FIGHT TO LIVE, LIVE TO FIGHT: MAPPING VETERAN NARRATIVES OF
VIOLENCE IN PEACE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
POLITICAL SCIENCE

MAY 2015

By

Benjamin T.G. Schrader

Dissertation Committee:

Kathy Ferguson, Co-Chairperson
Michael Shapiro, Co-Chairperson
Jairus Grove
Manfred Steger
David Stannard
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first and foremost like to thank my committee: to my chairs, Kathy Ferguson and Mike Shapiro, thank you for your inspiration, insights, and patience. I am thankful to have come to this program and to be able to work with the both of you! From my first semester through my last semester of taking courses, I took a course with Jairus Grove. All the classes and hours talking in your office were priceless for my understanding and development of this project. To Manfred Steger, who helped me to conceptualize many of the concepts around class, thanks much! And thank you to David Stannard, my outside committee member, your class on the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement was amazing, as it helped me to see the ties in the peace movement of old to the contemporary peace movement. I am also very much indebted to funds obtained through the Nobumoto Tanahashi Fellowship/Scholarship Fund, from the Matsunaga Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, and the Jorge Fernandes Memorial Fellowship and Award Fund in the Political Science department. Both these fellowships helped me to finish my dissertation with less of a need to seek outside work.

Probably one of the most important people to me while working on this project, who helped me tremendously, and was an amazing person to bounce ideas off of was Brianne Gallagher, thank you so much for everything. And another special thanks to Francois-Xavier Plasse-Couture for being one of my first friends on the island who also helped me conceptualize much of this project as well. There were also many other students and alumni at UH who greatly helped me to think about many of these topics and made my grad experience a lot of fun, they include: Rex

I would also like to thank Eric Ishiwata for inspiring me to keep going on, and keep fighting to be infectious with my thought. I wouldn't be where I am if not for you. Thanks to Lori and the rest of the office staff for helping me through all the maddening bureaucracy. And thanks to the rest of the UH Political Science faculty for making such an amazing department. A big thank you to Elizabeth Dauphine and Oded Lowenheim for being amazing reviewers for my Autoarcheology chapter which was published in the Journal of Narrative Politics.

A very deep thanks to those I interviewed, this would not have been possible without you all! And thank you to all those who hosted me while I drove around the country conducting these interviews: Eri Kiyoko, TJ Buonomo, and Jeff Key. And thank you very much to all my friends and family for all your support, especially: Mom (stop crying), Dad, Jann, and many others.

Finally, much love and thanks to my brothers in arms that I served with. Garett and Jeff, my two oldest and closest friends, I wouldn’t be who I am without you! Gordie & Thom, I am so glad our paths crossed and have stayed intertwined! Frank, Stroup, and the rest of 2/63 Scout Platoon, thanks for keeping me alive. And to Sgt. J. I hope someday we meet again. This dissertation is dedicated to the peace-makers and those fighting to make a better and more equitable world.
ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an examination of military veterans who have come home to become social justice activists. I proceed by staging encounters between their lives, stories, activism, experiences in war, with a number of theoretical concepts. These concepts include: geocorporeal actors, parrhēsia, organic intellectual, masculinity, hypermasculinity, state violence, citizenship, war imaginaries, and healing. These encounters between these veterans and concepts tell us many interesting things about war, militarism, US democracy, and US society. At times these encounters help to unravel the messiness of understanding some of these concepts; at other times it makes that which seems clear-cut more complicated. Finally, this dissertation shows the wars at home that these veterans are currently fighting. They are fighting wars that are often tied to the wars they left while in the military, and they are fighting to make sense of it all, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1: AUTOARCHEOLOGY OF WAR</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: FORGED IN WAR, BATTLE FOR PEACE</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: OCCUPY VETERANS</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4: ENVIRO-WARRIORS</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 5: FIGHTING VIOLENCE IN THE RANKS</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 6: SERVICE, CITIZENSHIP, AND THE “AMERICAN DREAM”</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 7: REMAKING SENSE</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLOSING THOUGHTS</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

As the Iraqi man lay in front of me cold and lifeless, the veil of ignorance was removed from my eyes. The actions of my deeds swarmed through my head like a beehive disturbed on a hot summer day. Was this man a father? Was he fighting to free his country? Was he fighting so that he could put food on the table for his family? I would never know. It was there on that hot, hectic, and deadly day that I had resolved the conflict that kept me up at night: that we should not be in Iraq. As I lay in my bunk after the heated battle, I discovered my passion to seek social justice for all, to fight for those too weak to fight for themselves, to give voice to those without a voice, and to show those with power and privilege how their actions affect those they don’t see.

Every day in Iraq I felt like a hypocrite and it tore me apart from within to fight in a war I didn’t believe in. I wanted to throw down my weapon and refuse to promote the injustices I executed. My integrity to fulfill my oath and the compassion for my comrades kept me at my post. The battle within raged, but the light at the end of the tunnel was near. I swore to myself that I would one day make a difference in this world. On May 31, 2005, I was honorably discharged from the United States Army, though in my heart and mind I felt I had been a part of a dishonorable action. I would spend the next nine years going to school, learning to understand my experience, and to help me understand the reasons I feel the way I do. I would also spend that time as an activist, fighting to make the world a better place, as well as seeking penance for the things I felt I had done wrong. I knew I was not alone in this quest, as the other veterans I worked with to create change had similar stories to
mine. Therefore I am writing some of those stories, to show the battles we face, how they relate to the wars we fought, and how our current fight seeks to heal, the nation, our communities, and ourselves.

This personal experience with being soldier, having fought in war, and then being an activist directly combating the very war I fought in, gives me special insights not only into the struggles faced by veterans coming home, but also allows me a certain level of understanding and intimacy with the veterans I interview. Many times in the past, journalists and academics have interviewed me and there was always a tension between the interviewer and me as I would have to constantly stop and explain little things, or I would hold back this or that because I knew they would just not understand. Many of the people that I interviewed relayed similar stories and told me how much easier it was to talk with me, because I had been there. This is not to say that other academics are not producing high quality work and interviews with veterans, because they are. Critical War Studies work, like Victoria Basham’s book on soldiers, War, Identity and the Liberal State: Everyday Experiences of the Geopolitical in the Armed Forces, acts as a guide for my own work as I try to uncover many of the same issues.\footnote{Victoria Basham, War, Identity and the Liberal State: Everyday Experiences of the Geopolitical in the Armed Forces, Interventions (Routledge, 2013).} Not only do I utilize her analytical framework, but like her, I seek to “offer insights into embodied experiences that materialize and coalesce within specific relations of power/knowledge.”\footnote{Ibid. 17.} I was also very inspired by the works of Christian Appy, whose work with Vietnam veterans is phenomenal, as he intertwines the many stages of veteran’s experience—Life before
the military, in the military, in war, and post-military—with issues of race, class, and gender. Nonetheless there is a different layer I bring, with my own story, a more contemporary view, and the subsequent way I am able to analyze these issues.

Since I began working on this project there have been a high number of events that directly impact veterans, making it hard to focus on one issue. Events such as: the release of the documentary *The Invisible War*, which subsequently brought to light the high levels of sexual assault in the military, prompting government officials to take action; the high rates of veteran suicide and veteran homelessness; whistleblowers Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden releasing classified military documents; the release of POW Bowe Bergdahl; the Veterans Administration (VA) healthcare scandal; the shift to drone warfare; and last but not least is the recent return to Iraq as the US continues this seemingly endless “War on Terror.” Many of these issues have been highly publicized since I began writing this project, only to be forgotten months after their occurrence. I do bring some of these topics in to the fold as they relate to veteran activism, however I am not able to cover all areas of veteran issues and activism, as it is a dynamic and ever-changing field of study that is rarely examined.

While there has been some work on contemporary veterans issues, most have focused on issues around PTSD, like Erin Finley’s *Fields of Combat: Understanding PTSD Among Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.*

There have been two works, to my knowledge, that examine veteran activism, Dahr Jamail’s book *The Will to Resist: Soldiers Who Refuse to Fight in Iraq and Afghanistan*, and Lisa Leitz’s book

---

Both books primarily focus upon the organization Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), which I was and still am a member of. While I use both their works, and am inspired by their writings, neither seem to reach a critical analysis that is needed to understand contemporary veterans issues. Jamail’s book is more of a brilliant piece of journalism chronicling the events of IVAW, while Leitz’s book is an in-depth ethnography aimed at understanding the dynamics of social movements, specifically the peace movement. What I seek to do is different.

Like Basham’s study on active British soldiers, I want to take the same critical analytical lens in order to examine post 9/11 US veterans, who are now social justice activists. As soldiers, these veterans were trained and formed in specific ways, for specific purposes, primarily to perpetuate violence. While every individual is affected by this training differently, there are similar themes and ideals that come to light, which tell us much about the military, the US government, western liberal democracy, the affects of war, and subjectivity. Furthermore, veterans are able to articulate these concepts and ideals differently than civilians because their lived experiences exemplify the ramifications of war and American policy. Often, veterans feel the effects of US policy before society does, thus acting as the miner’s canary. As Victoria Basham points out in her book on UK soldiers, “War, Identity and the Liberal State: Everyday Experiences of the Geopolitical in the Armed Forces,” soldiers act as ‘geocorporeal actors that are necessary for waging wars that

---

harm some populations while preserving the life of others.” The veterans that I interviewed have been these “geocorporeal actors” in times of war and continue to be so, though in different ways, as they interact and often resist the very institutions that they were a part of as soldiers. The analytical lens of my project uses three intersecting components, similar to the Critical War Studies lens outlined by Basham, for the critical analysis of soldiering and its relationship to society and everyday life: 1) liberal democratic governance; 2) constructions of identity; and 3) geopolitical war. While similar to what Basham is doing, the context shifts when applied to the United States, and it shifts when analyzing activist veterans rather than current soldiers. First and foremost the context shifts when applied to the US as opposed to the UK due to the hegemonic relationship that the US has to the rest of the world. While the UK is seen as a leading western liberal democracy, the US is often seen as the country at the head of the table, as it has taken the lead on many military and economic policies that face the world today. Furthermore, many of the institutions that perpetuate the neoliberal policies that are the primary force within many “liberal democracies” are rooted within the United States. Finally we can see the intimate link between the military and these global economic policies within the US as the “Washington Consensus,” which works to maintain economic power with the help of US military might, or at least with the threat of it.

The contextual shift from soldier to activist veterans highlights the aims of my project. With veterans being separated from the military, this time often gives

---

5 Basham, War, Identity and the Liberal State: Everyday Experiences of the Geopolitical in the Armed Forces.
6 Ibid. 15.
them the space for critical reflection that is often difficult to achieve when in the thick of it. These veterans are able to find ways to heal through these different forms of resistance within these veteran activist communities, as their reflection and their activism work hand-in-hand to help them understand their experiences. This not only works to heal the traumas of war within the veteran, but also pushes the veteran to try and alter the war dispositif, thus attempting to heal the impacts of war on society. Finally, parallels can be drawn with these veterans current passions of social justice activism which they are advocating for and their time within the military, which tells us about the three frames I examine, liberal democratic governance, forms of identity, and war, which I will now expand upon each in turn.

**Western Liberal Democratic Governance**

Using Michel Foucault’s conceptualization of a biopolitical society, a liberal democracy “will seek to produce populations that are healthy and free to be productive, entrepreneurial and consumptive, making the prioritization of life and the well-being of populations highly compatible with liberal rule.”\(^7\) This liberal governance thus becomes the justification for war, in order to protect the society or productive population that it has created. These wars, as Foucault explains, become ‘inscribed on and within society, its institutions, and the bodies of individuals.’\(^8\) The bodies inscribed are not only the soldiers and veterans who have fought in these wars, but all participants of civil society as well as the civilian populations, which are often the targets of these wars. In Foucault’s description of civil society he says:

\(^7\) Ibid. 6.

Civil Society is not a primary and immediate reality; it is something which forms part of modern governmental technology. To say that it belongs to governmental technology does not mean that it is purely and simply its product or that it has no reality. Civil society is like madness and sexuality, what I call transactional realities. That is to say, those transactional and transitional figures that we call civil society, madness, and so on, which, although they have not always existed are nonetheless real, are born precisely from the interplay of relations of power and everything which constantly eludes them, at the interface so to speak, of governors and governed.⁹

Civil society is formed in reaction to the government and the government reacts in relation to civil society. So, when societal projects like neoliberalism affect populations, there is often a responding reaction. In a liberal democratic system this can often be seen in different forms of activism.

Simon Springer identifies four ways in which neoliberalism is conceptualized contemporarily. The first two are commonly looked at in a similar fashion: the first being, “neoliberalism as an ideological hegemonic project;” and the second being, “neoliberalism as policy and program.”¹⁰ These two perspectives come from a neo-Marxian ideology. The first being the top-down ideological conception, whereas elites and those in power perpetuate ideals like “individual freedom, liberty, personal responsibility, virtues of privatization, free market and free trade, for the implementation of draconian policies to restore and consolidate capitalist class power.”¹¹ The second, similarly is a project that works for an upward redistribution of wealth, and as Lisa Duggan points out that they are “policies meant to not only

---


destroy social policies, programs, and funds, but also aimed at complete deregulation of any and all business regulations (locally and globally).”  

12 To do so it uses global organizations (the Washington Consensus: WTO, G8/G20, IMF), treaties (soft power: embargos, sanctions, NAFTA), and military might (hard power: Coups, CIA, US military) to enforce these policies.  

13 These first two examples of neoliberalism—as an ideological framework and as policy—can be seen throughout my work from the ways in which veterans seek to shift the discourse at Occupy Wall Street in Chapter 3, to veterans of IVAW fighting the ways in which the military uses its “hard power” in chapter 2.

The third way in which neoliberalism is framed is in a neo-Foucaultian framework. This form of governmentality works on the body and on knowledge as a disciplinary/regulatory function; it is a cultural project in which market rationalities become embodied by self-regulated, self-responsibilized subjects.  

14 Furthermore, as Foucault highlights in The Birth of Biopolitics, neoliberalism transforms citizens into what he calls, “homo œconomicus.”  

15 If neoliberalism has created homo œconomicus, which is the productive body for labor and the economy, then soldiers within the military serve a similar function in maintaining the economy; upon exiting the military veterans must find new skills to fulfill new functions within society and those veterans who cannot remold to that body are thus the excess of

---

13 Ibid.  
14 Springer, “Neoliberalism as Discourse.”  
15 Foucault, The Birth of Biopolitics. 224-226.
society and are left to "let die." This function of neoliberalism can be clearly seen in Chapter one in my autoarcheology, as I describe the processes of inscription and identity formation, and also in my final chapter as veterans seek to reinscribe the meanings of their experiences.

The final way that neoliberalism is conceptualized is as a process of state transformation. Within this frame, there is a focus on neoliberalism as a new mode of statecraft entailing a shift from the welfare state to the carceral state within all areas of policy from urban to immigration policy. This securitized state apparatus can be clearly seen in my chapter Service, Citizenship, and the "American Dream." As this chapter examines the ties between how veterans must navigate the neoliberal state and its conceptions of citizenship. While these four frames of neoliberalism have often been placed in separate camps of thought, my dissertation hopes to transcend those camps and show the bridges between these conceptualizations are seen in the veteran experience. As Springer points out, by bridging these camps we create a discourse that is more apt to “disestablishing neoliberalism’s rationalities, deconstructing its strategies, disassembling its technologies, and ultimately destroying its techniques.”

Therefore, veterans act as the “transactional and transitional figures” in relation to both war and to the ways in which neoliberalism affects the rest of civil society. Furthermore, these geocorporeal actors are often seen as the sword bearer, carrying out the policies on international levels. Therefore, their activism can be

---

16 Foucault, Society Must Be Defended. 241.
17 Springer, “Neoliberalism as Discourse.”
18 Ibid.
seen as a crucial aspect of the ideal participatory democracy because of their dual roles within this construction of civil society. However, as shown throughout my project, their activism is also seen as a threat, as speaking truth to power often represents a danger because it delegitimizes the democratic ideology promoted by the government.

**Forms of Identity**

A large part of Basham’s study, is formed through extensive interviews with British soldiers and ethnographic research of time she spent with military members. It works to show the ways in which the UK’s military and the country’s ideal of militarism is formed around and interacts with white heteronormative masculinity. I would argue that the US military is very similar, however as explained above, the context shifts when examining veterans as opposed to active duty soldiers; particularly social justice activist veterans because they are able to reflect and critically analyze these constructions that they were a part of while in the military. I examine this pushback to the subject formation that occurred in the military, as many of these veterans currently seek to deprogram from these white heteronormative masculinities. I find this through extensive interviews and through ethnographic research of the organizations that these veterans are advocating for.

Another interesting nuance is that the geocorporeal actors that Basham is examining work to reinforce many of the embodiments formed in and through the military. There are similar types of geocorporeal actors throughout society, from police officers to politicians, and while many of these veterans once worked to reinforce and protect the systems that these geocorporeal actors are a part of, they
now resist them. This resistance comes in large part due to the ways in which these subject formations contribute to the traumas and violence of war, which is a part of what these veterans are attempting to recover from.

In Judith Herman’s groundbreaking 1992 book *Trauma and Recovery*, she works to depathologize trauma by shifting it from an individual symptomatic occurrence to a political and social problem. She bridges the traumas of sexual assault and ties them to the traumas experienced by combat veterans in war. While her book was geared more towards helping therapists treat people who have been through traumatic experiences, there is a basis for seeing how activism is healing. Herman states, “The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections. Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation.”

While Herman is talking about the treatment of trauma in general, there is a promotion of prosocial behavior that seeks empowerment, which leads to the healing of trauma. This can be found in veteran activist groups, as there is a bond similar to the bonds formed in the military, all seeking justice for something they see as a wrong. Similarly, the work of Camillo Mac Bica—a philosopher, activist, and Vietnam Veteran—who looks specifically at the best ways to help returning veterans, specifically those with what would be considered moral injury, we see not only the advocacy of veterans seeking counsel with each other, but he also

---

19 Ibid. 133.
advocated activism as a way to combat the mental traumas of war.\textsuperscript{20} As he points out:

It is here, in the company of comrades, that veterans can begin to ask the difficult questions... The journey to healing is long and difficult, and given the moral enormity and gravity of the war experience, it is not uncommon for PEM [Psychological, Emotional, and Moral] injuries to persist, causing veterans to feel that renewal and redemption are necessary to once again rejoin the moral community of humankind. It is at this crucial juncture in the healing process that veterans realize the importance of activism. By speaking out, educating the public about the truth of war, exposing Warist's lies and holding them accountable, upholding the moral integrity and national interest of their nation, working for the well-being and dignity of their comrades and for the betterment of humankind - that is, by becoming activists, many veterans can, and have, found the renewal, absolution and penance they so desperately need to forgive themselves and go on with their lives.\textsuperscript{21}

Similarly my project does this as it examines veterans speaking out, not only against the war but also against injustices tied to the military dispositif, from issues related to poverty and class to environmental issues. Therefore their activism not only acts as a form of healing oneself, but also exposing these issues to the broader public, and healing the violences perpetuated upon society.

