recruiting practices in the for-profit education sector, where over one-third of GI Bill funds are allocated (Sander 2013). SVA recently revoked chapter status

to over forty for-profit colleges that claimed "veteran friendly" standing but that offered insufficient veterans' services and whose SVA membership included only administrative staff (Sander 2013). At Colorado State University, where we teach, our local chapter of the SVA campaigned to revise university enrollment procedures; since the GI Bill affords only thirty-six months of financial support for undergraduates, this chapter of the SVA successfully promoted an expedited enrollment process that allows student-veterans to register for core, required courses earlier in their studies. This generation of student-veteran, in other words, is generally well organized and vocal about educational aims and, as the Pat Tillman Foundation (2012) report on veterans' progress toward degree completion puts it, ready to "complete the mission" by earning their degrees.

THE GI BILL(S) AND VETERANS IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

White's and McDonagh's comments, which open this introduction, are very much of their historical moment. Yet their remarks resonate in our contemporary scene insofar as they convey a sense of ongoing cultural obligation to the young people who have fought in the United States' wars. Paula Caplan, former head of the American Psychological Association and outspoken veterans' advocate, argues in her book *When Johnny and Jane Come Marching Home* that this work need not be left to professional psychologists but can involve everyday citizens who are willing to listen and resist comment (Caplan 2011). Many contemporary colleges and universities echo an apparent responsiveness to veterans' needs today as they seek "veteran-friendly status" and attempt to address the needs of student-veterans, including those experiencing "signature wounds"—posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) of Gulf War II service. Also mingled in White's and McDonagh's sixty-year-old comments are concerns about the tolls of war and apprehension about the "dangerous repercussions" and collective power of the huge population of returning WWII veterans in 1947. Of course, Adelbert and McDonagh were justified in voicing apprehension. As a number of scholars have noted, the original GI Bill was an overt effort to quell a potential repeat performance of the 1932 Bonus March, in which World War I veterans mobbed the capital to demand the unpaid military benefits they had been promised (Mettler 2005; Murray 2008). Given the multiple deployments demanded of the post-9/11 military due to the absence of a draft and low enlistment percentages, today's veterans certainly have ample reason to be disgruntled.

Add to this the fact that daunting economic hardships face today's veterans, especially given recent challenges to the national economy, sequestration, and a growing demand on veteran resources as a result of the aging population ("Budget Battles and a Stagnant Economy Greet America's Soldiers as They Return from Iraq and Afghanistan" 2011). As of June 2014, Syracuse University (reporting Bureau of Labor Statistics) recorded that the unemployment rate for veterans of all ages and eras was comparable to that of the general public. Among post-9/11 veterans ages eighteen to twenty-four, the numbers were substantially higher for veterans: 17.7 percent compared to 13.4 percent in May 2013, but the gap closed by January 2014 to 12.2 percent (veterans) to 12.9 percent (civilians) ("Employment Situation of Veterans" 2013). These numbers, while lower than those reported in 2011, when the unemployment rate for this veteran demographic was 30 percent (Beucke 2011), suggest not so much an improvement in veteran unemployment as the volatility of these numbers, the danger of drawing conclusions based on statistics over short periods of time. Female veteran unemployment represents its own particular set of issues as documented by Syracuse University's May 2013 National Summit on Women Veteran Homelessness. The Summit named four major factors affecting female veteran employment: (1) the long-term effects of military sexual trauma, (2) for a shortage of peer support (3) childcare needs, and (4) the availability of safe and affordable housing ("Employment Situation of Veterans" 2013). While a college education certainly doesn't guarantee economic security, there are good reasons, and among them is employability, for veterans to enroll in colleges and universities in record-breaking numbers. Only time will tell whether the Post-9/11 GI bill will have as profound an impact on social needs such as employment as the original GI Bill, which historian Dennis Johnson has included among the fifteen most influential pieces of legislation in United States history (Johnson 2009).

While the original GI Bill initiated significant changes in postsecondary instruction generally and composition pedagogy specifically, it is astonishing to note how little scholarship has explored these issues. Betty Pytlik noted, "None of the dozen or so book-length accounts I have read mention the effects that the Bill had on curriculum and pedagogy" (Pytlik 1993, 2). On the other hand, we do have several invaluable accounts that peripherally link an influx of student-veterans to transformations in writing instruction. Robert Connors (1997), for instance, pointed out in his book *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy* that the postwar (WWII) "communications" movement brought together speech and English in ways that helped establish the rhetorical