I have chosen veteran activists who are specifically working on these issues, from veterans working with poor Black youth in inner cities, to veterans working with survivors of sexual assault within the military, both male and female survivors. Finally, these different forms of activism are not only forms of resistance and

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{21} Mac Bica, “Should Veterans Become Activists?”
\end{flushright}
healing but they also tell us as much about US civil society as they do about the military and the ways in which veterans’ identities are formed and controlled within the military. Furthermore, many of these veterans seek to shift the narrative of who is and who is not considered a part of the social imaginary that makes up civil society.

**War**

The final aspect of my analytical lens is the way in which war affects the construction of the soldier identity and how that construction is subsequently played out in everyday civil society. It is through these veterans’ forms of activism, and by looking at war, the military, and militarism that we see what Chris Cuomo calls a *presence.*

This presence is a force that can be felt and seen at all times because it is inherent within the structure. Cuomo’s aim is not an examination of war in and of itself, but rather a critique of militarism in general and the military institutions whose goal is ultimately to make war. In this critique, she shows how the military propagates violence not only in times of war but also in times of peace, specifically along gender and environmental lines. This is better explained by Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via who sum up Cuomo’s argument by stating, “...war is best seen as a process or continuum rather than a discrete event. Where an event has a starting point and an ending point, militarism pervades societies (sometimes with

---

more intensity and sometimes with less) before, during, and after the discrete event that the word “war” is usually used to describe.”

Cuomo’s use of the military as a presence not only shows the violence perpetrated on women’s bodies by men, but also shows that there is a similar effect as the violence and harm of militarism is perpetrated upon the environment. Cuomo explains that the military is one of the most harmful institutions against the environment. She illustrates that the military is inflicting violence on both human and nonhuman entities, not only in times of war, but also in times of peace—or in other words, the everyday.

Similarly, in Michael Shapiro’s book *Studies in Trans-Disciplinary Method*, he examines “the presence of war” through an intervention of theory and aesthetic montages. Shapiro shows that there is a “spatio-temporality of war” that cyclically connects war and the homefront. In this analysis he states:

> Both texts disclose not only the way the homefront delivers bodies to the war front but also the degree to which war takes place on the home front. They evince an equivalence that frames ‘war’ within a critical politics of aesthetics inasmuch as they repartition the sense of war as they challenge the boundary between war and domesticity.

In other words there is not only an intimate link between the battlefield and those at home, but there is an affectual relationship between the two. Those at home are driven to war for a variety of reasons, to which is another frame of the war. My

---

23 Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via, *Gender, War, and Militarism: Feminist Perspectives* (ABC-CLIO, 2010). Pg. 7.
24 Ibid. 41.
26 Ibid.
project is examining this frame of war as these veterans are coming home and fighting these new wars through their activism. Their activism also ‘challenges the boundaries between war and domesticity.’

Kathy Ferguson and Phyllis Turnbull use the same terminology of a presence in their study of militarism in Hawai‘i, by labeling the military as “a damaging institutional presence.” They focus not only the environmental degradation that the US military has had upon Hawai‘i, but also the violence that is perpetuated by military members towards the communities in and around the bases on the Hawaiian Islands. Furthermore, the footnote connected to this section is rather revealing as well:

Individual cases of violence toward women and children in military families are frequently reported in the local newspaper. State officials maintain that 5.5 percent of reported child abuse and neglect cases involve military personnel. Given the negative effect that official reports of family violence may have on a soldier’s career, it is likely that many incidents go unreported... children in military families are nearly twice as likely to have alcoholic fathers as are civilian children, a factor that probably increases violence in military homes.

This shows that the idea of militarism as a presence is intimately tied to excessive masculinity and violence, even in times of peace. Similarly, Denise Horn looks at the violence in military families and explains how any questioning of the soldier is not only bad for moral but also unpatriotic, thus the all too prevalent violence against

27 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid. 219n31.
military families is often swept under the rug in order to ‘maintain the mission for national security.’\textsuperscript{31} Violence permeates not only on the bodies of the “enemy,” or on the perceived other, but also that which it calls its own: on its own families, and finally upon the lands in which it resides, and it is accepted as the norm by the military dispositif.

The Everyday that is affected by war, the military, and militarism is expanded beyond civil society to the planet and the environment as a whole, both in times of war and of peace. Furthermore, the veteran activism I examine is actively working against this presence, almost exclusively through nonviolent tactics. This project looks at why and how these veterans are resisting, and engages with how these forms of resistance are not only able to change civil society, but also shifts the embedded subjectivity within their identities.

\textbf{Methods}

This qualitative study utilized in-depth interviews as well as ethnographic research. To get participants, I utilized a snowball method; first utilizing my own network of veteran activists, but then meeting other veterans through the networks of friends, and my participants’ networks. My only stipulation when searching for interviewees was that they considered themselves activists and that they were veterans. I met with veterans all across the country, conducting open-ended interviews, and when possible spending time watching the veterans in action conducting their activism. I would open interviews with a very basic ask, “Tell me your story, who are you.” This

\textsuperscript{31} Sjoberg and Via, \textit{Gender, War, and Militarism}. Pg 64.
allowed for a narrative style response in which a discursive analysis can take place.

As Frank Fischer points out:

From infancy we learn how to interpret and understand new narrative stories through older ones acquired in the course of socialization and lived experience. At the cultural level, narratives serve to give cohesion to shared beliefs and to transmit basic values. At the individual level people tell narratives about their own lives that enable them to understand both who they are and where they are headed...

...Through narration individuals relate their experiences to one another. It is the cognitive form with which people convey what they think and feel, and understand one another, in writing as well as speech. Structured sequentially with a beginning, middle, and end, the narrative tells us about an ‘original state of affairs’, an action or event and the consequent state of events. As a mode of thought, the narrative furnishes communication with the particular details that constitute the stuff of which meaning is made.32

Fischer is seeking to create a new methodology that shifts from normative empirical epistemologies to more discursive practices, which he calls the argumentative turn. Fischer’s field of study is public policy, however his goal of bridging public policy experts with the lived realities of everyday people has a certain resonance with my work. As Fischer states, “the job of policy analyst, then, is not just to tell a narrative story. It is rather to translate a narrative into an argument, or to tease out the argument implicitly embedded in the story.”33 Similarly, my collection of narratives from veteran activists works to make discursive arguments meant to shift the ways in which we understand and view issues around the war dispositif.

---

33 Ibid. 182.
The initial narratives led into questions that would highlight their current activism, how it tied to their experiences as a soldier, how the issue that they are fighting is tied to military, and the ways in which their activism has affected them since their exit from the military. I utilized grounded theory, as I traveled and interviewed, I would find common themes to build upon, as well as new questions to ask based upon past interviews. I came into the project solely wanting to interview activist veterans, with no other parameters, but as I traveled and themes around identity began to form. While I started with anti-war activists, I found that many of these veterans activism bled into other forms of activism. One example is the veterans I interviewed who were a part of the Truman foundation. This group had a wide array of veterans, from those who were in no way anti-war, but were very environmentally conscious, to those whose activism took them back to Afghanistan to meet with local peace groups there. While I often drew from my own war experiences to relate to those I interviewed, I often used stories I heard from other vets to relate to those I was currently interviewing. This allowed for a further development of the themes that are now my chapters.

While there are thousands more veterans who are activists, that all have different stories and experiences, which could have contributed to my project, it was obviously not feasible to interview them all. And while I could have done a survey to get a wider representation, the in-depth interviews provide a more intimate account of the everyday violences that these veterans are facing. Furthermore, a part of what many of these veterans are trying to do is to speak their truths to power, which the details of those truths get lost in survey and quantitative studies. My project works
to display these intimate stories and then cuts them open to show how it relates to theoretical concepts, and shows us what we can learn from these veterans. Some interviews were very helpful for me in understanding how their activism is directly connected to their time in the military; some interviews were interesting but didn’t seem to tie into the themes that were forming; some interviews were a complete waste of time, such as one of my participants who was not so much an activist as he was an aspiring politician seeking to fill his resume.

All of my interviews and field notes were transcribed, tying together those common themes with the different interviews and to various literatures and concepts. It wasn’t until after I had completed my research that I had found Critical War Studies, but as I read Basham’s book, it seemed to help tie together many of the concepts and ideas that I had found, thus helping me to form an analytical frame to run my interviews and concepts through. By looking at these interviews through a framework that includes, liberal democratic governance, constructions of identity, and geopolitical war, I am able to show the common threads between these and the everyday experience of these activist veterans. Because while Basham is looking inside the military to show how the soldiers daily lives reflect a certain reality in relation to larger civil society, my project shows how those embodiments are not only self-reflexive, but also transformative. Many of the veteran activists I interviewed understand the subject formation processes and the ways that they interact with ideals of masculinity, racialization, and liberal democratic governance, but what they seek is to change those interactions, as they find those interactions deeply problematic and the source of much trauma. So while the soldiers that
Basham interview is reflections of white heteronormative masculinity, the veterans I interview largely recognize these norms, and seek to resist those embodiments, even if they were once a part of and reinforced those same identities.

Furthermore, these narratives that I am staging encounters with theory are genealogies, as I seek to create histories of the present. As Foucault explains about genealogies:

We have both a meticulous rediscovery of struggles and the raw memory of fights. These genealogies are a combination of erudite knowledge and what people know... we can give the name ‘genealogy’ to this coupling together of scholarly erudition and local memories, which allows us to constitute a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of that knowledge in contemporary tactics.34

Similarly, my use of the narratives of these veterans and their activism highlights “the discursive construction of social subjects and knowledge and the functioning of discourse in social change.”35 These veterans hope to construct new ways of knowing with their activism and narratives, which is counter to the hierarchical knowledges or systems of thought. These systems often use empirical data, which more often than not works to dehumanize the issues that these veterans are passionate about.

Note about Social Movements

While I hope that my work can be helpful to Social Movements literature, the work itself is not necessarily about social movements. While authors like Sydney Tarrow, Charles Tilly, Kevin McDonald, Donatella della Porta, and many others work is very

34 Foucault, Society Must Be Defended. Pg. 8.
35 Fischer, Reframing Public Policy. Pg. 38.
important to not only social movements but also to understanding the collective identity formation process, they are not particularly interested in the singularity of particular experiences because they are trying to build 'theories' of social movements. Furthermore, I am not so much interested in the process or how contentious politics becomes formalized into movements, rather, I am instead moving in the opposite direction as I seek to understand the affective relationship between these veterans activism in relation to war and trauma. So while normative social movements literature is conceptually helpful to define what has been done, it is not useful for understanding the micro-politics of veterans, who already have a collective identity bonding them together. Hopefully my work can be seen as an alternative way to examine social movements, as a micro-political analysis is very useful to examining the meso and macro levels of social movements.

**Roadmap**

In the first chapter I locate myself within my work through an auto-archeological account of my time in the military. This chapter explores my own subject formation in boot camp, then goes on to show the affects of trauma from war. By relating my own experiences, I am able to problematize the ways in which masculinity and racism are used within military training, and how individuality is stripped in order to form the soldier subject. Upon leaving boot camp, an examination of my time in Kosovo and Iraq shows that the soldier subject is not completely stable, as it becomes fractured in war, which then leads to the subsequent fight to heal and understand my experience through academia and activism.
Chapter 2 examines the organization that got me interested in activism, Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). It not only explores the history of IVAW and their tactics, but also focuses upon how their primary tactic, parrhēsia—speaking truth to power—represents a perceived threat to western liberal governance. This form of non-violent action works to expose the lies and hidden truths that have been hidden from civil society, while also healing by releasing the burden of their truths. Finally, the chapter illustrates the similarities between dangers that these veterans represent with their words to the threat that Chelsea Manning posed by releasing top-secret documents.

Chapter 3 partially continues with IVAW, as it engages with IVAW members Scott Olsen and Shamar Thomas, and their work with and beyond the Occupy Wall Street movement. This chapter considers the affects of neoliberalism, its effect on communities of color, and the ways in which it is maintained by the police state. Occupy Wall Street reflects these problems as it seeks to confront these systems of power through non-violence, even in the face of heightened state violence. This in turn invigorates what famous Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci calls the Organic Intellectual, embodied by these activist veterans. The Organic Intellectual is thus an inscription produced by neoliberalism in reaction to neoliberal policies as social programs are stripped, communities become impoverished, and as they seek to better their situation through resistance, which is the activism that these veterans are a part of. Furthermore, this organic intellectual becomes a manifestation of one kind of transactional geocorporeal figure.
Chapter 4 moves to the presence of neoliberalism and war, in environmental activism. Many veterans have left the military disgusted with the resource wars that have violently claimed the lives of their brothers and sisters in arms. This in turn has pushed them into becoming advocates for alternative energies and a nonviolent geopolitical stance. This advocacy for the environment has had multiple effects, from shifting the debate from global warming to a position of national security, to veterans finding new forms of healing in and through the power of the nature they aim to preserve.

Chapter 5 examines veterans who are engaged in activism around the sexual assault epidemic that is taking place within the military, which as mentioned above is one of the violent effects of the presence of war. These veterans seek to change the policies within the military through congress. While it is often thought that this problem primarily affects female veterans, this chapter also examines the high rate of sexual assaults on men. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the ways in which these sexual assaults are seen as a form of betrayal similar to incidents of incestual rape. These sexual assaults act as a marker of the inherent violence of the hypermasculine subject formation that takes place within the military and also occurs throughout our militarized society.

Chapter 6 continues with the theme of a presence of war and neoliberalism as it juxtaposes three veterans’ stories about service to their country, citizenship, and the idea of the “American Dream.” The first narrative is that of a Mexican immigrant who served the United States honorably and has now been deported, like many other veterans in his position. Today, he seeks readmitance to the US,
pleading his case to anyone who will listen as he marches up and down the rows of cars entering the country through the border town of Tijuana. The second story is of the son of migrants whose family members have all served in the military. After his deployment to Afghanistan, he refused to be redeployed and fled to Canada to become a war resister. He now seeks asylum, but has been labeled a criminal and faces deportation and imprisonment for being Absent Without Leave (AWOL). Finally, the chapter relates the story of a veteran who has fought to have his courageous interpreter given asylum to the US. These three stories show how the racial imaginary within civil society is formed, and who is deemed worthy of being a part of that imaginary.

Finally, chapter 7 engages with veterans who are trying to “remake sense,” of their experiences in the military through art and poetry. This chapter offers new alternative ways to combat the PTSD and other traumas that they experienced while in the military. These practices are used to deprogram the violent identity formation produced by the military and the traumas of war. While the inscription of war is a permanent scar that the veteran cannot erase, these activists seek to transform the experiences of war into something that the veteran can understand and live with.
CHAPTER 1: AUTOARCHEOLOGY OF WAR

In July of 2001, I joined the United States Army to serve as 19D Calvary Scout. The next five years would be very transformative, as I would go from being a Young Republican in college, to a soldier who would go on two deployments and live overseas, to a radical activist fighting for peace and social justice. This chapter will take selected experiences from my past to reveal some of the consequences of militarization and the subsequent affects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder that has become a common theme of American military veterans; it also locates me within my work. Furthermore, my experience with war, militarism, and violence also highlights a number of theoretical explorations by a number of different social scientists, most notably and pertinent for this paper are philosophers Michel Foucault and John Protevi.

In Michel Foucault’s lectures entitled *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, he outlines a number of methods related to an introspective line of understanding that looks to locate the intricacies that are tied between the concepts of the subject and truth. Within this journey, he examines the concept of knowledge and “true discourse,” when he states, “making the truth your own, becoming the subject of enunciation of true discourse: this, I think, is the very core of this philosophical ascesis.” It is in this spirit, of making my experience the subject of enunciation, that I hope to draw out why my work is important. By turning the gaze inwards,

---

36 I would like to thank Elizabeth Dauphinee for the term “auto-archeology,” as this is not quite an autoethnography, but still has many similar qualities as it is drawn from my personal experiences.

hopefully a new discourse can be found and a personal account of political affect, as described by John Protevi, can be seen. Furthermore, by examining this particular narrative through different lenses, the political can shift as a different understanding of the Iraq war can be told and used as a lesson of war and violence. The narrative thus becomes its own body politic as similar stories can be heard from veterans across the nation which highlights how war and veterans’ subsequent return has affected society. Furthermore, this account can be seen as a model for examining narrative accounts, which highlight the politics of narrative IR. However, it should be noted that Foucault’s appeal to “true discourse” and “the subject” contains multiple layers. For Foucault truth is a contentious claim, not solely focused upon accuracy, because my truth may look very different from the truth of those who I interview throughout my dissertation, or even different than those I fought beside. Our subjectivity’s and truth’s becomes sites of struggle, which work to contest and complicate the everyday narratives. Our stories and our activism is a struggle towards a truth that can serve us, and a subjectivity we can inhabit, as it becomes a poignant field of struggle.

**Joining the Army**

One day while driving down Patterson Rd. in Grand Junction, CO, my best friend Garett tells me he had a dream, in it he saw himself in the military. “I’m thinking of joining,” he said, “which is crazy because I told myself that I would never join after the torture that my dad put me, my brothers, and mom through.” His father was a drill sergeant in the army, and had received a Purple Heart among other medals for his time in Vietnam. He died from complications with shrapnel that eventually
formed cancer after being in his body for over 20 years. I told Garett that I had tried to join many years before but was overweight at that time and not able to join. I knew the recruiters, and told him, “Well, if you wanna go, I would be down, let’s go talk to them.” I had spent the prior year in college, but knew that I could not afford to continue to take out loans, as well as I knew I was not ready for college since I had spent the last few years partying and not taking my studies seriously.

Initially we tried contacting the Colorado National Guard, but only got the answering machine and didn’t hear back from them, so we went to the regular Army recruiters. I had been to the recruiting station before and recruiters SSG Fortenberry and SSG Petty greeted us; the latter would die at the same time that we were in Iraq. The job of the recruiter is to be your best friend, he is there to reassure you, excite you for joining, and make sure that you qualify. The first time I had attempted to join a couple years before I was barely overweight and told to come back the next month, which discouraged me, and this would be the first time that I had seen the recruiters since my initial rejection; though they had called me regularly. The two men seemed genuinely happy to see me, perhaps because they knew that besides my past weight problems I was a quality candidate as I had a high school degree and no criminal past.

SSG Petty was a Calvary Scout, and one of the videos that he showed us was actually a Special Forces video, but he said that this would basically be our job if we chose to be Calvary Scouts. The video was very exciting as soldiers zipped around on dirt bikes and dune buggies, and were shooting weapons neither of us had seen before. We decided that this would be a fun option if they offered it for the Army
Reserves. Within a couple of days we were on a plane to Denver to go through MEPS (Military Entrance Processing Command). They flew us over the night before and we were put up in a hotel. Early the next morning we would be rushed through breakfast and then put through a number of lines, tests, background checks, and paperwork. I had gone through the process before, and knew that much patience was needed to get through the long day. Once we had both passed all the tests and were done being poked and prodded we were taken to the contracts office. Garett went ahead of me, and came out and told me, “so I decided to sign up for active duty for 3 years, but got guaranteed to be stationed in Germany, do you want to do the same, cause if you do we can go on the buddy program?” It didn’t take me long to decide that it would be fun going to Germany, so I agreed, and within an hour the contracts would be drawn up and we would sign our lives away for at least the next 3 years. What we were told, but not very clearly—and would later become a very stressful aspect of our service—was that our contract was actually for 8 years, 3 years of active duty service, then 5 years of Individual Ready Reserve. Furthermore, what they quickly say while reviewing the contract with us was that anytime during those 8 years we were at the will of “the needs of the Army.” Meaning, if they need us to stay in, they would extend our service beyond the 3 years of active duty service, which did end up happening. However, all of this seemed as some sort of distant thought since there was no reason as to why they would need to extend our service, we weren’t at war. We also decided to go on the Delayed Entry Program, not leaving until October of that year.
About a week after we had signed up, our buddy Jeff had decided that he wanted to join us in Germany, so he went through the same process and we were all then on the buddy program together. Once we had signed up, the recruiters kept contact to ensure that we were preparing for basic training. We did so primarily through working out and by watching Stanley Kubrick’s famous film, *Full Metal Jacket*. We built up an idea of what boot camp would be like by repeatedly watching the film, which on one level terrified us, but felt that it prepared us for the worst. The recruiters assured us that it would be much easier than the movie, but that it definitely did resemble it in many ways. And like generations of soldiers before us we turned to popular culture to build conceptions of war. Generations before us had looked up to John Wayne and Audie Murphy; we had directors like Kubrick and Stone.38 While the tenor of the films changed, the glory and excitement had not. Movies prior to Vietnam seemed to glorify the soldier as a hero, and while many post-Vietnam movies showed layered complexities of war, the masculinity of being a soldier still shined through.

Less than two months after signing I would be awoken by my roommate telling me that there was an attack on the World Trade Center in New York. I told him to fuck off, and he said, “Seriously, come check it out.” I got up and went into his room as the first tower fell. My mind began to swim and my stomach knotted up, as I knew that this would change everything with my upcoming entrance into the military. At the time, I was working at a river rafting company and had a trip to lead that afternoon. The trip was different than any other trip I had guided, as the

shadow of the moment ominously loomed over the day. To add to the awkwardness, the family who was on the float trip was from New York. The silence was piercing, and I remember asking, “have you been in touch with your friends and family?” The father replied, “yeah, we’re actually from upstate New York, but we have talked to most of our friends and family back home.”

That night I went to hang out with Garett and Jeff to discuss the situation. While we were all scared about the future, we were still adamant about joining. I was more so than Garett and Jeff because of my conservative political leanings, but Garett was still determined, and Jeff decided he was still along for the ride. There had been some talk of what could happen if we didn’t go, and we thought that we probably didn’t want to find out. Our recruiters had called the next day to see how we were doing, but they also called to tell us that we had signed contracts and that we could go to jail if we didn’t go, which confirmed our thoughts on what would happen if we didn’t go. We would later find out that our recruiters were lying to us, since our contract was not solidified until we were sworn in before we left for basic training, but either way we planned on going. I was proud to be going, as I thought at the time that we were doing the right thing. On October 15th, 2001, we would leave Grand Junction, fly to Denver, be sworn in, and fly out to Fort Knox, Kentucky.

**Boot Camp**

...there are psychiatrists who recommend fear, violence, and threats in every case. Some see the fundamental imbalance of power as sufficiently assured but the asylum system itself, its system of surveillance, internal
hierarchy, and the arrangement of the buildings, the asylum walls themselves, carrying and defining the network and gradient of power.  

Much as Foucault points out in the above quote, basic training was an imbalance of power. After a week of waiting for space to open up in a new training company, we were given our initial physical test; those who passed would go on to the training company, and those who failed would have to wait longer and try again. We were told that the next chance we would have to do this would be a month away, so it motivated us that much more to pass the first time. The Sergeant who was in charge of us until we went to our training platoon was now unleashed and was finally allowed to “smoke us” now that we had passed our physicals. He had us going back and forth between the “front leaning rest position” (better known as the push-up position) and standing at attention for hours. He would call-out “Bawk Bawk,” to which we were to reply “Chicken Chicken”; he would then call it out again and we were to reply, “Chicken Head.” The cadence was from a popular rap song that came out that year, meant to degrade women, which it seemed he enjoyed transferring upon us. Later that morning we would get on a bus and go get all of our issued equipment that we would need, and then go to our training company, Echo Company.

As the bus pulled up, the drill sergeants were waiting outside for us, and they boarded the buses to begin screaming at us to get off the buses. It was a torrent of

---

41 The song was actually aimed at another rapper, likening him to a woman who gives oral sex to a man, thus making the degradation towards women obvious.
yelling, as curse words and degradations were being thrown at us as we tried to exit the buses and get in line outside as quickly as possible. Once outside we were to empty our duffle bags on the ground for their inspection, though they barely looked at the contents strewn across the lawn, as they would yell at us to “get our shit back in our bags.” One smaller drill sergeant walked around with a clipboard and got the recruits’ names, and told them which platoon they would be in. Once we were told our platoon, and all of our stuff was back in the duffle bags, we were told to get our stuff up to our barracks as quickly as possible and to get back down stairs for formation. I was put into 3rd Platoon, while my friends Garett and Jeff were put into 2nd Platoon, which was distressing, but it seemed that I had much bigger problems to worry about at the time.

The first few weeks of basic training were known as black phase—so named because it reflects the status of being completely out of supplies, or more particularly ammunition, to which we are seen at this point as starting from zero—and is the most difficult portion of basic training. It is in these first few weeks that the initial imbalance of power is formed, primarily through a somatic process that includes discipline centered on the body and psychological degradation meant to break down the soldier. Punishments were usually focused on individuals but if the offense was big enough the whole platoon would be punished. Often there was no real cause for punishment, but rather a statement being made that we were not individuals. We were now property of the US Army. Drill sergeants would scream in our face, call us names, and make us do hours of bear crawls, push-ups, sit-ups,
running, etc. We would be kept up late and awoken early to ensure that our mental and physical capacities were worn down to a bare level of survival.

Throughout these first few weeks we were constantly exhausted, and it seemed that everything we did was incorrect. A button would be undone on our pockets, and we would be punished, some one next to you would fall asleep during a class, you and him would have to do push-ups, it got to the point where I questioned which way was up and which was down. I questioned why I joined, why I was there. It is in the first few weeks that the highest attrition rate takes place, but with the attacks of September 11th having just occurred, our drill sergeants aimed to make it very difficult for anyone to get out of their contract, which made us hate them that much more.

One night in the first few weeks my “battle buddy” Jared told me that ‘he couldn’t take it any more’ and that he was going to tell the drill sergeants that he was gay. I asked him if he was telling the truth, and he said he had a whole black book of contacts to confirm his story. The confrontation must not have gone well because the next time I saw him he was in tears and wearing a bright orange vest that read “SUICIDE WATCH,” and we had to take shifts to watch him. He later told me that he had threatened to commit suicide if they didn’t let him out, which later created a spectacle as the drill sergeants would berate him as “weak,” “a pussy,” and “a faggot.” The obviously gendered insults were just as meant for us as they were for him, as they insinuated that a man is not like him, and that he was acting like a

---

42 A battle buddy is an assigned soldier that you are supposed to do everything with. In some ways it acts as a support system, but also it works as an accountability system, because if one messes up then both mess up and both are punished.
woman. The military relies on creating and maintaining these gender roles during training, as it is an easy way to control and build the hypermasculine subject. This berating was prior to the repeal of the military’s policy of “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell,” which had made coming out as gay a crime within the military; while gays can now openly serve the maintenance of masculinity is still a very important aspect of training. This punishment was also a purposeful humiliation as he was used as an example of the hell that they could put us through, because if we thought we had it bad, they showed us that they could make it a lot worse. He was eventually sent to an out processing unit and kicked out of the Army, but the message was sent: it may just be easier to finish then get kicked out like Jared was. A part of me looks back and sympathizes with him, but another part of me feels like he is the one who got off easy.

In Foucault’s *Psychiatric Power* lectures, the construction of the soldier as a subject can be related to his description of subject formation in the asylum, which comes in progressive steps. The first step that Foucault identifies is the creation of an imbalance of power between the doctor and patient, whereas the doctor is demonstrating force in order to make the patient conform to his will and the patient learns to “accept the doctor’s prescriptions.”43 Similarly, Black phase is meant to perpetuate this imbalance of power, from the constant punishment which broke down not only our bodies but also our will, to making an example of my battle buddy; the laws had been set as to who was the doctor, and to survive, the drill sergeant’s prescriptions must be taken. It was a constant mix of emotions that drove

43 Foucault et al., *Psychiatric power*. 146-147.
me the first few weeks: fear of being punished or even worse, recycled and having to start all over; a deep anger and hatred at the drill sergeants and what seemed like cruel punishment; the feeling of pride, whenever a task was completed, or when we overcame an obstacle; and the constant extreme exhaustion. While that wouldn’t seem like an emotion, it definitely was one, perhaps an anti-emotion because when you become too exhausted you become completely devoid of all emotions, and you start to move on auto-pilot, which is what they wanted. Furthermore, this emptiness of emotions helps build the path towards hypermasculinity; as the hypermasculine subject is supposed to be devoid of emotions as they were seen as a weakness.

A Reuse of Language

…it is equally a matter of re-teaching the subject to use the forms of language of learning and discipline, the forms he learned at school, that kind of artificial language which is not really the one he uses, but the one by which the school’s discipline and system of order are imposed… making the patient accessible to all the imperative uses of language: the use of proper names with which one greets, shows one’s respect and pays attention to others; school recital and of languages learned; language of command. 44

In our right cargo pocket we were to have with us at all times our “Soldier’s Blue Book.” We were to memorize our chain of command, ranks, the 7 core Army Values, how to address our superiors, etc. We were told to be reading it and reciting it whenever we had free time. At any time, day or night, we were subject to examination, and an incorrect answer would result in corporeal punishment. The “Soldier’s Blue Book” contained everything from the definition of a soldier to the

44 Ibid. 150.
national anthem. It was the go-to-guide for any questions we had for the first half of our training.

When we would run or march anywhere, we would chant military cadence as a group to ensure that we were all in step with one another. Protevi describes this as an ‘entrained acculturation through rhythmic chanting to weaken personal identity in order to produce a group subject.’

This was especially effective because it made one feel more powerful as a group and not alone as an individual when chanting the different cadences. The loneliness that came with such training, the feeling of alienation seemed to disappear as the group became more proficient at running and marching while singing cadence. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, it helped us to stay in step with one another when marching in formation. As the cadence caller would sound off, the first word is when your left foot is to hit the ground. The most basic cadence, that most soldiers first hear, and is often used as filler between cadences, is the simple “left, left, left right.” It is through this basic coordination that a somatic reflex begins to be formed so that the individual ceases to be and thus becomes a part of a group as they march as a single organism. To this day when I go for a run, cadences go through my mind, even at times when I walk I hear the “left” as my foot hits the ground. There was a sense of unity in this constant drilling, especially when we practiced for parade drills. This unity was both positive and negative because when someone would mess up and we would have to start over, we would all be angry, but when we perfected our parade steps, a unified smile could be seen. While it seemed that I was losing myself, I was gaining brothers in

---

arms, who knew the feelings I was feeling because they seemed to be experiencing the same.

A few weeks later, while training, Drill Sergeant Mendez was yelling at us and said something that I will never forget: “listen here privates, you need to take this shit seriously. Many of you will be going to Iraq and some of you won’t come back. You need to know how to kill those Haji’s so that you can come back.” The main reason this has always stuck in my head was because at the time there was no talk of going to Iraq, as Afghanistan was the primary focus. I have always wondered, was this a premonition or did he know something that many did not. Perhaps it was neither and in his own ignorance he was lumping the whole of the Middle East into one enemy; there is no way to be sure. However, it is in this quote that we see a number of things within this concept of the reuse of language that is seen within basic training: first and foremost is a dehumanization of the enemy. As Protevi points out, this is done primarily through creating sterilized euphemisms that makes it as if one is not killing a fellow human but rather a wild beast that would kill you otherwise. Protevi uses names of past “enemies” of the US such as “Kraut, Jap, Reb, Yank, Dink...” but none of these were used when I was in training, it was, “Sand Nigger, Haji, Camel Jockey, Dune Coon, etc.” This updated version of racial epithets is fairly spatially and ideologically specific, making the enemy of the state not only those who live within the Middle East but also those who are of the Muslim faith and dark-skinned, since for Americans, “nigger” and “coon” are unmistakable. At the time I had no problems with these sorts of terms because I had grown up in a

46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
very conservative town, where many of these terms and worse were commonly used. However, racial epithets were not always tolerated: as a soldier in 2nd platoon would say, “he wouldn’t take orders from that fucking nigger,” talking about Drill Sergeant Rivers. The word got back to Drill Sergeant Rivers about what Polaski said, and within an hour he was sent up to 3rd platoon where Drill Sergeant Mendez made him hate life, after which he was eventually kicked out. The contrast of using racism to create a foreign “other,” versus not tolerating internal racism creates an interesting hierarchy. As Basham points out:

These accounts suggest that military training could mitigate the association of racial difference with inferiority that so often characterises racial stereotyping and racism within the institution and more widely. However, it is important to remember that as long as the military as an institution continues to facilitate stereotyping based on seemingly fixed notions of culture in its recruiting and institutional practices, then traces of the myths that sustained the military’s imperial past will continue to mark its present. Such myths not only facilitate divides between subgroups of the military population but echo a wider biopolitics that prioritises some ways of life over others on the grounds of perceived and often immutable cultural differences. These supposedly unassailable differences sometimes materialize war.48 Therefore, it’s ok to be racist towards the enemy but not towards the hierarchy or the structure of power. However, because the military perpetuates racism within its training, it creates spaces for racism to persist and thrive, so long as one does not get caught being racist towards another within the military. Often time’s instances of racism are often tolerated and not addressed.

---

48 Basham, War, Identity and the Liberal State: Everyday Experiences of the Geopolitical in the Armed Forces. 132.
The movement of Polaski meant that 2nd platoon needed another soldier, and knowing that my friends were in 2nd platoon, I was sent down, which seemed to be a blessing and a curse. I was near my friends, but with Drill Sergeant Rivers who not only scared the crap out of me, but also had a reputation for being the most difficult drill instructor. This fear was most likely tied to my own racism, and fear of Black men who had been a stereotype in my mind perpetuated throughout my childhood, by the town I grew up in and by American society and culture in general.

Returning to Drill Sergeant Mendez’s “premonition,” the idea of needing to know our jobs because otherwise “Haji’s” would kill us is the way in which a dichotomy of life and death is formed. You must kill, before being killed. It will be a “Haji” trying to kill you. It is in this point that I feel I must push against Protevi in that as being a 19D Calvary Scout, which is a combat arms specialty, there were no sterilized euphemisms for killing. We were expected to be killers, trained to be killers, told consistently that we were killers. On the whole, other military occupation specialties were trained differently, specifically the support specialties that were not combat arms—because they were not expected to be killers—but our training glorified combat and killing. Furthermore, one example of this killing instinct that is specifically drilled into us using raw emotions is on the bayonet-training course.