turn in composition. He also noted that the Conference on College Composition and Communication sprang from this period, and that the journal *College Composition and Communication* helped professionalize the discipline by publishing the work of established scholars on debates relating to "the purposes of the composition course" (Connors 1997, 205). Reflecting an expanded notion of higher education that emerged post-WWII, the work of these composition scholars was "democratizing" and "populist," Connors argued (Connors 1991, 52). Mike Edwards also notes that we would do well to remember that Donald Murray was a veteran, and that early in his career, Peter Elbow helped young men opposed to the Vietnam War craft statements required for conscientious objector status. Mike Rose (1983) offered insights into the academic experience of Vietnam veterans, particularly as this group influenced basic or remedial writing instruction. His work with veterans became part of his larger project relating to the underprepared, "remedial" writers, whose causes and instruction he has championed throughout his career. In particular, although Rose, subject to the stereotypes about veterans that permeate our culture, clumped returning Vietnam veterans alongside "parolees and newly released convicts" (Rose 1983, 110), his instructional approaches helped subsequent generations of writing teachers recognize that developmental students, among them veterans, needed not impoverished skill and drill instruction but opportunities to exercise critical thinking in rhetorically grounded writing contexts. In his 1993 autoethnography, *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color*, Victor Villanueva offered insight from the perspective of both veteran-student and veteran-faculty whose world view has been shaped by having "finished his tour of duty in Vietnam, left the Army, and made his way through the progression of experiences, schools, and degrees" (Villanueva 1993, 340). Among recent accounts, Liam Corley, a professor of English at California State Polytechnic, Pomona, and a national reservist who was deployed to Afghanistan, explained that, upon returning stateside, he struggled with hypervigilance, became brusque in conversations with colleagues and students, struggled with feeling that academic tasks were less meaningful than his work in Afghanistan, and had considerable difficulty concentrating and writing (Corley 2012). Such testimonies have paved the way for additional research on veterans and writing.

It is important to remember that the original GI Bill led to much greater diversity in student populations, which challenged and permanently altered previous paradigms of curricular theory and delivery. In fact, the influx of veterans changed how colleges and universities

operated: the number of postsecondary schools with more than 20,000 students increased from eight in 1948 to fifty-five in 1967 (DiRamio and Jarvis 2011, ix), and growing enrollments necessitated changes in approach, including wider reliance on graduate teaching assistants. Keith Olson claims that larger classes and the increased use of graduate students as teachers "accomplished educational wonders for the veterans" (Olson 1974, 103). "Wonder" or not, the labor landscape was permanently changed since, as Pytlik points out, a job market was created for anyone with a master's degree (Pytlik 1993, 5) and teaching-methods courses slowly developed for the graduate teaching assistants upon whom so much instruction increasingly relied (7–8). Jackson Toby (2010) draws a direct link between the increased access afforded by the original GI Bill and a trend in higher education in which standards for admission and subsequent college performance have eroded. In contrast, Deborah Brandt's (1995) "Accumulation of Literacy" suggests that the post-WWII era was part of an important and rapid evolution of new literacy expectations—one that was directly influenced by the development of war-motivated literacies. Discussing the case study of Sam May and his "piling up" (Brandt 1995, 652) or accumulation of literacies, particularly from the 1920s to the 1940s, Brandt argues that May's increasingly complex language use had become expected of literate persons during and after WWII. May's childhood understanding of literacy had involved a belief in the importance of correctness, but as an enlisted soldier he was compelled to go beyond correctness produce highly complex and technical reports. Then, using the GI Bill to go to college, May became part of a significant shift involving "the emerging power of a highly educated, technocratic elite" for whom, "the meaning of education and educated language had begun to change by mid-century—shifting from the cultivated talk of the well-bred to the efficient professional prose of the technocrat—thereby altering the paths of upward mobility" (Brandt 1995, 659).

The GI Bill, because it afforded new opportunities for upward mobility, is often credited with having created the modern American middle class. It certainly afforded opportunities for a whole generation of high-achieving professionals, including more than 60,000 GI Bill-educated doctors, who would develop a vast array of new treatments and technologies (Humes 2006, 146). In addition, the wives of veterans, accompanying their spouses to campus, were also newly exposed to college education, influencing middle-class women's pursuit of higher education (Olson 1974, 102). Prior to WWII, college had primarily been the domain of the upper middle class, but the GI Bill opened college to a much larger population. The story of the historic GI Bill of Rights is thus

central to the story of access to higher education in the United States. This story, in turn, is closely tied to the story of college composition. Like the GI Bill of Rights, composition pedagogy is associated with the democratizing impulse of the American university—a trend that began with the establishment of land-grant universities, continued on through the GI Bill, found new expression with the open admissions initiatives of the late 1960s and 1970s, and continues today. This democratizing effect influenced the course of higher education and the development of the teaching of writing as it is currently understood. Among other things, the social contract that emerged held that as an increasingly diverse group of people became eligible to pursue a college degree and develop the kinds of literacies demanded of citizens like Sam May, services supporting their success would follow.