While Protevi points out that rage is ineffective for the contemporary soldier, that emotion is still tapped within the training of the soldier, though only briefly, and at specific times. Like a powerful drug, the authorities dole it out when necessary. The first half of the bayonet training consists of pugil stick training. The
pugil stick is meant to act as a replacement for a rifle. There was about an hour of training in different moves that were to be performed if we were attacked in hand-to-hand combat, such as a butt stroke and the thrust; and while the initial training seemed important I eagerly anticipated what was to come. I could see it in other’s eyes as well, and I could hear the hypermasculine calls for the pugil sticks. Everybody was given a football helmet and put into a circle. In the circle two soldiers would come together and told to rage upon one another. It was a primal feeling that you could feel in your gut with emotions going wild as we were screaming and everyone around the circle was chanting and yelling, hoping for blood. Like the movie Fight Club, everyone must fight, but it doesn’t end until the drill instructor says it’s over. Because I was one of the larger soldiers, I was matched up with another large guy, Anderson. The lessons that were just learned had easily been forgotten as I swung with a wild rage trying to hit a homerun, pretending Anderson’s head was the ball. I was reminded of my time playing football, with everybody screaming and yelling, and the blood pulsing through my head drowning out the sound. He hit me hard in the jaw, which knocked me backwards. He lunged forward, but as he lunged he tripped, and like a tiger pouncing on its prey, I attacked, hitting him on the back of the head. As I went to swing again the drill sergeant had called the match but I could not hear him as my adrenalin pumped. I swung again at the man on the ground only to be tackled by the drill sergeant. While in another arena this may be discouraged and looked down upon, but here it was encouraged as the drill sergeant slapped my ass afterwards and told me, “good job.”
The second half of the training was just as intense. Soldiers are given a fake rifle but a real bayonet. We were again instructed on how to stab someone with it, while it was affixed to the rifle. The drill instructor would yell out, “What is the spirit of the bayonet?” We promptly replied, as loudly as possible, “TO KILL KILL KILL WITH COLD BLUE STEEL DRILL SERGEANT!” The drill instructor then asked, “What makes the green grass grow?” To which we respond, “BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD MAKES THE GREEN GRASS GROW DRILL SERGEANT!” This was done many times over the course of the day, and every time we are to thrust with the bayonet we were to scream with our “battle cry,” like in the movie Full Metal Jacket. Like the marching and cadence, this repetition works to erase the individual and replace it with a group identity, one that removes the moral ambiguity of killing, and instead normalizes it. We were then sent to a mile long obstacle course in the forest where we were to jump logs, crawl under concertina wire, run up to a large human shaped wooden targets, scream, stab, twist, and pull. There were at least 5 different dummies along the course and if it was completed in a certain amount of time, we were awarded expert in the Bayonet Achievement Medal. This day seemed to act as a turning point; not only was it a confidence booster after so many days of being mentally, emotionally, and physically beat down, but we were also given constant positive reinforcements throughout the day. The act of killing was being transformed from what I had always been told as bad, to something that was righteous, powerful, and good. It was the first time in weeks that we had all been in high spirits, as we all joked and laughed before going to bed that night.
Management or Organization of Needs

The third maneuver in the apparatus of asylum therapy is what could be called the management or organization of needs. Psychiatric power ensures the advance of reality, the hold of reality on madness, through the management of needs, and even through the emergence of new needs, through the creation, maintenance and renewal of needs... Basically it involves establishing the patient in a carefully maintained state of deprivation: the patient’s existence must be kept just below a certain average level. 49

One of the most basic and consistently drilled managements of needs comes in the form of shining boots. The appearance of the boots is to be scuff free and shiny at all times in garrison and as much as possible in the field. 50 If the boots are not adequately shined, as per usual, the soldier will more than likely be punished; I am not sure how many pushups I was subjugated to throughout my time in the military due to ‘not shiny enough boots,’ but it was definitely a lot. Throughout basic training and the rest of my time in the military, countless hours were spent shining boots. While the boots are the focal point for this entrained action, the whole uniform is to be honored, which is thus creating a need within the reorganization of needs within this process of subjectification. There should be no wrinkles, all pockets should be buttoned, the beret should be properly formed, etc. As stated in the Soldier’s Blue Book:

Personal appearance is important—it demonstrates the pride and self-discipline you feel as a Soldier in the U.S. Army. Being neat and

50 Since my departure from the military they have switched to a tan suede boot that does not require shining, but the shining of boots serves as a good example of just one way in which soldiers needs are managed.
well groomed contributes to the esprit in your unit. Your uniform should fit well and be clean, serviceable, and pressed as necessary.  

This passage highlights that the Army sees a fluid exchange between the individual and the group, wherein they are affective upon each other. Personal appearance becomes a statement of one's feelings and emotions towards the military and the country. The soldier who is “ate up” or in other words, looks like a slob, shows a lack of respect for his/her self, the uniform, and for the military. It is thought that it affects the morale of the unit, which then becomes a reflection upon the leadership.

Probably one of the most somatic aspects of the management of needs comes by way of nutrition, and is also alluded to as a tactic by Foucault as meals are targets of making the subject become more docile. This is done in a number of ways and begins in basic training. All meals are set at specific times, with a specific amount of time to consume each meal. Soldiers who are larger are regulated as to what they can eat, while soldiers who are under weight are forced to eat more than they normally would. This is to put soldiers at an “ideal” weight, but in reality it is a transformation of the body into a productive subject aimed at being able to complete the tasks the military requires. Soldiers who are overweight are highly scrutinized and face punishment as extreme as expulsion from the military, but that is only for those who cannot achieve an ideal weight through rigorous, often forced, exercise. I was one of these soldiers, as I have always been heftier than most people.

---

52 Foucault et al., *Psychiatric power*. Pg 154.
I had entered the Army weighing 250 pounds, and by the time I left basic training I weighed 180 pounds as the result of many extra miles of running, additional push-ups, sit-ups, food being taken off my plate at dinner, and other forms of punishment. At times it felt like punishment, other times it fueled me to lose more weight and become stronger. My body had changed and I no longer looked like an offensive lineman in football, but now looked more like a running back or a linebacker, or more to the point, like an “ideal” soldier. When I went home on hometown recruiting in the following month, my transformation inspired two of my female friends to join the Army. At the time this seemed cool, but I later regretted it, since they would have very difficult experiences in the military; though I know they do not regret their choice to join. Either way, I was transformed into a new man, I was a soldier, and I was a 19D Calvary Scout.

**Transitions**

After graduation I went home, as mentioned, to do two weeks of hometown recruiting. After hometown recruiting, and a bureaucratic battle with the army, I finally arrived at my unit in Vilseck, Germany, where Garett and Jeff were waiting. Having just finished basic training “a new man,” my previous ideals of conservatism were further solidified. Garett and Jeff on the other hand were both fairly liberal going into the process, and while they too had been transformed physically, they maintained their liberal ideals; but even though we had different political ideologies, we were much closer after our experience in basic training because we were able to constantly give one another mental and emotional support.
Within the coming months we would spend much time traveling around Europe, experiencing the world and soaking in new cultures. Many of our friends in the platoon would stay close to base as it provided everything an American craves: bars, bowling alleys, movie theaters, and restaurants. We were constantly told about the dangers of going off base and told to stay within a 50-mile radius of base. This meant that soldiers could go as far as Nuremberg, but no farther without written consent. However, having each other as pillars of support emboldened us to go where we pleased. Many of our fellow soldiers expressed their fear of going too far, especially without permission, but we felt that one of the main reasons we had joined was to see Europe, and we did. We often tried to stay away from places that soldiers went, because all too often that would be the center of trouble as fights often broke out due to drunken soldiers.

Our refuge came from a small Irish Pub in Nuremberg called PJ O’Shea’s. We became family with the staff, sometimes spending the night at different staff members’ homes. We seemed to be experiencing Germany and Europe very differently than our compatriots, as we became embedded within the German economy, and made many friends from all across the world. It was this time that probably softened my ideals of American exceptionalism, but it would all be shattered upon our first deployment to Kosovo. We trained to be the battalion’s Quick Reaction Force, and in September of 2002 we were sent to a small town near the Macedonian border called Vitina, Kosovo.

The training leading up to our deployment consisted of preparing for mortar attacks and sniper attacks. We were to be prepared for everything, and were told
the worst; so on our first day in sector, when going on a “ride along” with the unit we were relieving, I was shocked when a little girl came up to the Humvee and threw flowers at the window. Immediately the sergeant on my truck yelled at me and said, “that’s why we keep our windows up, for all we know that could’ve been a grenade and we would all be dead.” I wasn’t sure how to react; a part of me was fearful that this place was as violent as the sergeant made it seem, another part of me was angry because what was said made no sense since it was a little girl. She couldn’t be the enemy, but it is this type of rhetoric that had become so common in the military.

Over the next six months I would be assigned to drive the platoon sergeant around, Sergeant First Class David Jenkins, or Sgt. J. Our time driving around Kosovo together changed me in ways I hadn’t thought possible. Sgt. J was a black man from “Hot-lanta, Georgia!” And this was my most intimate experience with a black man as we spent thousands of hours together. I grew to not only respect him but I also looked up to him as a sort of father figure. All my preconceived notions of race were thrown out the window as the stereotypes I had once grown up with, believing as facts, were dispelled as things that would infuriate me when I heard them. To this day I still try to track down Sgt. J, and hope to someday reconnect with him and tell him how much he meant to me, as well as his contribution to my transformation into the person I am today. I would later work to understand racial politics, social justice, and white privilege, which might never have happened had I not spent so much time with Sgt. J. While the army isn’t trying to make people more liberal, it does need for soldiers to work together across racial boundaries with minimal
friction. So the military’s production of subjectivity can take unpredictable turns, as some young white men recalibrate racism in system-challenging ways as evidenced here.

Another thing that made me question my identities that I had grown up with came that winter as it was especially cold and there were multiple blizzards that brought a lot of snow. While on patrol one day I noticed that none of the houses in the area had windows. This thought blew my mind, as I could not imagine living in this climate, in a house with no windows. Having grown up in Colorado, I knew about the cold, but everybody I knew lived in a house with windows. To stay warm people had trash barrels in these windowless concrete homes. To add injury to insult, one of our tasks was to stop smugglers, not smugglers of drugs or weapons mind you, but rather smugglers of wood. This left an awful taste in my mouth, and made me question my privileges as an American.

While we sat in Kosovo, George W. Bush and company ramped up for a war in Iraq. With my walls of my ideologies falling, I didn't know what to believe anymore. I stayed up at night watching the news, listening to Colin Powell’s speeches to NATO, and I even went as far as printing out the transcripts of different speeches as to why we were being told we were going to war with Iraq. If these reasons held up, then it seemed justified, but as time went on the justifications for why we were going to Iraq fell as did my conservative leanings as I followed my friends and became more and more liberal. This caused a lot of personal tension as I slowly lost faith in our cause, which eventually made me not only angry for being
sent to Iraq, but also I felt betrayed by my government for sending me to a war that seemed to be justified by lies.

Upon our return from Kosovo we were told we would be deploying to Iraq within 6 months, and we promptly returned to training. This time we had much more intense weapon and reaction training. As Cavalry Scouts we were constantly at different firing ranges learning different weapon systems throughout our time in the military. My own personal weapon throughout my time was an M4A1 semi-automatic carbine rifle. While I was a driver, my rifle had an M203 grenade launcher attached to it, but once I became a gunner this was removed. When I was a gunner I served on two primary weapon systems, the 50-caliber machine gun, and the MK 19 automatic grenade launcher. Both weapons were mounted to the tops of our Humvees, and I was considered an expert marksman with both weapon systems. When training with our personal weapons, the silhouettes we fired at were pop-ups at various ranges, which resembled human targets. We would fire from a standing position and lying in the prone position. When firing a crew-served weapon such as the 50 cal. or the MK19, we would fire at vehicle silhouettes. I fired at numerous different firing ranges, and it was always exhilarating to shoot those weapons. The adrenaline rush of shooting automatic weapons is amazing, as I would fire and see things destroyed before my eyes. The shooting of targets that resemble actual bodies and vehicles, as Proetvi highlights, raises the probability that soldiers will fire upon real targets when faced with a threat, because the protoempathic identification processes have been bypassed and killing an enemy becomes no
different than killing a target.\textsuperscript{54} Furthermore, Michael Shapiro explains that these depersonalized targets creates an ambiguity of the target so that when and if a non-combatant is killed there is less of a legal and ethical impact for those who not only pulled the trigger but also for those who ordered the killing.\textsuperscript{55} Therefore, if a person shot an innocent civilian, the casualty can be brushed off as collateral damage or forgotten as a silhouette.

Protevi also points out that the use of these automatic weapons is to effectively kill through the use of technology at a distance, because it is more effective and the soldier will be more likely to pull the trigger, since the distance keeps them from being able to identify with the subject.\textsuperscript{56} The military does not label or think of it in this way but rather conceives of the technologies as “combat multipliers,” whereas the better our technology and the farther away we can kill from, the fewer soldiers it will take to neutralize a greater number of their soldiers. It is in this sense that a sterilization of the terms has shifted the most when examining the act of killing, which has a double effect, one on the soldiers, the other on society in general as the act of killing then sounds not as morally reprehensible.

Another form of target practice we frequently prepared for was room-clearing tactics. While in Germany, preparing to go to Iraq, our platoon did a full day training with a Navy Seals unit on room-clearing, which we would repetitively practice for the next few months. We started doing room-clearing tactics with no ammo, then with blank bullets, and finally with live ammo. This repetition helped to

\textsuperscript{54} Protevi, \textit{Political Affect}. Pg. 147.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid. 151.
create a muscle memory, or as Protevi puts it, “direct access of the military machine to reflexes embedded in the spinal cord of the soldier—as clear an instance of political physiology as one can imagine.”\textsuperscript{57} This training would prove useful in Iraq as our platoon was tasked with a number of house raids, and we were able to safely clear rooms with no casualties on any side, though while there was no deaths, there was definitely physical, mental, and emotional casualties. We were good at what we did, which was quick, efficient, and terrifying. I have no idea how many people we frightened, made cry, slammed on the ground, or butt-stroked with our rifles. We tore apart families as we often took the males away for questioning, not knowing when they would return. It was all a very traumatic experience for those who were our targets, often based on poor intelligence.

The last form of reflex training we conducted before leaving for Iraq was a month long training exercise in Hohenfels, Germany. Hohenfels, an ex-German Army training site, is an expansive area where brigades can hold training exercises that have a “home” brigade that plays as Oppositional Forces (OPFOR). Throughout the month numerous live-action scenarios are played out, all while wearing MILES gear (Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System). The MILES gear consisted of a laser system attached to our weapons that would fire if we fired (when we fired we were using blanks so it still sounded like we were firing an actual bullet), and receiving sensors that we put on our vehicles and our bodies so if someone fired at us we would know we were hit by the “enemy’s” fire. With each platoon there was a referee who would tell us the extent of the wounds if someone shot at us and it hit

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid. 155.
the receiving sensors, and we then had to react accordingly. This simulation is meant to try and match the intensity of real combat situations, as local actors are brought in to act as civilians, small cities are erected and given names of towns we will be deployed to, and past events are recreated.

At the time, though, it felt like an extreme waste of time to me, partially because it was snowing most the time we were there so most of us seemed more concerned with staying warm; and secondly, knowing that none of it was real when we would soon be facing the real thing made it seem less glamorous. However, the simulation would often spark the adrenaline that I would face in the combat zone—even if it was only a fraction of the intensity; even an unconvincing practice produced a version of the desired militarized affect. The month before we left was nerve racking as we packed up all of our equipment and had a constant ear on the happenings in what would become our AO (Area of Operation). At the time I had thought that there was a chance that I would be getting out of the military in October, since my 3 years would be up in the middle of our deployment, but all hopes were lost when we were told we were being put on a stop-loss that would last until 3 months after our deployment. When I heard the news it was like somebody had kicked me in the stomach. Not only was I being sent to a war that I no longer believed in, but I would be stuck there after I was supposed to get out. It looked like the needs of the Army had won out and I was on the receiving end of what we called the “big green weinie.”
**Iraq**

Our mission in Iraq was to be somewhat similar to the operations we had conducted in Kosovo for nine months, just six months prior to this deployment. We were told that we would be primarily the Battalion’s Quick Reaction Force (QRF), but would also be tasked with the Brigade’s QRF duties as well. This task would be split up into three sections, two sections from our Scout platoon, one from the Battalion’s Mortar platoon. Each day, one of the sections would be on call for 24 hours, and it would then rotate to the next section. When on call, we would have to be prepared to leave the base within 5 minutes and get to any situation to respond to IED’s (Improvised Explosive Devices), ambushed convoys, mortar attacks, etc. On days off, we were tasked with regular patrol missions, convoy escort missions, house raids, and a number of other operations. When we were not out on mission we would have to do maintenance on our vehicles. So needless to say, there was little to no personal downtime for my platoon, making our year there a constant adrenaline high that was very physically, mentally, and emotionally strenuous, which has contributed to my own Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In relation to PTSD, Protevi states, “many of the problems have to do with the sustained high cortisol levels and the high endorphin-release thresholds of the traumatized body. In other words, PTSD is at least as much physiological as it is psychological disturbance, though neither nor the other exclusively.”\(^58\) This has played out in a number of ways throughout the years; I will now try to discuss some of the events and situations that led to the

\(^{58}\) Ibid. 156.
different elements of my PTSD and discuss my symptoms in general, which in turn show the affective somatic relationship between the individual body and war.

Many of our missions were conducted at night: raids, counter-mortar operations, patrols, over-watch operations, etc. At least half of our encounters when we were fired upon occurred at night. This has had a lasting affect on me, which is one of my symptoms of my PTSD. To this day, my anxiety level is usually higher at night, especially while driving. Whether walking or driving, I usually feel like someone is following me. The darker and more quiet it is, the more I am at unrest.

Years after exiting the military, I was riding my motorcycle the day before the 4th of July, when a loud “BOOM” went off, followed by a number of small “pops.” It sounded as if an IED went off followed by small arms fire. I nearly drove my motorcycle off the road. I pulled over and cried for nearly 2 hours. Protevi links this crying to a “reprogramming... joy/endorphin triggers, which are set at a very high level due to the intensity of battle.”59 It may have worked in some sense, because since this situation my sensitivity to fireworks has lessened over the years to a level where it does not really bother nor surprise me anymore. However, my anxiety levels and vigilance at night are still a problem, as I am often hyperaware of my surroundings.

Another source of anxiety for me comes when I am driving slowly. When driving, I usually try to drive as quickly as possible, without getting a ticket. I attribute this to two things that stem from my time in Iraq. The first is the fact that we had to drive as fast as possible to avoid IED’s, which hit us frequently in Iraq;

59 Ibid. 155.
however, because we drove so fast, we usually came out of the situation unscathed. The second is when we were assigned movement to contact missions or, as we liked to call it “Trolling for Fire” missions. Whenever a particular road or stretch of highway became areas of high contact, we were sent out to drive slowly up and down that area to try and draw fire. After the first few times of this, it became ineffective as the Iraqis realized what we were doing, which then proved dangerous for us, as we became regular targets of IED’s. Every few months, the command would make us do this, because they thought it might be effective since we did kill some Iraqi’s the first couple of times, but it never was.

With only a few months left in our deployment, my section was on QRF duty and at around 9 am we were spun up and told to be on stand-by as the city of Ba’qubah was being overrun by insurgents. While this may sound fairly exciting or dangerous, it just seemed like another day to us, as it seemed that we had been constantly on mission and in danger since we had arrived. We got into our trucks and moved to the front gate. It seemed very chaotic as we waited to get our orders as to what the commander wanted us to do. Our Platoon Leader (PL) came out and told us the situation. We were to get into the city square and secure the location until the areas that were overrun could be retaken. In some ways I was excited because it seemed like this was a legitimate mission to get rid of some actual bad guys, but it also carried a bit of fear since we could hear the chaos from the radio and the booms of explosions outside the wire. As we approached the edge of the city a tank battalion was parked in the middle of the road blocking our entry. We contacted their PL who told us that there was an IED ahead and said that we
shouldn’t proceed until it was cleared. While waiting for them to clear the IED, we started to take automatic fire from a nearby building. The gunner in front of me, Holmes, opened fire with his 50 cal. on a nearby building that subsequently was the local hospital. This angered me at the time because nobody was clear as to where the fire was coming from at that point, but Holmes opened up fire anyways. The fire continued for what felt like an eternity, as time seemed to slow down. We took more small arms fire that I could hear pass over my head and then an RPG was fired and exploded near the tank, which caused all of us to open fire to the southwest as the sun was high overhead. A few minutes later the fire stopped. We waited for about 10 minutes; at that point the tankers disarmed the IED by shooting at it and blowing it up. We regularly used this tactic to disarm IED's and every time it seemed gratifying to me.

We slowly crept towards the city center, leaving behind the tankers that were cordoning off the city. The city, a heavily populated and normally a very active city, was like a ghost town. We would go one block and stop and wait for a minute or two. My truck was in the rear of the convoy so my sector of fire was anything behind us, and about half way to the city center we took fire from the west. We stopped as the drivers and dismounts got out of the vehicle to cover to our east as we turned our crew served weapons to the west. Down an alley I saw a man in black running closer towards us with an AK-47; I opened fire with my MK19 and saw the man fall from the blast. I could only see half of the man’s body as the other half was hidden by a building, but he lay there without movement. It was a strange mix of emotions seeing the body of someone I just killed at about 30 yards. My adrenaline was
pumping, as there was fear, excitement, satisfaction, anger, sadness, and joy all at once. The fear was for my own life and my friends, excitement and satisfaction from doing exactly what I was trained to do, anger for having to be there and from these people attacking us, sadness for having taken a life, and joy for having come out alive at the moment. The negative feelings would not become prominent until later as I reflected upon the moment, but they seemed to be there still as I fought to survive.

My hands were shaking as we moved on to the city center, but that would prove to be the last real contact we received for the rest of the day. It was hours until our relief came, and as time went on in the day people slowly started coming out of their houses. Few dared to cross the main road that we were sitting at, and then a car came out on the road and started coming towards us. I asked my Truck Commander (TC) if I should open fire, and he approved. I then told him that I was going to fire a warning shot with my MK19 first. Shooting a warning shot with an MK19 is a difficult task as it is an area weapon that has a 15-meter blast radius, but I was confident in my ability. I shot and it landed just outside of the blast radius directly in front of the oncoming vehicle, which caused the car to make a 90-degree turn onto a side road. Myself and the few soldiers that were standing there watching this all burst into loud laughter as none of us had ever seen a car turn so quickly and sharply. It was shortly after this that our relief would come and we would return to base.

It was upon our return and as I was lying in my bunk that the guilt would begin to flood my mind, which is another aspect of the PTSD that I live with today.
Protevi links this to the protoempathic identification that was not completely bypassed by the neural conditioning that I had received throughout my time in the military. The guilt that I felt was a mixture of thoughts and feelings. First and foremost was wondering about who this man was that I killed earlier in the day, did he have a family, and thinking that he would never see them again. Secondly, I was angry that I was put into that situation, as I was supposed to be out of the military a month earlier, but because of our deployment I was stop-lossed. I wanted to throw down my weapon and tell my command to “Fuck off,” “do what you will,” “take me to jail.” Though I knew this would do nothing and I knew that I would feel like I was abandoning my brothers in arms who had my back, I knew I had to be there for them. Lastly, was the emotional drain of being in an intense situation for nearly 12 hours; I was mentally, emotionally, and physically drained. I lay on my bunk, unable to sleep, feeling sick to my stomach, shaking and crying. For years after my deployment, I would dream of this day, and wake up in a sweat. Furthermore, one of the side effects that would come from my PTSD would be my weak early morning stomach, as I would often vomit up my breakfast if I walked too quickly in the morning. It still happens occasionally, but only when I am stressed.

These examples, which all come in the form of PTSD, are an excess of war and docility. The life of a person within the military is filled with this disciplinary training upon the body, which is affectively physiological and psychological, in a sense this is masculinizing, feminizing, and infantilizing the soldier all in one. This is done in order to maintain the ability to do the job required of a soldier, which is

---

60 Ibid. 155-157.
often to kill but only to kill those whom they are told to kill and when they are told to kill. Upon leaving the military, the neurons reroute and the soldier is forced to face those memories without the blanket of disciplinary thinking that shields the morality of warfare and maintains the distinct boundaries of their identity. Soldiers are expected to be docile in relation to their chain-of-command and when a soldier is traumatized by war that docility becomes dislodged and the excesses of masculinity come through if not properly maintained, controlled, and regulated. The docility that soldiers are trained to be, runs counter to the ideal of masculinity, since docility is often thought to be a feminine trait. The disciplinary lifestyle within the military can sometimes not be enough to maintain the “military bearing” as soldiers sometimes crack, and the boundaries of reality began to blur, which is why you see some soldiers crack while still in the military. This leads to incidents that vary in intensity, from subtle problems like driving erratically or not socializing well outside of the military, to more intense problems like domestic violence or murder, which have become all too common on and around military bases across the country.

**Transitions II**

We had left on Valentines Day in 2004 and returned on Valentines Day 2005. It seems that the irony of this was not lost on the military, as the day that was meant for love was transformed into fear, but was again transformed back into a day of rejoicing as we returned to celebrate with our loved ones. While there was no sweetheart waiting for me upon my return, I was deeply looking forward to seeing my friends at P.J. O'Shea’s, which was a double-edged sword because I knew the
drunkenness that would ensue, but this too was something I was looking forward to.

The next three months would be spent in some stage of non-sobriety, as I fought to forget the past year. Our base butted up against a firing range, so at night I would often hear the booms of tanks, which would cause me to jump out of bed in a panic as I searched for my weapon that was no longer constantly by my side.

Two weeks after we had returned we were given a month leave, and I decided that I would go on a trip by myself. I bought a Euro Rail pass and headed north. While crossing a bridge into Sweden, listening to my mp3 player, Pink Floyd came on, *The Gunner’s Dream*. A lot of the music on my mp3 player I had not heard in a long time, and as I listened to this song I was taken into the memories of the past year, as the sound of bombs, helicopters, and bullets resonate throughout the song. As the song progressed, waves of emotions washed over me, from disgust when he says, “You never hear their standard issue kicking in your door,” to an immense sadness when he sings, “And no one kills the children anymore.”61 As the tears streamed down my face a searing anger rose up within. I wanted to hurt someone, not an innocent random person, but whoever was responsible for causing me this pain. I wanted to fight, but I had no idea as to where to point my rage. My time in Iraq had been an injustice and I felt a need to correct this injustice. I wasn’t sure how I would do this, but it was at this point that I was determined to do something. The song still acts as an emotional trigger for me, as I still get emotional whenever I hear it; even as I write this my eyes become teary.

The rest of the trip was pure debauchery, as I was drunk nearly every day and every night, also often taking mushrooms or snorting cocaine, sleeping with random women, all in an attempt to numb those feelings and emotions, while not caring about the consequences. While I was determined to make some sort of change, I could not face those memories yet. It wouldn’t be until I returned to Germany weeks later that I would attempt to address some of this anger as I went to see an independent counselor. While the counselor helped, it would be years before I would consider myself at some point of normalcy—if there is such a thing—but what he taught me was that speaking about my experience made me feel better. Being able to tell my story in a way was liberating and healing, as it was an opportunity to release much of the hate, anger and fear that seemed to be strangling me from within.

I got out of the military on May 31st, 2005, and was flown back to Denver, Colorado. It was one of the best feelings I had ever had, as it felt as if a huge boulder had been removed from my back. But my return had not brought all good news as I soon learned that my Grandma was not doing well. The day after my 25th birthday, a week and a half after I had returned, she died. I was very close to her throughout my life, but for some reason I was completely devoid of all emotion. While everyone around me was profusely sad, I could not sympathize at the time with their pain; it seemed that they were dealing with a small cut, while I was facing the Grand Canyon. I realize now not only how selfish this was, but how I was attempting to deal with my emotions in a very unhealthy way, as drugs and alcohol filled much of my time.
Garett and Jeff got out of the military on the same day as I did, and while Jeff went to Bulgaria to spend time with his future wife, Garett headed to Washington DC. He too seemed bent on creating change as he teamed up with Vietnam veteran, activist, and Nobel Peace Prize winner Bobby Muller. Garett would become one of the “poster boys” for the veteran peace movement as he worked with the organizations Vietnam Veterans of America, and Iraq Veterans Against the War. Garett was the first active duty soldier to become a member of IVAW, and upon our return from the military, he encouraged Jeff and I to join, which we did. IVAW became an outlet for me to release my anger in positive ways, from protests, to hanging out and venting with like-minded individuals who were just as pissed off as me. It was therapeutic. It also hooked me into a number of other healing organizations such as Vets for Vets (a peer counseling group) and the Warrior Writers project (which taught us to make poetry and art with our experiences, also the focus of Chapter 7).

While IVAW had helped me before—and is the focus of the next chapter—I still felt like something was missing. Late one night while lying on my mom’s couch, flipping through the channels, I stopped on a PBS special highlighting the classical sociologists; the episode that was currently on was examining Karl Marx. I became entranced, as everything that was being said seemed to make sense. So much so, the next day I went to the local library and checked out Das Kapital. The next night, the show highlighted Max Weber, and the next night Durkheim. I fell in love with Sociology, and decided that I would go back to school and study both Political Science and Sociology in order to best understand my experience. The transition
into school was tough, especially interactions with the students who were fresh out of high school, who seemed to know nothing, worry about the dumbest stuff, and complain about everything. Though again, this was my selfishness, as I tried to quantify my pain.

I kept myself as busy as possible, in school activities, homework, and activism, as these helped me to avoid the mental and emotional pain I was experiencing. It took close to three years for my VA claim to finally be processed, so I found my own ways to cope with the stress and PTSD. Even after I was receiving VA benefits, I used my own means of coping since I did not like the antidepressants that they tried to keep me on, as they made me feel number than I already felt, which felt disturbing to me. I often returned to drugs and alcohol, but I had gotten over my dependency upon them and my constant need to escape. My activism branched out from war-related issues, to social justice issues, as I began to understand more about race, class, gender, and sexuality. I began to see the connections between these issues and militarism and realized that it was a multifaceted front that I must fight. It was my original intention to go to law school and try to fight that way, but as fate would have it, I’m horrible at standardized tests and did not do well on the LSAT. One of my professors at the time had other plans as he invited me to apply for the Ethnic Studies graduate program. The same professor, Eric Ishiwata, would encourage me to get my PhD where he did, in the Political Science department at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa. Following his footsteps, I now seek to be a professor, and I too hope to be “infectious” with my thought, like he once told me was his goal. I hope to teach a new generation of the dangers of militarism, racism, class inequity,
sexism, and masculinity. I fight to make a difference in every person I meet, and all the while atone for the wrongs I have perpetuated.

**Moving forward**

So what can be drawn from this story? Not only is the violent process of militarization highlighted, but the ways in which it is embedded with a racist, sexist, hyper-masculine discourse that perpetuates certain hierarchies of power. It is a testament to the atrocities of war and the ways in which war affects soldiers. It examines the biopolitical excesses of war, as veterans must fight to remake sense with little to no help or understanding. But most importantly, it is my story, my truth, and hopefully an insightful lesson to you the reader as a call to arms, or a call to fight injustice with me.

The story places me within my larger project of examining veteran activism, exploring the new politics that is arising from their experiences, and mapping violence in peace. This is not a project of self-affirmation, as I too got out of the military and became a social justice advocate, but rather this is a project about a body politic of veterans discourse that says something more significant about hegemony and neoliberalism. The following chapters will explore my travels around the country, as I sought out veterans who considered themselves social justice advocates. I met a wide range of people, all dedicated to their service in the military and all passionate to their current activism. I will explore the discourse of American
culture around many of these issues, and what these veterans are doing to try and influence and shape this discourse.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{62} John Protevi’s work builds upon many great feminist works like Cynthia Enloe and Carol Cohen, however for my work Protevi’s construction of the affect of militarization is key to my understanding of how these processes work.
CHAPTER 2: FORGED IN WAR, BATTLING FOR PEACE

A soulja has put down their rifles and has picked up their souls.
Instead of bullets, a soulja has their words.
Instead of Dogma, a soulja listens to their heart.
Instead of secret codes, a soulja reflects their feelings and their thoughts.
Instead of stealing land, a soulja expands their intellect.
Instead of taking aim, a soulja takes reason.
Instead of building fortifications that divide, a soulja grows with unity for all humankind.63

-Hart Viges (Iraq War Veteran)

The US government’s Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) is said to be aimed at making the world safe for democracy. It has instead perpetuated a number of other problems including violations of human rights, environmental degradation, racism, and sexism, thus bringing more violence, in the name of security. The activist organization, Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) is comprised of military veterans who have fought in the GWOT. IVAW seeks to resist the continuous war that has been taking place since 9/11, through a number of tactics, i.e.: going AWOL, occupying public spaces, and conducting war reenactments. One of the ways in which resistance is made is through the act of what Michel Foucault calls parrhēsia. This translates as “frankness,” or “telling all,” but Foucault expands this definition to encompass a technique whereby a “moral attitude or ethos,” creates an indisputable truth, “...so that at a given moment the person whom is speaking finds himself in a situation in which he no longer needs the other’s discourse.”64 The truth that is exercised through parrhēsia acts as “a weapon to be used for a partisan victory,” as

64 Foucault, The Hermeneutics of the Subject.
it ‘deciphers the discourse that perpetuates the permanent presence of war in society.’

A good example of *parrhēsia* (that will be the focus of the second half of this chapter) is a series of testimonies by IVAW in 2008, called the Winter Soldier Project. In these testimonies, veterans of war revealed the atrocities they had witnessed and participated in while on active duty. The veterans’ acts of *parrhēsia* worked to counter the narrative and effects of the government’s “war on terror” by exposing the racism, sexism, lack of care for life, environmental degradation, and fiscal irresponsibility. This chapter will first provide a historical background of IVAW, as well as exploring my personal experiences as a member, and then examine the concept of *parrhēsia* as performed by IVAW members at Winter Soldier and in other forums. Not only are these acts a form of resistance, but they also provide for an alternative discourse to the current GWOT literature and a form of healing for the mental and emotional trauma caused by war.

**Iraq Veterans Against the War**

IVAW is rooted in the activist group Veterans For Peace (VFP), and was modeled after the similarly named, Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). At the 2004 VFP annual convention, a group of recently returned veterans of the Iraq War participated in a panel. Participants Kelly Dougherty, Michael Hoffman, Alex Rybov, Isaiah Pallos, Diana Morrison, Tim Goodrich, and Jimmy Massey came together to

---

65 Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*. Pg 270.
66 For a more normative, but excellent, social movements analysis of IVAW see Lisa Leitz’s, *Fighting for Peace*.
67 Much of the following information is drawn from a number of sources including my personal experience as a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War. I was a participant in many of the activities and events discussed.
start IVAW on July 24, 2004. I first heard of IVAW in the spring of 2005 when Garett decided to join the group, becoming the first active-duty member of IVAW. While still in Iraq, we had blogged about our experiences there with a critical voice. We were likely some of the first to do so, but I decided to wait until we exited the military to join IVAW. I waited because we had run into some problems with our chain of command while blogging and I didn’t want to cause more disruption than I already had. Garett, however, was determined to rock the boat as much as possible.

The mission statement of IVAW set forth three principles/goals: “An immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all occupying forces from Iraq; Health care and other benefits for all veterans and service members; [and] Reparations to the Iraqi people.” The group first received national attention in 2005, as veterans of IVAW joined the activist Cindy Sheehan, mother of a soldier who died in Iraq. Garett and Jeff attended with other IVAW members helping to provide security and solidarity with Sheehan outside President Bush’s vacation home in Crawford, Texas. The group followed with a bus tour called, “Bring Them Home Now,” making stops at military bases and college campuses across the country, hoping to bring the realities of war to those who had not experienced it, and showing those who had that it is possible to resist.

---

69 Jamail, The Will to Resist. Pg 172.
In 2006, the first official chapter of IVAW formed in Colorado Springs, CO, and the national office was established in Philadelphia, PA. This was convenient for me as I was just a two-hour drive north, in Fort Collins, CO; Jeff was living in Colorado Springs and Garett often visited his mother who also lived there, so I drove down for many of those first meetings. While 2006 was fairly quiet for IVAW, the organization was focused on building up its foundations and membership; by the end of the year there were 10 chapters across the country. In 2007 IVAW tripled its chapters—31 by year’s end—and continued to participate in leading actions, like the April 17th “March on the Pentagon” which drew tens of thousands of protestors. At the time, I was in Washington D.C. at the time, and as we marched from nearby the Vietnam War Memorial to the Pentagon, anti-war chants rang through the air, which was a very powerful experience for everyone involved. Garett was one of the march leaders, as well as one of the main speakers. I realized then that he had become one of the “poster boys” of the antiwar movement. This was very inspiring to me, but it also gave me a reason to make fun of him.