Of course, the original GI Bill was no panacea, and the processes by which it was dispersed contributed to some forms of social injustice. Beth Bailey argues that over the past few decades historians have "used the GI Bill as a kind of shorthand—almost a deus ex machina—explanation for the emergence of a rapidly growing middle class in the years following WWII" (Bailey 2011, 198), but recent research argues that the GI Bill of 1944 institutionalized, consolidated, and reinforced race, gender, and sexual orientation biases and inequalities (Bérubé 1990; Canaday 2003; Cohen 2003; Frydl 2009; Onkst 1998; Rosales 2011). Exclusions were standard with the GI Bill, which "filtered benefits to male heads of households to the overwhelming exclusion of women" and "left veterans who had been discharged 'undesirably' [code for queerness] . . . without benefits" (Rosales 2011, 598). Kathleen Frydl (2009) notes that, although African Americans, Latinos, and other racial and ethnic groups had, on paper, equal access to GI Bill benefits, racial segregation and the prejudices of VA officials who determined the allocation of benefits actually enforced inequities. In addition, because writing instruction traditionally served an acculturation agenda, it was complicit in the hegemonic reinforcement of white, male privilege. Indeed, educational access continued to reflect a largely white, heterosexual, male population. In time, the services that a student-veteran like Sam May needed slowly began to be understood as more broadly needed by a diverse demographic. This shift may have helped usher in a new type of "critical and self-reflective form of acculturation" that was informed by an increasingly diverse student audience and that, in turn, informed pedagogy and curriculum (Bawarshi and Pelkowski 1999, 42).

Today, over sixty years after the first GI Bill, the 2009 Post-9/11 GI Bill, widely hailed as equivalent in generosity to the 1944 law, is the next

great hope for opening the doors of access, particularly by serving a new kind of student-veteran. Certainly, intervening laws between GI Bills one and two extended GI Bill benefits after the Korean and Vietnam wars as well. However, these bills received little public attention and tepid reviews from affected veterans, although some scholars have argued that the post-Korea and Vietnam legislation went some distance toward addressing the racial and gender shortcomings of the original GI Bill (Boulton 2005). The Post-9/11 GI Bill offers tuition coverage at any in-state public university, an annual book and fee stipend, and a monthly living allowance. In addition, with the 2012 repeal of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, GLBTQ veterans are making strides toward public, equal access to post-9/11 benefits. The 2013 Supreme Court decision to strike down the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) promises to expand the number of eligible family members to whom GI Bill benefits might be transferred. The question remains, however, as to how successful the advancement of those opportunities will be.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill may also embody affective politics that shape our interactions with student-veterans. Drawing from Frydl's (2009) *The GI Bill*, Bailey (2011) argues that the original 1944 GI Bill fostered a (primarily male) sense of citizenship, national pride, and optimism about social mobility. Suzanne Mettler (2005) similarly suggests that the original GI Bill helped to create a "civic generation" by implicitly and explicitly telling veterans that *they mattered* to the state. A number of scholars, including Mettler, have suggested that the Post-9/11 GI Bill, in contrast, is focused less on citizen's intrinsic value to the state and more on "paying soldiers back" for what they have sacrificed in OEF and OIF. Concerns about the ethics of the US "war on terrorism" and American citizens' responses to the faulty intelligence about Iraq's WMD stock-pile, generally used as the rationale for OIF, permeate discussions of the Post-9/11 GI Bill ("CIA's Report: No WMDs Found in Iraq" 2005). Thus, while we can certainly look to the 1944 GI Bill to understand major changes in the academy, we also must recognize that the Post-9/11 GI Bill represents different values born of a dramatically different cultural and economic landscape.

ETHICAL EDUCATION AND MILITARY-FRIENDLY COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Colleges and universities have had to prepare very quickly for the growth in student-veteran enrollment. In an American Council on Education (2009) survey, only half of all colleges and universities were

prepared to provide services for vets, and less than half offered faculty training for working with vets. In the years since, college campuses have increasingly sought to become "veteran friendly" ("Military-Friendly Schools" 2013). For instance, in addition to designating a certifying official who verifies GI Bill eligibility and manages paperwork relating to the GI Bill (a service required of campuses that wish to obtain federal funds through the VA, which administers the program), veteran-friendly campuses generally offer some combination of support services. These often include special admissions assistance, registration help, designated financial-aid officers, housing arrangements, special academic support services, career counseling, and access to mental and physical healthcare tailored to the needs of veterans. Standout programs might also include specialized orientations, designated study areas, student-veteran organizations, award and scholarship committees, honor societies, veteran-cohort classes, faculty development workshops, preferential enrollment/registration policies, academic workshops, career counseling and professional networking opportunities, and "veteran village" living and learning communities. As this list suggests, many colleges and universities are developing multifaceted support networks that reorganize or even redefine standard university services. The clamor to obtain student-veteran enrollments has also led to the critique of institutions and their associated ratings and rankings. For instance, in a 2010 testimony to the House Committee on Veteran Affairs, Kathryn Snead, president of Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Consortium, lamented the ways in which many universities and colleges were targeting what she calls the "new veteran market." She explained, "Many of our service members and veterans are first generation college applicants who lack general knowledge about the college search, selection, and admission process. They rely heavily upon the guidance and assistance of college admissions personnel as their primary source of reliable information."

Of course, federal dollars associated with the GI Bill are significant and come at a time when higher education, particularly in the public sector, is desperate for new forms of financial support. Sander (2012a) notes, in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, that as the number of GI Bill recipients rose from 34,393 in 2009 to just over half a million (555,329) in 2011, the University of Phoenix, a private for-profit institution, enrolled twice as many veterans as the next-highest enrolling institution. Of the $4.43 billion in GI Bill benefits paid in 2011, $1.68 billion went to public nonprofit institutions, $1.65 billion to private for-profit institutions, and $1.02 billion went to private non-profit institutions (Sander 2012a). Critics of today's Post-9/11 GI Bill point out that tuition

assistance may unfairly obligate public institutions, which charge less than private counterparts yet must absorb the cost of support services without compensatory monies. Also, private and for-profit colleges can charge more and can cover the gap between GI Bill benefits and the cost of tuition by participating in Yellow Ribbon Programs, which can result in some universities and colleges "bring[ing] in more in federal dollars than it actually costs them to educate a student" (Eckstein 2009). This phenomenon led F. King Alexander, president of California State University at Long Beach, to declare that "when the smoke clears, you'll see half the veterans at public institutions but 80 percent of the money at the for-profit institutions [in California]" (Eckstein 2009).

STUDENT-VETERAN DEMOGRAPHICS AND ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS

Student-veterans are a heterogeneous population. They share a primary characteristic insofar as they have served in one of the five branches of the military—the US Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard—or in the Reserve component of one of those branches. They also include the Army National Guard and Air National Guard, which typically serve needs such as Homeland Security and relief programs during times of national and international disaster. The National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (NCVAS), an arm of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that maintains a perpetually updated Veteran Population Model based on actuarial projections, reports that among other factors, the total veteran population will fall substantially by 2040, but the female veteran population will grow (NCVAS 2013). According to the National Priorities Project, a nonprofit research organization that analyzes federal data, the US Armed Forces as of March 2012 employed 1,458,219 active and 1,552,000 reserve/National Guard, with 90,000 in Afghanistan, 22,000 afloat, and 50,000 in Europe. They report a military that is 75 percent Caucasian and approximately 12 percent Hispanic. African Americans are overrepresented, comprising 19 percent of the military, compared to just 11 percent of the population overall. Women are underrepresented in the military, at just over 14 percent of the active-duty force compared to over 50 percent of the population. Servicemembers tend to come from both highly urban and highly rural origins; among US counties, Los Angeles and Orange Counties (of the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area) and Cook County (Chicago), for instance, report some of the highest levels of enlistment, but Wyoming, Alaska, and Maine also report consistently high percentages.

Regionally, southern states, such as Georgia and South Carolina, rank at the top for enlistments, perhaps reflecting the southern tradition of military service. The South is followed by the West, the Midwest, and the Northeast. Both the poorest and wealthiest zip codes in the United States are underrepresented among enlistments (National Priorities Project 2011).

By 2010 statistics, roughly 97 percent of enlistees in today's military had at least a high-school diploma (National Priorities Project 2011). Dan Berrett (2011), drawing from the 2009 American Freshman Survey, estimates that "11.5 percent of the students who later entered the military had A or A+ averages, which was less than half the percentage of nonveteran students who had earned those grades. Nearly 1 in 5 students who later joined the military had a C+ average or lower in high school, or more than quadruple the rate of their non-military peers." As a student demographic, student-veterans are both adult and nontraditional learners, who are characterized as being generally older than traditional college students and financially independent; they are thus responsible for themselves and oftentimes other family members. Student-veterans, like other adult learners, have generally been away from the classroom for several years but possess often-unacknowledged workplace knowledge. Like many other adult-learner groups, student-veterans are often concerned about the relationship between a college education and an occupational future. Unlike other adult learners, however, student-veterans' former military workplace is generally less well understood by faculty and traditional students alike; hence, making pedagogical connections between the experiences of the military and the civilian sector as well as connections between social groups (across the veteran and nonveteran divide) can be challenging for faculty. Also, while a student-veteran who has GI Bill support may enjoy better material resources than other nontraditional and adult learners, the student-veteran may also suffer from a range of lasting effects from military service, including physical and psychological wounds, and thus may need specific forms of support. Student-veteran eligibility and use of educational resources may also influence veteran homelessness, which the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans has established as an ongoing problem: While 7 percent of the general population can claim veteran status, veterans make up 13 percent of the homeless adult population, and while young veterans between the ages eighteen and thirty represent only 5 percent of the total veteran population, they constitute 9 percent of the homeless veteran population (National Coalition for Homeless Veterans 2013).

Comprehensive efforts to support student-veterans are suggested by Nancy K. Schlossberg, Ann Q. Lynch, and Arthur W. Chickering's (1989) model of adult transition, which argues that the adult learner moves in, moves through, and moves on. David DiRamio, Robert Ackerman, and Regina L. Mitchell (2008, 80) adapt this model to the student-veteran who first "moves in" to military service, then "moves through" it, gaining experience and sometimes formal education along the way. Finally the servicemember "moves out," going through a period of transition that may include returning home or heading to college. At that point the cycle starts over as the veteran moves in to the campus setting, moves through college classes, and then moves out to function in the civilian world. Using the DiRamio, Ackerman, and Mitchell modified model, we can see the college experience as a key bridge, linking transitioning veterans from one world (military) to another (civilian). The period of "moving in" to the college community involves choices such as choosing to blend in or to identify peers who have shared the military experience. It may involve directly addressing new disabilities and wounds, whether physical, psychological, or emotional. It often involves a renegotiation of personal finances and daily habits as well as dislocation from community support as offered on bases and posts, including ready access to competent medical care. Many student-veterans are thus engaged in a profound transition that is at once exciting and disorienting. Former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen (2011), has argued that veterans need the full services of a support triangle comprised of educational, workplace, and healthcare support. Most student-veterans understand obtaining a college degree as a necessity and an opportunity, not an entitlement. According to the Pew Research Center's (2011, 3) report, "War and Sacrifice," nearly half of today's all-volunteer force joined the military for the educational benefits, which often begin, particularly via online courses, while the servicemember is on active duty.