In the following months IVAW conducted what it called “Operation First Casualty,” citing that, “the first casualty of war, is the truth.” Operation First Casualty is a guerrilla street theater simulating the tactics used by soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. VVAW had done the same thing in the ‘60s, mimicking combat

73 Ibid.
75 This was a slogan that the IVAW strategy team came up with.
patrols through towns while carrying rubber rifles. IVAW—like VVAW before it—made street theater a regular tactic, repeating the simulations at events all across the country. The first time I participated in an Operation First Casualty event, I found it very charging. We started early in the morning, making sure everyone was on the same page. We brought in a number of local activists to play the part of the Iraqis and Afghans. Meanwhile, we were dressed in our own desert combat uniforms to play the role of the soldiers. We discussed carrying rubber rifles like the ones used by VVAW decades before, but we decided against it for fear that the police may mistake them for real rifles and may shoot one of us. Instead, we used our hands, miming where the rifles would be held. Even though we were not wearing the full combat load carried by active-combat soldiers, it was still physically demanding as the day drew on and the temperature rose. Our route started at the Colorado Capitol Building, winding down the always-busy 16th Street Mall, then cutting over to the Denver Military Enlistment Processing Station (MEPS) where we held a press conference highlighting the lies that were told to us by recruiters when we had enlisted into the military. Afterwards, we worked our way back to the Capitol Building, ending in Veterans Park. The actual operation was fairly simple; we walked in a staggered formation as we did in the military during combat patrols. The activists who were playing the part of “the enemy” walked ahead of us, chanting slogans like, “U.S. go home.” We then approached the individuals who seemed to be leading the chants, physically extracted them from the larger group along with anyone else who resisted, threw them on the ground, put a sandbag over their

dyn/content/video/2007/03/19/VI2007031901446.html.; It should be noted that Operation First Casualty was a recreation of VVAW events.
heads, and zip-tied their hands behind their back. While we were gentler with our actors than we had been with the Iraqi and Afghans we dealt with on our deployments, many of the actors left the day bruised and cut up. One of activists told me he was shocked by the brutality and violence, as we not only physically threw them down, but we often screamed obscenities at them. A veteran friend who had participated said that he felt like he was back in Iraq when he threw down one of the activists, as he felt the same hate, fear, and anger arise during the action. We conducted this simulation over and over throughout the day, handing out fliers explaining what was going on to curious onlookers. Some looked on in horror, (I remember an old lady crying); some kept on walking, indifferent to what was going on; a few folks stopped and thanked us for our message; one gentleman called us traitors as he walked off seemingly disgusted. It was a very powerful tactic, as it affects not only those to whom the message is targeted, but also the veterans and activists participating. For me, it was mentally, emotionally and physically draining, yet left me inspired and yearning to do more.

The action attempts to bring the war home, as it simulates the violence and brutality that occurs everyday in the war zone. The shock of this violence in spaces that would normally be spaces of peace is meant to trigger a visceral reaction that forces the onlooker to think about what it would be like to be in Iraq or Afghanistan. The fact that the actors are speaking English and look like a majority of the onlookers, forces the onlooker to sympathize with the actor who seeks to repel the soldiers who are not only out of place but also perpetuating violence upon the actor, who again looks just like those who are watching. This aims to create a space of
sympathy for those in Iraq and Afghanistan who are the targets of US violence. Furthermore, the action is a reflection of the violent reality of war that many may or may not have inclinations of, but are then forced to face these truths. Facing these truths pushes the onlooker to examine their relationship to the violence that is being perpetuated by their government, in their name. While many protests seek to raise awareness about particular issues, these guerrilla street theater tactics create an experience of violence in a non-violent way, which was an effective (and affective) tactic that IVAW would continue to use.

As John Protevi points out, encounters between two bodies—in this case the by-standing viewer and the veteran—can have a mutually empowering affect. Protevi calls this a somatic “affection,” where a psychological and physiological change can be felt. For the veteran it is the “flashback,” and the feeling of being back in Iraq or Afghanistan; for the activist it is the visceral feeling of sickness in the gut, or the tears formed from experiencing the horrors of what these veterans were recreating. Furthermore, this re-experiencing of the tactics of war, in a different context, works to shift the way that the veteran relates with their past experiences, thus lessening the trauma. This is similar to the way in which the military is using virtual reality simulators bringing soldiers back to the sites of their traumas, in order to reprogram the trauma they relive through their flashbacks. This tactic, of guerrilla street theater would become common during IVAW actions, as it proved effective on a number of different levels.

77 Protevi, *Political Affect*. Pg. 49.
For IVAW, 2008 became a pivotal year as it held three major events and grew in membership and chapters. By the end of the year, there were 57 active chapters, including the Fort Collins, CO chapter that I founded and served as president of. The first major event of 2008 for IVAW—held March 13th-16th at the National Labor College in Silver Spring, Maryland—was a recreation of a VVAW event, called Winter Soldier. Over 225 veterans, Iraqi civilians and military families testified at the event, which was broadcast live over the Internet. There were numerous panels, but the main themes included: Breakdown of the Military, Civilian Testimony, Corporate Pillaging, Cost of War at Home, Crisis in Veterans Healthcare, Future of GI Resistance, Gender and Sexuality, Legacy of GI Resistance, Racism and War, Response to DoD, and Rules of Engagement. While the 2008 Winter Soldier was largely ignored by the mainstream media, (similar to VVAW’s Winter Soldier) the progressive media picked it up in full force. The event provided a forum for healing for many veterans, making it a success. While I was also invited to speak, I wasn’t ready at that time to tell my story: I was still keeping it locked within, and not sure how to tell it or how to face the shame of the things that I had seen and done. I will return to Winter Soldier in the next section of this chapter.

The next two major events of 2008 revolved around the Democratic and Republican National Conventions. The planning for these events began early in 2008 on an IVAW camping retreat at The Crags outside of Colorado Springs. Members from the headquarters team in Philadelphia joined the Colorado chapter, to outline a

81 “Winter Soldier | Iraq Veterans Against the War.”
plan for coming months. There were many disagreements over tactics—as some of the more radical members wanted more drastic actions, while moderate members preferred more subtle tactics. In the end, a good compromise was found on most points of disagreement. The DNC in Denver proved quite fruitful for IVAW. They performed numerous guerilla street theaters, conducted a “tower guard” (a tactic in which a scaffolding is set up and veterans emulate a guard post, symbolically protecting their nation and honoring their oath of enlistment). In addition, IVAW organized a free concert for the public, featuring the bands Rage Against the Machine, MC8, the Flobots, and many others, all emceed by famous punk-rocker and Dead Kennedys front man, Jello Biafra. Rage Against the Machine had not played a show in many years, and many people were very excited to see the group play together. The energy from the show was amazing, and at the end of the show, Rage told the 10,000+ in attendance to turn to the streets to march from the Denver Coliseum to the Pepsi Center, where the DNC was taking place.

The march was the biggest activist event during the DNC, as the un-permitted march spanned over a mile long. There had been a lot of conflict leading up to the march between IVAW members who argued over the route we planned to use. Again, the more radical members called for something more drastic; they wanted to march on to I-70 & I-25, effectively shutting down the city of Denver, while others thought a more prudent route was in order. Since we did not have a permit to do the march, we feared the police reaction to the march. However, just hours before the concert began a Denver police officer called one of our coordinators to offer a compromise. They would help support a route from the Denver coliseum to the
Pepsi Center’s free speech zone.\footnote{A couple of interesting facets to this: first and foremost, we did not tell the police of any of our intentions about having a march, which made many of us who were close to the situation believe that there was either an informant within the Denver group or they were conducting surveillance on us, thus showing the threat we posed to the Denver police and the DNC. Second is the “Free Speech Zone,” which was used as a place to conduct protests, which is still being debated for its unconstitutionality by many groups including the ACLU.} We were instructed to disperse after standing at the free speech zone for an hour, if we did not they said that they would shoot tear gas into the crowd and make arrests. We did leave the free speech zone, but rather than disperse we just moved to another gate at the DNC where a standoff ensued between police and the veterans.

We were determined to come to some sort of resolution, and as I looked across towards the cops who faced us I saw a mix of emotions, from some police angry and ready to fight to one cop in tears, not wanting to fight recently returned veterans. Fearing a recreation of the 1968 DNC, representatives of the Obama campaign sent a delegate promising a meeting with IVAW. The message from IVAW to Obama included all three pillars of IVAW’s mission, but most pertinent was the withdrawal of troops from Iraq. The event was a success and members of the organization felt they had finally made some ground. Months later, I heard that IVAW was invited to meetings with Obama’s office, but the leadership of IVAW blew off the meetings. Many members, including myself, was discouraged and bitter in light of the progress we seemed to have made.

The RNC a few weeks later in Minneapolis, MN, was not as successful, as police cracked down on nearly all the protests and actions by IVAW members. Even the free Rage Against the Machine show was shut down by the local police force,
leaving the band to singing to the crowd through loudspeaker microphones. IVAW knew that the Republican Party would not back down from their support of the war. Instead IVAW focused on its second goal: providing care for veterans upon their return home. The shift in tactics was made evident by IVAW member Adam Kokesh’s infiltration of the RNC, where he disrupted Senator McCain’s acceptance speech holding a sign that stated, “McCAIN VOTES AGAINST VETS,” in order to highlight the senator’s poor voting record on veterans’ issues.83

With the election of Barack Obama as President, there seemed to be a shift in American political activism. Many who came out to protest against Bush stopped demonstrating as the promises of “hope” and “change” ruled the dominant discourse. Many thought that Obama would end the wars immediately, so the IVAW shifted gears to focus instead on Afghanistan. The first order of business for 2009 was to take a stance on the war in Afghanistan. There was a slight divide within IVAW, since some saw the reasons for going into Afghanistan as honorable, due to the events of 9/11. Though many others saw the Afghanistan war as a continuation of an imperial project that benefited no one but the war profiteers, warned against by so many throughout our history, from General Smedley Butler to President Eisenhower. Since its inception, IVAW accepted veterans from the Afghan war; the basic requirement for membership was to have served in any branch of the military, post 9/11. It was proposed that the same three tenets that were made towards the Iraq war would be carried over for the Afghan war: immediate withdrawal,

83 Jamail, The Will to Resist. Pg 212.
reparations to Afghans, and provision of care to soldiers upon their return. The proposal passed. With a more inclusive membership, and a broader vision, 2009 marked a new chapter of IVAW history. The organization continued to organize and hold small-scale events, like local Winter Soldiers as well as supporting GI coffeehouses and leading peace marches, however as mentioned before it was difficult organizing and getting civilian volunteers due to new presidential leadership.

In 2010 the growing number of suicides in the military prompted IVAW to roll out a new program called Operation Recovery. Armed with a growing knowledge about the traumatic effects of war, IVAW targeted military base commanders, as well as the broader community, in order to shed light on issues of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Military Sexual Trauma (MST), and combat stress. This spotlight on veterans’ health has been the primary focus of IVAW in the past two years, shedding light on the unsustainability of the wars and the serious deficiencies in the Veterans Administration that need to be addressed immediately.

There are three other major events that happened between 2012-2014 that have not had a major impact but are worth mentioning. These include the advocacy for the release of Bradley Manning (which I will return to later in this analysis), a

---

85 “History | Iraq Veterans Against the War.”
protest of the NATO summit in Chicago, and an alliance with the Occupy Wall Street movement (which is the focus of the next chapter). The protest of the NATO summit attempted to recreate the powerful effect of a VVAW event during the Vietnam War, when veterans lined up and threw their medals away, during a protest called Operation Dewey Canyon III. While the event was indeed powerful, and even healing for some veterans, it failed to capture the nation the way Operation Dewey Canyon III did, as the original became iconic to Vietnam War protests. Instead, the event drew the attention of the FBI, and crackdowns on the groups participating in the event followed, thus showing how the state feels threatened by these voices. In May 2014, IVAW released what they referred to as “The Ft. Hood Report,” a nearly 500-page document consisting of testimony of veterans and an analysis of the treatment of soldiers returning to Fort Hood. Much like Winter Soldier, the report aimed at exposing the ineptitude of the US military in dealing with the affects of the traumas of war. In the past year there have been no nationwide events besides their annual national conference, but IVAW remains active and focused upon advocating for veterans care, reparations for the Iraqi and Afghan people, and immediate withdrawal of all forces—including private contractors—from Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Winter Soldier, Parrhēsia, and Bradley Manning**

As described above, Winter Soldier took place March 13\textsuperscript{th}-16\textsuperscript{th} at the National Labor College in Silver Spring, Maryland. Over 225 veterans, Iraqi civilians, and military families testified to the horrors of war. Many of those stories contained accounts that could be defined as war crimes. Instead, the events have been labeled “collateral damage” and no actions have been taken to prevent such atrocities. The stories relate more than the expected tragedies that come with war; they expose the systemic nature of these crimes and the manner in which the soldiers committing these atrocities become victims of the violence as well. The veterans who testified at Winter Soldier told their truths and bared their hearts for all to see, relating things such as the killing of innocent civilians to the torture of “enemy combatants.”

These testimonies were much more than just emotional tales of war. By telling their stories as a tool to fight oppression, they performed what Michel Foucault called *parrhēsia*. Foucault devoted his last two series of lectures at the Collège de France to understanding this regime of truth-telling practices. While Foucault focused on the use of *parrhēsia* in ancient Greek philosophy, there are many parallels that can be drawn to the events of today which highlight the power and importance of Winter Soldier.

There are four primary attributes that are necessary for *parrhēsia* to be present within speech. First and foremost, it must be rooted within a democratic tradition that upholds this radical speech.\textsuperscript{90} The democratic tradition described by

Foucault is similar to our current focus upon the freedom of speech protected by the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment of the US Constitution. Foucault states that there is a reciprocal nature between *parrhēsia* and the democratic ideal of free speech—one cannot exist without the other. Because *parrhēsia* is intimately tied to our western democratic ideals, it is always political speech in nature—though not all-political speech qualifies as *parrhēsia*.91 This democratic tradition is one of the main reasons as to why many members within IVAW do what they do, as many still feel that they are defending their oaths of service and protecting the democracy they fought for overseas by speaking up at home. Furthermore, most all whistleblowers have used the argument that their actions are tied to this free speech that is meant to perpetuate democratic ideals, from Daniel Ellsberg who released the Pentagon Papers which undermined the Vietnam War, to current whistleblowers Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden who seek to undermine the current narrative for the Global War on Terrorism.92

The second attribute needed for *parrhēsia* to be present is for it to be “connected to a situation of injustice, and which, far from the right exercised by the powerful over his fellow citizens in order to guide them, is instead the cry of the powerless against someone who misuses his own strength.”93 While some may claim that the War on Terror is a necessary evil in order to provide a more secure world, the testimonies heard at the Winter Soldier suggest otherwise, as abuse of power created death, destruction, and constant violence upon an entire population

---

91 Ibid. 154.
93 Ibid.
of people. The truth that is exercised through parrhēsia acts as “a weapon to be used for a partisan victory,” as it “deciphers the discourse that perpetuates the permanent presence of war in society.”

So the testimonies of veterans who experienced and participated in acts of brutality undermine the narratives of war perpetuated by the government and they help to create a new regime of truth that combats the current Global War on Terror narrative. While the current narrative examines legalities of institutions such as Guantanamo Bay, the testimony of Army specialist Christopher Arendt, a guard at Guantanamo Bay, states:

The temperature of the interrogation room was maybe 10 or 20 degrees, with loud music playing. Sometimes that detainee would stay there for my entire 12-14 hour shift. He was shackled to the floor by his hands and his feet, with nothing to sit on, loud music playing, in the freezing cold...

Arendt went on to describe the tactics of Guantanamo Bay’s Quick Reaction Force, which used pepper spray and physical force regularly for any reason possible. These stories work to shift the narrative from the normative neoliberal legal forum and instead push it toward a moral human rights narrative. A moral human rights narrative maintains that governmental bodies can only be legitimate so long as they comply with moral standards of human dignity, thus torture is an act of delegitimization. This shift to a moral human rights narrative becomes the basis for other activist groups who seek to shut down military facilities like Guantanamo Bay.

Another example of this shift to a moral human rights narrative—that is similar to Foucault’s second attribute of parrhēsia—is seen in the veterans’ stories

---

94 Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*. Pg 270.
96 Ibid. 84.
about the “Rules of Engagement” (ROE). The current International Relations literature that looks at “rules of war,” examines the importance of an ROE: how ROE policies are formed, how they are disseminated, and how they are interpreted. However, they fall short in discussing the implementation and practice of ROEs.97 The testimonies provided at Winter Soldier show soldiers sometimes had no idea of what the established ROE was, how it was constantly shifting, or that it was frequently circumnavigated. As Corporal Sergio Kochergin testified:

The third day after we arrived, our company commander, our first lieutenant, and one of our NCOs all got killed by an IED. As time went on, and as the casualties grew in number, the Rules became lenient. Because we saw our friends getting blown up and killed everyday, we didn’t really question them. We were angry. We just wanted to do our job and come back.

We used “drop weapons.”... given to us by our chain of command in case we killed somebody without weapons so that we would not get into trouble. We would carry an AK-47 and if the person that was shot did not have the weapon, the AK-47 would be placed at his corpse. Then, when the unit would come back to the base they would turn it in to identify the shot man as an enemy combatant... After our own casualties mounted the Rules changed. We were allowed to engage anyone with a weapon without calling in and asking permission [to engage an enemy combatant]... Two months into our deployment our Rules were to engage any person with a heavy bag and a shovel at intersections or on the roads...98

It is from this testimony, as well as the other similar ones at Winter Soldier, that a narrative that challenges the standard literature on Rules of Engagement emerges. The common literature discusses the importance and legal nature of an ROE, however when a contradicting testimony is introduced into the narrative, the

importance of an ROE that changes at the whims and emotions of those who make it is clear. The constantly shifting ROE not only provides an alternative narrative to the security studies literature, but also chips away at the neoliberal rationalization/justification of security within the current Global War on Terrorism.

The third attribute of parrhēsia is that it is tied to “a game of ascendency.” In other words, there are differences in the power relations between those who are speaking and those who are receiving the message.99 It was within this “game of ascendency” that Foucault constantly shifted his gaze as he looked at the parrhēsia relationships between philosophers to kings, advisors to kings, philosophers to students, a war hero to a senate forum, and many others. Within these different power relations, Foucault found a number of “regimes of truth” that took on different truth-telling practices, which is a large part of what he termed, “veridiction.” These truth-telling practices, or veridiction, are an act where the person speaking binds himself to his truth.100 The power exerted over the person speaking his truth is “juridical, political, institutional, and historical.”101 In relation, these veterans were testifying not only to the general public, amplified through modern media, but to the official congressional record. Therefore, these veteran testimonies affected power relations at several levels depending on the mode of delivery.