Many veterans classify the process of obtaining a college degree as another "mission." Indeed, General Erik Shinseki, head of the Veterans Administration and former chief of staff of the army, in a speech before the national conference of the Student Veterans of America in the fall of 2011, reminded student-veterans that they are themselves responsible for seeing through the "mission" of college. In his remarks, Shinseki urged, "If you think this country owes you an education, you have an attitude problem. They didn't do this for any generation since World War II—until yours . . . The mission is clear, defeat is not an option, no one quits, and no one gets left behind" (US Department of Veteran Affairs. "Remarks by Secretary Erik K. Shinseki" 2011).

TEACHING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MILITARY-CIVILIAN GAP

To many academics, Shinseki's comparison of earning a college degree and strategies for engaging in battle seem aggressive at best. Indeed, perhaps one of the most vexing issues in working with veterans is the military-civilian divide. When less than one-half of one percent of the population has been involved in military service during the decade of war encompassing OIF and OEF (Pew Research Center 2011, 2), compared to approximately 10 percent of the population involved during World War II, it is likely that neither faculty nor traditional students have sufficient understanding of their military students and classmates. The Pew Research Center (2011) bears this out. Investigating the "military-civilian gap," the report suggests that the differences between military and civilian populations are not only experiential but ideological; for instance, while 36 percent of veterans describe themselves as Republicans, a nearly equal percentage (34 percent) of civilians view themselves as Democrats. Perhaps more tellingly, 61 percent of veterans, compared to 37 percent of US citizens in general, describe themselves as patriotic (Pew Research Center 2011, 3). The Pew study also reports that veterans believe civilians do not understand what they and their families have been through, and their concerns seem borne out by statements made by civilians. While 83 percent of civilians recognize that servicemembers and their families have made sacrifices during a decade of war, only one-quarter of them describe this as unfair while 70 percent describe it as a natural outcome of having chosen the military as an occupation. Furthermore, only 25 percent of polled civilians say they have followed the wars closely, and only 50 percent report that the wars have affected them in any way. Interpreting the Pew data, *Time* reporter Mark Thompson explains,

> Never has the U.S. public been so separate, so removed, so isolated from the people it pays to protect it . . . Over the past generation, the world's lone superpower has created—and grown accustomed to—a permanent military cast, increasingly disconnected from U.S. society, waging decade-long wars in its name, no longer representative of or drawn from the citizenry as a whole. Think of the U.S. military as the Other 1%—some 2.4 million troops have fought in and around Afghanistan and Iraq since 9/11, exactly 1% of the 240 million Americans over 18. (Thompson 2011)

The implications of the military-civilian gap are profound, and the disconnect leads to some acute contradictions about how the US public—including faculty—understand veterans. Such contradictions certainly influence faculty's interactions with veterans. In "A Barbarian in the Ivory Tower," Alex Vernon, English professor at Hendrix College

and US Army veteran who served in combat during the Persian Gulf War, explains:

> We [faculty] want to sympathize with individual soldiers, to hear their voices, to recognize the value of their lives beyond their military function, but to sympathize with them individually is to risk sympathizing with and supporting them collectively, which is to risk patriotism, which is to risk imperialism, which is to consort with, if not the devil, at least the devilish. (Vernon 2002)

The ambivalence many academics feel about the military and, yes, veterans, is a profoundly difficult—and profoundly important—subject to address, and the distrust goes both ways. Consider that much of the popular literature intended to advise veterans about obtaining college degrees emphasizes the dangers of a military-academic ideological divide. "Culture Shock: Five Tips to Help You Acclimate to Academia," published in the *Military Times* in 2011, typifies the tenor of the advice given to student-veterans. Among some valuable suggestions, such as "avoid split-second decision-making" and "talk like a student, not a warrior," author Jessica Lawson advises, "Don't take the bait." Lawson cites a Washington state VA director who says, "Academic freedom gives some instructors the sense that they can say whatever they want to say . . . There is a certain amount of baiting going on . . . We really try to train professors to suspend some of the rhetoric" (*Military Times*, March 31 2011, 34). Lawson recommends that student-veterans tap into the grapevine, learn about professors known for antiwar rhetoric, and "try to avoid their courses" (*Military Times*, Marc 31, 2011, 34). Even Lighthall's (2012) otherwise reasonable list of "things you should know about student veterans" is punctuated by the suggestion that faculty not discuss war or their political positions on it. It may be important for faculty to recognize that these cultural clashes can easily become litigious. Student-services researchers Persky and Oliver (2010, 118) suggest that colleges need to address "antimilitary bias" as a potential "liability issue," noting that "several states have pending legislation that specifies veterans as a protected class."

This climate shapes faculty concerns about the risk of offending student-veterans and their family members. We who teach in "veteran-friendly" institutions are often given contradictory advice about how to address these issues. On the one hand, the MLA and NCTE position statements stress the importance of promoting critical perspectives about the language and literature of war. MLA Resolution 2003–1, ratified in December 2004, takes a very clear stance:

Whereas in wartime, governments commonly shape language to legitimate aggression, misrepresent policies, conceal aims, stigmatize dissent, and block critical thought; and

Whereas distortions of this sort proliferate now, as in the use of the phrase "war on terrorism" to underwrite military action anywhere in the world; and

Whereas we are professionals committed to scrupulous inquiry into language and culture;

Be it resolved that the MLA support[s] the right of its members to conduct critical analysis of war talk in public forums and, as appropriate, in classrooms. (MLA 2003)

On the other hand, student-services literature on student-veterans and veteran-friendly colleges and universities has recommended that the topic of war be avoided unless absolutely necessary. This includes a statement from the American Council on Education (ACE 2009):

Most importantly, avoid expressing personal sentiments related to war or military personnel that could alienate or embarrass student veterans. All veterans deserve recognition and appreciation for their service regardless of our personal opinions.

Negotiating these conflicting viewpoints is always difficult, as two recent Op-Ed pieces exemplify. Historian Joyce S. Goldberg's (2011) "Why I Can No Longer Teach U.S. Military History," published in the *Chronicle*, explains that in recent years, students have enrolled in her US Military History course not to explore military history up to the Vietnam War but to "work through personal issues originating in more recent conflicts" and to find solace, seek closure, or gain personal understanding of their own or a loved one's post-9/11 military experience. Goldberg laments universities' lack of preparation and academics' lack of professional training to address such emotional needs, "but a course in military history," she insists, "is not an appropriate place for a therapy session." Literature professor Elizabeth Samet's (2011) "On War, Guilt and 'Thank You for Your Service," which was initially published in the *New York Times*, discusses the discomfiting phenomenon of strangers approaching uniformed servicemembers at airports and other public places with the broad comment, "Thank you for your service." Samet argues that the specter of guilt about Vietnam vets' homecomings animates this "mantra of atonement," sanitizes the reality of service during wartime, and inhibits, rather than fosters, mutual understanding between soldiers and civilians. "Today's dominant narrative," Samet (2011) insists, "favors sentimentality over scrutiny, [and] embodies a fantasy that everything will be okay if we only display enough flag-waving enthusiasm." These "bizarre, fleeting" interactions are "a poor substitute

for something more difficult and painful—a conversation about what war does to people who serve and the people who don't" (Samet 2011). Samet's insights reaffirm claims by rhetoricians such as Roger Stahl (2009, 533), who argues that "support the troops" rhetoric functions primarily to deflect questions of just policy and dissociate civilians from questions of ethical military action by "manufacturing distance between civilian and soldier."

However, civilians' and military servicemembers' values do overlap in significant ways. According to the Pew Research Center's (2011) report, for instance, an equal number of both groups (35 percent) identify as Independents, rather than Republicans or Democrats. Also, civilians and veterans share nearly identical views on the connections between violence and patterns of cultural conflict: 51 percent of veterans and 52 percent of civilians say the connection between war and lasting hatred is real while 40 percent of veterans and 38 percent of civilians believe that overwhelming force is the best way to defeat terrorism.

Taking these complicated factors into consideration, the contributors to this collection convincingly establish that there's more to being "veteran friendly" than having flexible attendance policies. They explore what it means not only to be "veteran friendly" but to be real advocates of veterans *and* critical education. Writing-intensive classes might offer a location for addressing ideological differences, but doing so will require thoughtful curricula and pedagogy. The presence of veterans in composition classrooms presents both opportunity and challenge.

GENERATION VET: ENTERING THE CONVERSATION

In "Serving Those Who Have Served," a plenary speech at the Council of Writing Program Administrators conference, Marilyn Valentino (2012) named a number of issues that composition faculty and administrators must address if we are to enhance veterans' academic success. She stressed the importance of community writing groups and extracurricular writing opportunities for veterans; the potential of cohort courses composed exclusively of veterans; the need for faculty training in retention assistance and understanding military culture; and, in keeping with the CCCC 2003 resolution, fostering all students' critical thinking and reading skills regarding issues of war and concomitantly fostering faculty abilities to negotiate difficult conversations about war in our classrooms. Valentino (2012, 165) was careful to avoid characterizing veterans in light of deficit: above all, she remarked, "They don't need us to 'fix them.'"