101 Ibid.
The final attribute is that of courage in the face of danger. For parrhēsia to be present, the speaker must be risking oneself through veridiction, as different power relations present different truth telling practices and different levels of risk ranging from bodily harm, to exile, and death. Foucault states:

...the parrhesiast’s truth-telling risks hostility, war, hatred, and death. And if the parrhesiast’s truth may unite and reconcile, when it is accepted and the other person agrees to the pact and plays the game of parrhēsia, this is only after it has opened up an essential, fundamental, and structurally necessary moment of the possibility of hatred and a rupture.102

The nature of the testimonies by the veterans at Winter Soldier speaks to this game of risk, as the veterans testify to war crimes that they have seen, participated in, and committed. They risk hatred and contempt from the audience, they risk legal action from the military and world courts, and they face possible physical or legal retribution from the victims who may be watching, as well as punishment from governmental organizations such as the FBI, CIA, NSA, who may find what they are saying as a threat to national security. The threat to national security has become the basis for prosecution of whistleblowers such as Chelsea Manning.103

In Derek Sweetman’s analysis, of the Chelsea Manning case—Manning’s releasing of diplomatic cables as well as the “collateral murder” video—he discusses the danger that the collateral murder video presents to the US governments’

102 Foucault, The Government of Self and Others. 25.
103 In the process of writing this, Bradley Manning has chosen to transition into a female identity, Chelsea Manning. While I am describing events that occurred before this transition I will continue to refer to her as Chelsea Manning. I do this in order to honor Chelsea's decision of her identity and pronouns. However, when I am drawing from quotes, I will use the original quote, thus Sweetman refers to her as Bradley Manning, rather than Chelsea.
neoliberal justification for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. That justification is built upon a cost-benefit analysis that professes a particular “Regime of Truth.” This regime of truth shows that the collateral damage of war is necessary; however, the video creates doubt in the necessity, thus making Manning’s activism an act of Parrhēsia as it fits within the different attributes described above. In a discussion of the US government’s treatment of Chelsea Manning, Sweetman states:

The particular threat that Bradley Manning and Collateral Murder present is then, in a sense, existential. If the war effort is built on an appeal to truth and Manning is destabilizing that, then his treatment begins to be more understandable. Although Manning’s treatment was not equivalent to that of those accused of terrorism and held in Guantanamo (where physical torture was an inarguable reality), it is possible to think of both Manning and the “terrorists” as sharing a similar position of enmity. Both attempted to undermine the claims of veracity upon which the existing neoliberal order is based.

Therefore, acts like the release of the “collateral murder” video and testimonies like those of veterans who participated in Winter Soldier, counter the cost-benefit truth regime that sustains and perpetuates war. It does so on moral grounds, by showing that a cost-benefit style of warfare is messy, bloody, and heartless. It takes the often-forgettable facts and numerical figures of war and replaces them with new facts, those of human faces, stories, and experiences, bringing them to the forefront of the people’s minds. As Sweetman points out, these moral grounds assume that theorist Gene Sharp’s conception of power is at work when one seeks to understand the US

---

105 Ibid.
Government’s crucifixion of Manning; Sharp held that power is a relation of consent and it cannot continue or perpetuate wars without the consent of the people. To maintain consent the government sanitizes the image of war.

In Jean Baudrillard’s book, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, he explains how technology has become a “virtual organ,” where war is viewed through the multiple screens that render the enemy as an imaginary threat. The simulacrum of violence creates an image of war that is sanitized, where the dead are erased from the image of war. The cleansing of war is primarily in response to previous wars, specifically Vietnam, where the atrocities like the My Lai massacre shocked the world and shifted the perception of war imagery toward the negative. In more recent wars, the dead are rarely available for viewing by the public, thereby preserving the “cleanliness” of war. For example, President Bush Sr. banned the photography of returning caskets of fallen soldiers. When atrocities such as the events of the “collateral murder” video are made available for viewing, the narrative that constructs the image of war transforms. As the narrative shifts from a “clean” war to a “dirty” war, public support for the war begins to wane.

So why the discrepancy between the treatment of the veterans who testified at Winter Soldier and the treatment of Chelsea Manning? Really there is none, besides the fact that one has become more publicized than the other; however, that publicity serves a particular purpose. This high publicity pushed the government to

---

claim that the Wiki-leaks release of documents constituted “aiding the enemy,” though those charges were dropped due to a lack of evidence. By claiming that Manning was trying to provide aid to the enemy—the key factor needed to charge her with treason—it reiterates the narrative that patriotism, duty, and honor are tied to silence; if that silence is broken, those who speak against power will be charged with treason—an act punishable by death. While everyone who testified at Winter Soldier was not imprisoned and charged with treason like Manning, anti-war activists—especially those who are a part of Iraq Veterans Against the War—have been the target of the military and the FBI in their 21st century version of COINTELPRO. The attention given by the mass media to the “collateral murder” video made the Manning Case high profile. This video showed US Army Apache helicopters open fire on unarmed civilians. While there are many narratives as to what the pilots saw and why they shot, the video provides a startling experience of war, one that is not filtered and “cleaned” by the media, but rather a raw or “dirty” war footage. Thus the actions of Manning and IVAW work to desanitize the image of the war and delegitimize the violence perpetuated by the US government.

Another difference between the narratives surrounding the Manning Case and the Winter Soldier veterans is that the “collateral murder” video allows the viewer to experience the deaths more intimately—nearly firsthand (similar to the way in which the guerilla theater action Operation First Casualty described above,

---

108 War, Winter Soldier, 2008. Pg. 212; COINTELPRO was a series of primarily illegal and brutal attacks by the FBI against different activist groups during the 1960’s Civil Rights Movement. These groups ranged from anti-war groups like IVAW to nationalistic groups like the Black Panthers.
works to create an intimate experience with the viewer and war), whereas the testimonies of the veteran’s is more of a secondhand experience. The point-of-view of the collateral murder video is that of the pilot—the viewer can not only experience what the pilot can see and hear, but can also see the crosshairs of the weapon, the flying bullets, and the bodies being torn apart, target after target. This creates the affect for the viewer that one is actually there—further shifting the narrative from a clean war to a dirty one. Leaked videos can be much more dangerous because the ability to see the deaths becomes much more accessible and immediate. For all of the differences between the narratives, there are some similarities; both the testimony and the video seek to challenge the power and truth regime held by the US government. The same holds true for the Edward Snowden/NSA whistleblower controversy that is currently playing out. As Sweetman points out:

The real danger that Manning poses is not the exposure of information—the release of what was classified—that we see in cases of traditional espionage. Instead, it is the production of doubt. This production of doubt is much more threatening than either the promotion of interest (in the traditional social movement sense, as embodied by the traditional anti-war movement) or the transfer of information from one state to another (as in cases of espionage). Seen from this perspective, the release of Collateral Murder can be viewed as the largest activist threat, and therefore, according to neoliberal rationality, the one necessitating the most severe response. It also, though, points to the possibility of new approaches to activism under neoliberalism aimed not at converting or persuading, but at undermining the particular relationships of systems of power to truth. Manning’s treatment, then, can be seen by activists as perversely hopeful, since it would seem to highlight the extent to which truth-oriented
challenges (those focused on destabilizing, not replacing truth-claims) are feared within the neoliberal system.¹⁰⁹

This points to other similarities between Winter Soldier and the Manning Case, which cuts at the truth regime constructed by the US government, not by exposing information but rather by creating doubt. As mentioned above in the description of the guerilla street theater tactic, Operation First Casualty, these truths push the onlooker to examine their relationship to the violence that is being perpetuated by their government, in their name. Therefore, these practices of parrhēsia are dangerous as they work to shift the narratives of war. This shift makes the original statements and justifications for war seem like forms of deception, which is why many people, especially veterans who fought in Iraq, often feel like they were lied to. Parrhēsia becomes a function meant shift the balance of power away from forms of hierarchical violent militarism, to more transparent forms of democracy, which is dangerous to the current order of power. Former Chairman of the Board of IVAW, Camilo Mejia, neatly sums up the danger of this parrhēsia when he states:

>We have become a dangerous group of people not because of our military training, but because we have dared to challenge the official story. We are dangerous because we have dared to share our experiences, to think for ourselves, to analyze and be critical, to follow our conscience, and because we have dared to go beyond patriotism to embrace humanity."¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ War, Winter Soldier, 2008. 212.
Conclusion

Because the Global War on Terror has been presented as a never-ending process that is occurring everywhere, at all times, IVAW provides a counter-narrative that seeks to oppose and undermine that view. Accepting the idea of perpetual war not only creates quiescence in response to oppressive regimes of power, but also minimizes the theorization and actualization of peace. The members of Iraq Veterans Against the War, who were once part of the destructive neoliberal forces within the Global War on Terror, machine, now work to perpetuate peace. Groups like IVAW are theory in action, and we, as academics, need to create a reciprocal relationship to these activist communities. The next chapter will expand this concept of theory in action by examining veterans’ relationships to the Occupy Movement as they fight state violence and become what Antonio Gramsci calls, “organic intellectuals.”
CHAPTER 3: OCCUPY VETERANS

I, Benjamin Schrader, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God.\textsuperscript{111}

On July 14, 2001, I took this oath, and it is in this oath that a number of other military veterans—including myself—have found validation in their activism.\textsuperscript{112} The oath is meant to show loyalty to the nation, and many veterans still feel that it is their duty to uphold that oath long after their time in the military is over. Because the oath states that they are to defend the Constitution against “all enemies, foreign and domestic,” it is easy to see how many veterans could translate this into many different forms of activism today.

This chapter will focus on veterans who participated in the Occupy Wall Street movement. It will examine the reasons why some military veterans have chosen to become involved in a movement that has often been labeled as unpatriotic or even un-American, as it confronts the structural violence that has been perpetuated through neoliberalism by the global financial system.\textsuperscript{113} This chapter will also probe the ways these veterans view capitalism and how their actions promote a revolutionary way of thinking, making them what Antonio Gramsci would


\textsuperscript{112} Leitz, Fighting for Peace. Pgs. 91-92.

\textsuperscript{113} Harvey, The Enigma of Capital. Pg 204.
call, “Organic Intellectuals.”\textsuperscript{114} It is through this interaction that a thought-provoking dialogue takes place between service to one’s country and protesting for the betterment of the nation. The discourse of military veterans offers an alternative view of how the Occupy movement might be viewed as these veterans utilize activism to challenge the neoliberal policies of western liberal democracy that in turn affect the communities that their identities are intimately tied to.

To do so, I will examine two core concepts, primarily through three different lenses, still deploying the analytical framework of critical war studies. The concepts, as identified above, are state violence and the organic intellectual. The lenses I will be using are: Iraq Veterans Against the War’s statement of support for the Occupy Movement; the attack on Occupy Oakland protestors and the subsequent injury of veteran Scott Olsen; and the story of YouTube sensation Sgt. Shamar Thomas, who has constantly publicly denounced state violence and is currently working to raise consciousness through community organizing. These are not just flat stories, they are dynamic and invite you to think about concepts like state violence and the organic intellectual in different ways. Furthermore, similar to how Michael Shapiro describes the creation of an encounter between data or events and theory, I seek to show how these stories interact with theory, and vice versa, throughout this dissertation.

For this chapter, I will preface these topics with a very brief historical background of the Occupy Wall Street movement. While it is these veterans’ involvement in Occupy that is the focus of this chapter, it is not the focus of this

chapter to theorize Occupy specifically, but rather the veterans’ actions, motives, and the meaning of their involvement.

**Occupy Wall Street**

While the Occupy Wall Street movement began on September 17, 2011, its roots can be traced back to earlier movements. As Elizabeth Cobbett and Randall Germain point out, “we can trace its origins to the food riots throughout 2007 and 2008 in Africa, the Indian Sub-continent and East Asia. In Europe, unrest has been simmering and boiling over since 2010, especially in Greece and Spain... And of course the Arab Spring began as local reaction in Tunisia early in 2011.”

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri also point out a number of contributing parallel events such as “the extended protests at the Wisconsin statehouse, the occupation of Syntagma Square in Athens, and the Israeli tent encampments for economic justice.” Each of these different movements convey civil unrest and are primarily tied to the global financial system and the declining legitimacy that people feel towards the institutions that work within these systems. Yet many of these problems tied to the global financial system were not felt within the United States until around 2006 when foreclosures on low-income households began to rise rapidly due to sub-prime mortgages. This quickly cascaded into one of largest global financial crises since the great depression, peaking in 2008. While it was

---

initially communities of color that were hit the hardest, as it began to spread to white communities it started to gain more attention.\textsuperscript{119}

The crisis, compounded with political actions—from what David Harvey calls the “state-finance nexus”—such as the Supreme Court ruling of Citizens United that ruled corporations as people, raised the level of discontent within America.\textsuperscript{120} This is why on June 9, 2011 the popular magazine \textit{Adbusters} started a campaign calling for the people of New York City to indefinitely occupy Wall Street, the epicenter of both US and world financial systems, to protest the ways in which corporations and banks were harming US democracy.\textsuperscript{121} They were calling for an occupation of Wall Street until solutions were found to address the troubling ties between capitalism and politics. As weeks went on, the movement grew to several thousands of protestors in the numerous cities across the United States, as well as in a number of other countries across the globe. While there has been a drastic decline of participation in the movement, there are still some who continue to occupy spaces in the name of the movement; however, most participation now occurs either on-line or during special events and rallies.

One of the main ways in which the occupiers tried to communicate their message to the everyday person was through their slogan of the 99\% vs. the 1\%. This stems from the fact that around 300 families control around 40\% of the world’s wealth, which would be well under 1\%. However, the top 1\% in America each have,
on average, over $19 million in net worth.\textsuperscript{122} While this is a lot of money, the next 9% below them average a net worth of over 2 million dollars, so in reality it should be a slogan saying “we are the 90%”, and it is the 9% that “enforces the legal and political rules everyone must abide by.”\textsuperscript{123} Though the numbers may be skewed in the slogan, the effect was meant to focus on the small number of decision makers within the state-finance nexus based on Wall Street who guide the American neoliberal system that is tied to the global financial system. As discussed in the introduction, this neoliberal project is focused upon an upward redistribution of wealth, through deregulation of capital, and the elimination of social programs.

Within this “occupation,” camps were formed based on egalitarian ideals, where decisions were made through a consensus process, as there was no hierarchical structure or leaders; however, many people I talked to said that they could definitely see individuals who acted as leaders throughout the different encampments. Information moved throughout the movement in a number of ways: it flowed through word of mouth, via the “human-microphone,” it was passed on in the numerous workshops and classes, and it traveled via the Internet. The information found on the Internet included everything from “how to” guides on how to start encampments and suggested camp procedures to information about why the crisis happened, and many other various topics. It gained the attention of a number of academics such as Naomi Klein, Slavoj Žižek, Cornel West, and many

more, all of whom came to speak to the “occupiers.” However, the movement did not garner much daily mainstream media attention except when acts of violence occurred, which was primarily perpetuated by the state, and when the media talked about it they were often ridiculing the movement. However, it is two such instances of state violence that will be examined in forthcoming sections as I examine veterans Scott Olsen and Sgt. Shamar Thomas. The next section examines why many veterans have come to stand in solidarity with the Occupy movement.

*Iraq Veterans Against the War and Occupy*

In November 2011, the Iraq Veterans Against the War Board of Directors posted a letter of solidarity for Occupy movement. The letter is a good entry point for understanding the ways in which state violence is perpetuated against veterans as it creates an intimate link between the state-finance nexus and the military-industrial complex.

**State Violence**

There are two forms of violence. The first is direct and somatic, which relates to the police and military's use of violence. Furthermore, this form of violence is legitimated in order to protect and maintain the systems and powers in place, like Wall Street. The other type of violence is structural. This form of violence is caused by systems like Wall Street, which the state seeks to protect through direct violence, thus putting direct violence and structural violence in a cyclical relationship. The poverty that comes from these capitalist institutions forces the state to choose between increasing capital versus the good of the people, in which the state chooses the prior through a private centralization of the means of production, which in turn
perpetuates poverty. In Johan Galtung’s seminal article “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” he examines this structural violence. Galtung states, “Violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations.” In other words, due to the state-finance nexus’ choice of capital over the protection of the people, which leads to somatic and mental realizations below their potential realizations, violence is being inflicted. One example of this can be found in the home financial crisis. As debts rose, incomes remained stagnant, and more people relied upon credit and the refinancing of their homes. With the deregulation of the various credit and housing markets, there were fewer protections for consumers, leading to high numbers of bankruptcy and home loan defaults. The removal of people from their homes is one site of state violence, which was one of the catalysts of the Occupy movement. At the numerous Occupy encampments, state violence became visible again as police used direct and somatic force in order to quell the numerous protestors. It is this form of state violence that this chapter primarily examines.

Veterans are a part of the 99%

The first part of IVAW’s statement of solidarity with the Occupy movement helps us to understand the ways in which veterans are directly and personally affected by this violence; it reads:

---

Most of our military is made up of the 99%. We join the military for many reasons. Some join because of family tradition or a sense of patriotism. Others join for citizenship, education or to escape poverty or violence in our homes and neighborhoods. Many service members realize the wars we fight contribute to poverty and violence in Iraq and Afghanistan communities. We are coming home to a broken economy where veterans have higher unemployment, incarceration, suicide and homelessness than the national average.127

This passage highlights a number of interesting factors. First and foremost is the idea that the military is primarily comprised of the 99%.128 This is the thread that holds the rest of the passage together as those who join are almost always of lower socioeconomic classes. Furthermore, immigrants who have come to this country and joined the military seeking citizenship are usually coming to the US because of the imaginary that the United States is the “land of opportunity” (which is the focus of chapter 6). Those who join the military to get an education are doing so because they cannot afford it otherwise; and escaping poverty is an obvious link to the 99% and violence in one’s home and neighborhood is almost solely tied to lower socioeconomic classes and their neighborhoods. Even the idea of joining the military because of family traditions can be tied to class issues, as soldiers from the lower and working class have been the ones who have primarily fought previous wars.129

128 Though I would say that it is solely made up of the 99%, there may be a multi-millionaire hiding amongst the ranks of soldiers, most likely some high-ranking officer.
129 Appy, Working-Class War.
Another aspect of joining the military, the idea of patriotism, ties to the opening vignette of this chapter. It is often patriotism that leads one to believe in the oath of service they take before, during, and after their time in the service. It is the oath to defend “the Constitution, against enemies, foreign and domestic,” and it is within the Constitution that a violation by the 1% can be found. The preamble of the Constitution states:

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.\(^{130}\)

It is a violation of the establishment of justice, the lack of domestic tranquility and of general welfare, that these veterans find the domestic enemy and stand in solidarity with the Occupy movement. As they point out, “We are coming home to a broken economy where veterans have higher unemployment, incarceration, suicide and homelessness than the national average.” To look at the numbers on two of those issues, “the VA estimates that on any given night there are 200,000 veterans living on the streets and nearly 400,000 experience homelessness over the course of a year.”\(^{131}\) As far as veteran suicides go, the VA reports there are an average of 18 veteran suicides a day.\(^{132}\) So it is not just the people whom these vets are defending,

---


but also the veterans themselves that are being violated by this systemic enemy as social programs, including the VA is stripped of funds in exchange for higher corporate profits/lower corporate taxation. A good example of this systemic violence and the desire to defend the oath can be seen in the life of Sgt. Shamar Thomas.