The nascent and innovative research in *Generation Vet* shares Valentino's objectives for faculty development and innovative programs with and for veterans. This collection brings together work by scholar-teachers with diverse voices, experiences, and perspectives: some contributors are veterans, while others' family members have served or currently serve in the military. Some have found themselves in the midst of difficult situations with student-veterans in composition courses, while others facilitate community writing workshops for veterans or coordinate innovative programs, such as learning communities. Some of the essays in this collection are personal narratives, some entail original empirical research, and some forge new connections between critical theory and composition studies. All address a wide range of issues concerning veterans, pedagogy, rhetoric, and writing-program administration, and all promise to enhance our understanding of student-veterans, composition, and the post-9/11 university. As editors, our own personal histories in regard to military service have driven our interest and sustained our commitment to the issues that have emerged in this collection and in our larger research agenda. Lisa is the daughter of a career army warrant officer. Sue is the wife of a career Corps of Engineers Army officer. Among other interests, and given our histories, we believe there is a need for more research on the transition challenges faced not only by returning veterans but by their family members, to whom many veterans pass their GI Bill benefits. Very little research about this population and their educational needs is available, though we hope *Generation Vet* will spark greater awareness of our students who, as military dependents, bring particular experiences (e.g., educational disruption as military families are frequently transferred and required to move far more often than civilian families; the combat-related death of a loved one; the demands of being caregivers to one of the 3.5 million veterans with service-related disabilities [US Department of Veterans Affairs: "VA Issues New Report on Suicide Data" 2013]).

Part 1, **"Beyond the Military-Civilian Divide: Understanding Veterans,"** addresses the potentially challenging rhetorical and cultural clashes that can arise as veterans transition from military cultures to academic cultures. Obviously, student-veterans are a diverse group with wide-ranging perspectives and experiences. However, according to a 2009 American Association of State Colleges report, student-veterans often report a sense of isolation on campus and frustration with traditional students: they express concern about entering a potentially liberal college culture that may conflate antiwar sentiment with antimilitary sentiment, and they can face difficulty finding mentors among faculty whose values may

differ significantly from their own (Cook and Young 2009). In faculty-development workshops we have conducted, a common thread arises: how, particularly given many colleges' interest in attracting GI Bill funding and maintaining a "veteran-friendly" moniker, do we address difficult topics productively without creating an epistemic shutdown or discussion that some students will interpret as anti-American or antiveteran? The articles in Part I offer insights into the contact zone between military culture and academic culture, and they trouble common constructions of "the veteran."

In "Veterans in College Writing Classes: Understanding and Embracing the Mutual Benefit," Sean Morrow (US Army and formerly of the United States Military Academy, West Point) and D. Alexis Hart (Allegheny College) work to explain to writing instructors the culture shock and sense of dislocation veterans often experience in their first college courses, and they suggest that faculty, given a solid understanding of military values, can assist with veteran reintegration. In "Uniform Meets Rhetoric: Excellence through Interaction," student-veteran Angie Mallory (Montana State University) and faculty member Doug Downs discuss their differing expectations for classroom leadership; they conclude that, although sometimes difficult and unfamiliar to veterans, open-ended forms of rhetorical inquiry common to writing courses are vital if student-veterans are to make a successful transition to the civilian sector. Countering Downs and Mallory's sense of the constraints of military genres in "Not Just 'Yes Sir, No Sir': How Genres and Agency Interact in Student-Veterans' Writing," Erin Hadlock (MAJ, US Army, United States Military Academy, West Point) and Sue Doe (Colorado State University) suggest that military genres are more plentiful and their service-member users more rhetorically agentive than most faculty understand.

Military/academic cultural clashes took a very public form in 2011 when Baltimore County Community College drew nationwide attention after Charles Wittington, a student-veteran, was suspended for psychological review after publishing, in the campus newspaper, an essay from his composition class about his "addiction to killing." National response and debate were immediate, and Linda De La Ysla, the student-veteran's composition instructor, calls for an ethics of response as she recounts the events at BCCC that spurred her to develop community forums about and for veterans in "Faculty as First Responders: Willing but Unprepared."

Part 2, "Veterans and Public Audiences," explores the potential of nonacademic settings for the support and development of veterans'

literacies and challenges cultural constructions of disability in and out-side the academy. In "'I Have To Speak Out': Writing with Veterans in a Community Writing Group," Eileen E. Schell and Ivy Kleinbart (Syracuse University) suggest the importance of veteran writing groups to encour-age and support veterans as they gain insight through writing about their experiences in the military and as they bring their writing to civil-ian audiences. Similarly, Karen L. Springsteen (Wayne State University), in "Closer to Home: Veterans' Workshops and the Materiality of Writing," reports on her work with the Warrior Writers Project, which brings together veterans and civilians through the materiality of writ-ing. She argues that community writing helps civilian participants in particular as they gain increased understanding of shared responsibility for war and its aftermath. Challenging common cultural constructions of the wounded warrior in academic communities and beyond, Tara Wood and Ashly Bender explore resistant forms of writing and repre-sentation of disabled veterans. In "Signature Wounds: Marking, and Medicalizing Post-9/11 Veterans," Wood (University of Oklahoma) calls for an overtly politicized approach to addressing disability that would challenge many institutional definitions of and approaches to PTSD and TBI. In "Exploring Student-Veteran Expectations about Composing: Motivations, Purposes, and the Influence of Trauma on Composing Practices," Bender (University of Louisville) suggests the importance of web environments for a generation of veterans accustomed to recording their experiences on YouTube. This new generation of student-veterans, she suggests, may embrace multimodal composition as a means of artic-ulating trauma and carving out a powerful narrative space to engage critical audiences.

Generation Vet next turns to the programmatic and pedagogical strate-gies that might best meet the needs of student-veterans. Part 3, "Veteran-Friendly Composition Practices," offers concrete strategies for writing teachers and administrators. In "Recognizing Silence: Composition, Writing, and the Ethical Space for War," Roger Thompson (Stony Brook University) considers the implications of Resolution 3 of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (which called upon writing classrooms to engage in rigorous debate about "wars perpetrated by the United States"). In light of the influx of stu-dent-veterans into our classrooms from the very wars that spurred the C's statement, Thompson argues that silence offers student-veterans a "powerful way of coping." Turning to specific locations and responding to regional differences at colleges and universities, Ann Shivers-McNair (University of Washington) reports on an innovative developmental

writing program at the University of Southern Mississippi, which is located near Camp Shelby, the largest US Army Reserve base in the country. "A New Mission: Veteran-Led Learning Communities in the Basic Writing Classroom" provides insights into the successes and challenges of veteran-initiated academic programs. In "The Value of Service Learning for Student Veterans: Transitioning to Academic Cultures through Writing and Experiential Learning," Bonnie Selting (University of Missouri, Columbia) explores the service ethic often associated with veterans and discusses veteran-students' responses to service-learning programs that bridge the university and the community. Finally, in "Front and Center: Marine Student-Veterans, Collaboration, and the Writing Center," Corrine Hinton (Texas A&M, Texarkana) offers concrete strategies for writing center administrators and tutors who are working with student-veterans in record numbers.

Of course, like every collection, *Generation Vet* reveals gaps in current scholarship and implicitly calls for additional research on critical issues. As previously mentioned, we need research about the needs of military spouses and dependents who are beneficiaries of the GI Bill. Also, very little scholarship is available about military personnel's ethnic and racial affiliations in connection to literacy practices, degree attainment, and employment opportunities. Similarly, Generation 1.5 veterans, as well as those who participate in the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) program, will be of particular interest to ESL and literacy researchers. MANVI provides expedited US citizenship for immigrants who (1) have legally been in the United States for two or more years and (2) have specialized linguistic skills or medical experience, both of which are in critical demand in all branches of the military. MANVI thus creates a unique literacy sponsor/recipient relationship that demands close and ethical attention.

Although many of the authors in this collection address issues of trauma and writing to heal, additional research about various aspects of trauma and the writing practices of post-9/11 veterans is of paramount importance. How does TBI affect information processing, problem solving, and the physicality of writing? What is best practice when veterans and their families disclose traumatic war experiences in our courses, particularly since Hart and Thompson (2012, 37) report that 71 percent of the writing faculty they surveyed require a personal writing assignment? Since the Veterans Administration estimates that 22 percent (and this number is likely higher due to report discrimination) of women veterans and in active military service have experienced military

sexual trauma (MST), how can we meet the needs of female veterans in our classes and beyond? What educational and cultural roadblocks still exist for GLBT veterans, even post-Don't Ask, Don't Tell policies? Since the Department of Veterans Affairs reports that a veteran or active military member commits suicide every sixty-five minutes, and that over one-third of those suicides are by young men and women under the age of thirty (US Department of Veterans Affairs 2012: "Suicide Data Report"; Haiken 2013; ; US Department of Veterans Affairs: "VA Issues New Report on Suicide Data" 2013s), can community writing programs and therapeutic writing practices help address the high rate of veteran suicides and ameliorate depression?

These questions—and others that are difficult to anticipate at this time—will become more pressing in the years to come. Today, however, *Generation Vet* joins the emerging conversation and invites the development and expansion of the many lines of research and scholarship still needed. Our sense is that we will learn alongside veterans. Consider, for instance, the insights of one veteran in a longitudinal study that the editors of this volume are conducting; he told us about his premilitary literacy skills, what he took from his military experience, and his current hopes for his college experience. He said,

> When I was growing up we didn't have TV . . . because we lived fifteen miles out in the sticks in the middle of nowhere . . . So basically, I read a lot of books. My mom, she was a big reader, so I was a big reader. I was reading on a twelfth-grade reading level when I was in sixth and seventh grade."
>
> [In the military] I learned a lot about responsibility, you know. Even if you make a bad decision, still take responsibility for it just to learn something from that experience. And, the good experiences? Even you have to go over them sometimes too, ask why did I do this, instead of this? Why did that turn out so good? How can I kind of get the same results from this totally different problem?
>
> [In college] I don't need a handout or for anyone to feel sorry for me, but more of just an understanding that I'm not an eighteen-year-old coming out of high school. No, it's like I've got to relearn all of this and try and remember, so I'm trying to relearn all of this and still remember things from ten years ago along with all the new material.

As these insights suggest, we oversimplify and homogenize veterans' identities, values, and literacy experiences at our own peril. *Generation Vet* offers pedagogical, administrative, and theoretical insights about this generation of student-veterans, insights we hope will spur additional, nuanced research with and about student-veterans.

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