_Sgt. Shamar Thomas_

The first time I heard of Shamar Thomas was the same as most have, through social media, as the big Marine who stood up to the NYPD. While in New York, I was able to catch up with him for an interview. As I waited outside my friend’s apartment in Brooklyn, the city hummed as the sun went down and darkness was replaced with orange streetlamps and neon signs. As he climbed out of his car I could see why the cops didn’t want to tangle with him, as he was a huge man with fists the size of small plates. We walked across the street to the park and sat down at a bench. A few minutes into the interview, some police approached us and asked, “What we were doing,” and “if we knew that the park was closed.” Shamar told the cops who he was and that we were doing an interview, to which the cops immediately recognized him. They told us that we could proceed with the interview in the park and that they would let the other cops patrolling the area know that we were here. One of the cops made sure to say, “see, just remember, we’re not all bad!” As the interview continued, I watched as police would walk by and kick out everyone but us from the park, as if allowing this interview to take place was some sort of penance for the

---

133 Shamar Thomas, Occupy Vets Interview, October 27, 2013.
violence that the NYPD had been involved in which brought me to interview Shamar. Whatever the case, it was interesting.

Shamar’s history was enthralling. At two years old his father died as a result of gun violence, and to support the family, his mother joined the military. This took him all over the country, as he went to 12 different schools throughout his childhood. He managed to finish high school at his mother’s urging, but he became involved in gangs at a young age. Because he moved around so much, he was constantly the target of bullying, and it was in the brotherhood of gangs that he found reprieve from the bullying. He left the streets as trouble neared and joined the US Marine Corps, where he would find a similar brotherhood to what he had on the streets. The camaraderie—which was a major theme amongst almost all the veterans I interviewed—in this case it is interesting in that it has been important in all phases of his life, from being in gangs, to the military, to the community activism that he fights for today. Shamar explained that many of his fellow gang members had similar backgrounds, in that they were primarily missing fathers, and being in a gang gave him a sense of family; where the “OG’s” (Original Gangsters, or older ones that still were a part of the gang) acted as the father figures and the other members were like brothers. This similar hierarchy would also transfer into the military brotherhood, as NCO’s would act as father figures to the non-NCO enlisted soldiers. Shamar highlighted this point when stressing the importance he felt in taking care of and teaching his soldiers the right way to do things as he did his brothers on the streets. Another very interesting aspect of this parallel between gang life and the military is the sense of responsibility he was given in the gang, where a high level of
trust is established and life and death jobs are often given to the children within the gang. Similarly, within the military, young adults are often given the responsibility of maintaining and operating sometime multi-million dollar weapon systems, and/or put in very similar life and death situations as those in gangs. Shamar confirmed this as we discussed the PTSD that many kids in gangs share with returning war veterans.

While in the military, Shamar was deployed to Iraq and fought in the 2004 battle of Fallujah. While there were many horrific stories to come out of the 2004 battle of Fallujah, Shamar said that his unit fought honorably, and he did not see any of the war crimes that many others attested to. While Shamar went on many missions his primary job while in Iraq was watching Iraqi prisoners. Again, he reiterated that they treated people with decency and it was nothing like Abu Graib, which became news around the same time as when he was in Iraq.

Upon Shamar’s exit from the military, he started college at St. Francis College in Brooklyn and then transferred to the University of Syracuse, but the compensation from the military (GI Bill) was not enough and he became homeless, living in a veteran’s homeless shelter. Shamar then left college and returned to the streets of Long Island to begin community organizing around gangs and youth.

When the Occupy movement began, like many people, he went to check out what

---

134 For under 18 years old I use the word child, and for 18+ I use the term young adult, however such a clear line should not really be established as more often than not those who join gangs and those who join the military are in a very similar cognitive state as their age is often very close.
was going on out of curiosity. He liked what he heard from the Occupiers but was disgusted by the police behavior he observed through the escalation of violence that he viewed as not only unnecessary, but also brutal and oppressive.

On October 15, 2011, the New York Police Department had a crackdown on the Occupy Wall Street Times Square protest, which became violent as the police tried to break up the demonstration. The most memorable aspect of the evening for many, though, occurred a block away from the violence as Sgt. Shamar Thomas faced off with about 30 police officers. The result of the confrontation was telling as the 6’4”, 300 pound Thomas yelled at police while wearing his Marine uniform after seeing protestors being attacked by the NYPD. As he yelled at the police, he asked a number of questions, none of which the NYPD was willing to answer. Shamar questioned: “Why are you doing this?” “Why are you hurting US citizens?” “Aren’t you supposed to be protecting these people?” 136 Both his physical presence and the fact that Thomas was a war veteran seemed to intimidate the NYPD, as the confrontation dragged on for over 5 minutes. While Thomas would eventually peacefully leave the scene, Shamar’s act of Parrhēsia was recorded and put online, becoming a YouTube sensation, and currently has over 15.3 million views.

It is in this scene that an interesting intersection takes place. Sgt. Thomas, an ex-gang member, a war veteran, living in poverty, peacefully protesting, and was witnessing violence at the hands of the state he swore to protect. Violence is evident not only by the state towards the protestors, but also in Shamar’s multi-faceted position of having fought in a war and fighting on the streets in poverty, as well as

136 Ibid.
currently and previously as a gang member. In describing this violence by the state, Eugene Holland states:

In one case, the violence is spectacularly noisy and direct—the modern state is indeed typically defined in terms of its absolute monopoly on legitimate or legitimated violence: on command, make war; disobey, and you answer to the police. In the other case, the violence is hidden, as it were, and indirect: Marx refers to the “silent compulsion of market relations” that makes the labor contract essentially involuntary; he also reveals that the “secret” of “so-called primitive accumulation” is that it more fundamentally means primitive destitution, that is, forcing people into abject dependence on capital for their very survival.\footnote{Eugene W. Holland, \textit{Nomad Citizenship: Free-Market Communism and the Slow-Motion General Strike} (Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2011). Pg. XX.}

This passage highlights the two types of violence that are being perpetuated by the neoliberal state not only against Shamar but towards many of the impoverished in this country, which were described previously through Galtung’s definition of structural violence. However, here the violence is correlated with capitalism, as it is a function of the state to protect those who profit from by any means necessary, even while violence is being produced by corporate entities against those whom the police are sworn to protect. This is the focus of the next section, centering on the idea of protecting capital by any means, both the silent form in which the violence is hidden and then the “noisy and direct” form. I will return to Shamar Thomas’ current work at the conclusion of this chapter.

\textit{The 1\% is Profiting From Our Sacrifices}

As highlighted above, those who are partially responsible for violence against the...
people and against veterans are profiting from it. The second section of IVAW’s statement states:

Our nation’s leaders have betrayed us. We have been asked to risk our lives and mental health for the defense of our country and the well being of foreign allies. The causes for military conflict have proven false while corporations profit. The military industrial complex continues to grow in wealth while the rest of the world pays for it in dollars and blood. Instead of increasing programs to attempt to repair damages, many schools, hospitals, and social services are shutting down. Programs for veterans are inadequate and are leaving us physically, mentally, and emotionally bankrupt.  

This section highlights a number of things, but first and foremost it returns to the idea of being violated by the state, in the name of profitability. In a 2011 report by the Project on Government Oversight (POGO), the report finds that private contractors were making 1.83 times more than federal workers who did the same job. Similarly, critics charge that there is at least $20 billion (perhaps upwards of $50 billion) worth of waste by military contractors where that money is basically going into the pockets of the CEO's of these private contracting companies.  

---

138 “Board of Directors Statement on the Occupy Movement: We Are the 99% | Iraq Veterans Against the War.”
141 “Contractor Distrust Costs DOD Billions, Study Says -- Washington Technology,” accessed December 5, 2012,
this is nothing new, as the military-industrial-complex thrived from WWI through the Cold War, and especially during the Reagan years, it has boomed again with the current “War on Terror” and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is clear that war is a profitable business, which is supported by the state and can be found just as culpable for the economic woes facing the nation.

The second important aspect highlighted in the passage above is the negligence by the US government in treating wounded soldiers, which can be seen as a silent function of the state in perpetuating violence. Although profits are high for those in the private sector of the military industrial complex, veterans are coming home and having to fight for benefits. While it is becoming easier to cash in on programs like the Post 9/11 GI Bill with liaisons at nearly all college campuses, it is still a long arduous process for those seeking treatment for physical and mental problems that occurred due to one’s military service. Because of the two recent wars, the VA system is extremely underfunded and overstretched. This provokes the question that if those who are supposedly the “heroes” and “protectors of freedom” are treated this way by the state, then what does it matter in giving benefits and health services to the everyday citizen? It would seem that there is no importance for ensuring the everyday citizen is taken care of, which makes one question the processes of western liberal democracy. Instead of the promotion of a “general welfare,” the fortune 500 companies on Wall Street are winning and it is now a promotion of profits and the bottom line, and to protect those profits, the state will

use any means to do so. The next section will highlight the “loud and direct” forms of violence that are perpetuated by the state as the Scott Olsen incident is examined.  

*Scott Olsen*

Scott Olsen, a 24 year old two-time Iraq war veteran moved from Onalaska, Wisconsin, to San Francisco to work for a software company. His first experience with activism came with protests against Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker’s attack on unions, and then with becoming a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War.142 When the Occupy movement began, he decided to become a part of the Oakland group and became a permanent resident at the Occupy Oakland encampment, working his job during the day and Occupying at night.143 On October 25, 2011 in Oakland, California—just over a month into the Occupy movement—Olsen was peacefully protesting when police decided to break up the protest by means of force. In the melee that ensued, Olsen was shot in the head with a riot gas canister. The canister fractured his skull, causing him to be taken to the hospital as surgery became necessary to relieve the swelling in his brain. The irony of the event is that Olsen was sent to Iraq twice, returning both times physically unharmed, yet came home to exercise the first amendment right that he fought for and was critically injured by the state.

---

143 Ibid.
The Scott Olsen incident represents what Alain Badiou calls a “spark that lights a prairie fire.” The fire can be seen in the resulting vandalism that took place after the attack on Olsen. Badiou continues on to state, “Just as uniformly, the government and its police not only categorically refuse to accept the slightest responsibility for the whole affair, but use the riot as a pretext for reinforcing the arsenal of the police and criminal justice system.” Similarly, the police denied that they were responsible for Olsen’s injuries and continued to use violent military tactics to combat the protestors.

On state violence, Badiou says:

To believe that the intolerable crime is to burn a few cars and rob some shops, whereas to kill a young man is trivial, is typically in keeping with what Marx regarded as the principle alienation of capitalism: the primacy of things over existence, of commodities over life and machines over workers, which he encapsulates in the formula: ‘Le mort saisit le vivant’.

While Olsen was not killed, a similar line can be drawn in a protection of capital with an utter disrespect for life. The police often claim that their tactics are not lethal and are meant to protect the people, but had Olsen not gone to a hospital, he very well could have died from his brain swelling. The incident has subsequently left him with some brain damage. Furthermore, who is it that the police are trying to protect? It is clearly not the protestors, as the violence seems to act as a form of repression,
while Wall Street continues to profit from those who have been violated. Therefore it is a protection for the profiteers of violence, not of the people whom the police are sworn to protect, as the “non-lethal” weapons used against such protestors can often be lethal.\footnote{Jorma Jussila and Pertti Normia, “International Law and Law Enforcement Firearms,”\textit{ Medicine, Conflict and Survival} 20, no. 1 (January 2004): 55–69, doi:10.1080/13623690412331302294.}

It is this violence that is created by the state-finance nexus that is of concern to veterans and to all those involved in the Occupy Wall Street movement.\footnote{Interestingly enough, parallels between what the Occupy movement is fighting for are in some ways similar to what the Tea Party was fighting for. While an in-depth analysis is not the focus of this paper, it should be noted as an interesting example that the Tea Party was demonstrating against the government, whereas the Occupy movement is protesting against corporate entities. While Tea Partiers were carrying weapons to protests, no violence was reported because it was against the state, which is commonly being protested against. Whereas the Occupiers carried no weapons besides a few rocks and bottles—the majority were non-violent, unarmed protestors—they have been met with riot gear and violence because their protest is against these capitalist entities. Therefore this state-finance nexus seems more concerned about protecting capitalist interests, as they seem more vulnerable to resistance. I have often heard in jest that if members of the Occupy movement had come to the different actions like the Tea Party members did, with weapons, they would more than likely get shot by the police, which seems like a very sad and disturbing hypocrisy, that shows the differences between the reactions of the state in relation to protests against capitalism. I cover some of the connections and hypocrisies of the Tea Party in my MA thesis: The Tea Party: The discourse of Race, Class, and Gender/Sexuality, which can be found on Academia.edu.} In order to overcome this violence, new types of thinking are necessary. It is in the creation of a resistance to the neoliberal state that I will now turn to an examination of veterans who act as Organic Intellectuals, creating such resistance and new modes of thinking.
The Organic Intellectual

Antonio Gramsci’s term “organic intellectual,” traces back to his thoughts on the spread of revolutionary thought in order to bring about the Communist revolution. The basis comes from Marx as he saw the role of Communists as “the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country,” and it was their role to “point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat.” Therefore, it was initially the communists who were seen as the intellectuals and it was their duty to raise class-consciousness to help progress a communist revolution.

By the time that Lenin had come around, the communist revolution had still not come to fruition and he looked to re-conceptualize how the revolution would come about. For Lenin, class political consciousness could only be attained from an outside force, which he would call the vanguard party. This party would consist of committees that had not only intellectuals but also primarily what he refers to as “agitators,” which would spread propaganda and rile up the working class. Furthermore, it was within these committees that theory would be formed, which would then be spread to the working class. Therefore, there were two functions of this vanguard party, one of social organizing and the other of theorizing, which is where the term praxis (theory in action) became popular in the Marxist tradition.

About thirty years later, Antonio Gramsci revisited this idea of revolutionary thought. While he agreed with Lenin that social organizing and theorizing were

---

153 Ibid. 102.
crucial to the revolution, he believed that it was from within the classes that organic intellectuals would rise to create revolutionary change.\textsuperscript{154} Therefore, these organic intellectuals would both organize and theorize, but it would be with an insight that is unavailable to bourgeois intellectuals because it comes from a level of experience. These organic intellectuals would be separate from the common intellectuals, and/or academics, because Gramsci saw the most common intellectuals as “organically bound to the landed aristocracy.”\textsuperscript{155} Thus, limiting their usefulness to the working class. Furthermore, for Gramsci, one of the main characteristics of the organic intellectual is to “conquer ‘ideologically’ the traditional intellectuals;” as this is a counter-hegemonic project, which I will return to shortly.\textsuperscript{156}

Nearly eighty years after Gramsci wrote about the organic intellectual, the discussion continues, and has been amplified in the wake of the largest financial crisis since the Great Depression. David Harvey picks up the torch in his book \textit{The Enigma of Capital} in a chapter, reflective of Lenin, titled “What is to be Done? And Who is Going to Do It?” While he gives some lip service to Gramsci, as he states there is a lot to learn from the plight of the working class, the chapter is much more aligned with Lenin’s vanguard party.\textsuperscript{157} Harvey divides those affected by the financial crisis into sides; the discontented and alienated make up one half, encompassing those who supposedly understand the system and have become jaded, i.e. academics, leftists, activists, etc.;\textsuperscript{158} while the deprived and dispossessed

\textsuperscript{154} Gramsci, \textit{Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci}. Pg. 132.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid. 137.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid. 142.
\textsuperscript{157} Harvey, \textit{The Enigma of Capital}. Pg. 257.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid. 240.
make up the other half, being “those whose conditions of laboring and living are most immediately affected by their insertion into the circulation and accumulation of capital only to be deprived and dispossessed of their command not only over their labour but over the material, cultural and natural relations of their own existence.”\textsuperscript{159} In other words, these groups of people are those who are exploited, not only by the corporations they work for but also by the system in and of itself. The exploitation has come at the hands of businesses, the legal system, the security apparatus, the military, etc. It is those of the working class who are most affected by capitalism, as they are the targets of exploitation and are often left behind.\textsuperscript{160}

Harvey states, “It is not the place of the alienated and discontented to instruct the deprived and dispossessed as to what they should or should not do. But what we... can and must do is to identify the underlying roots of the problems that confront us all.”\textsuperscript{161} While Harvey seems to be pushing against the vanguard idea, he also advocates that it is “the intellectual wing of the alienated and discontent” that must basically teach and expose the problems of the world to everyone else. He implies that those who comprise the deprived and dispossessed are not capable of conceptualizing what the problem is and what should be done to solve the problem. Harvey also seems to suggest that the alienated and discontented must join the deprived and dispossessed and surrender their privileges to become deprived and dispossessed themselves, which will create a better alliance.\textsuperscript{162} Yet this seems to come from a place of privilege as it belittles the complexities of issues like racism,

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid. 241.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid. 241.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid. 241-242.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.
sexism, and the other identity politics connected to class issues. This is why a turn back to Gramsci is needed, as it is not the bourgeois intellectual that will be the savior of the working class, but rather the organic intellectual since they are the ones who experience the most violence at the hands of the state finance nexus. Also, as I mentioned above, according to Gramsci it is the job of the organic intellectual to conquer the traditional intellectual, not the other way around. Furthermore, the concept of the organic intellectual can be seen as parallel to my labeling of veterans as geocorporeal actors; they are both because these veterans are theorizing, organizing, and acting in a counter-hegemonic ways.

The Veteran as the Organic Intellectual

The third section of IVAW’s statement of solidarity with the Occupy movement is subtitled “Veterans have a history of effective grassroots organizing” and reads:

IVAW has been a voice for veterans and their grievances since our founding in 2004. We understand that change comes about when people speak up, organize, and demand justice. Veterans and active-duty service members have a history of organizing, from the Bonus March to the Vietnam War. Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have an important contribution to make to this movement.\textsuperscript{163}

This passage exemplifies the ways in which veterans have been and continue to play important roles in activism for social justice. It is evident that IVAW is working towards issues beyond those concerning veterans, as their mission statement seeks reparations for the Iraqi people. Similarly the havoc reaped upon the American people by the neoliberal state is a similar violation that the veterans have

\textsuperscript{163} “Board of Directors Statement on the Occupy Movement: We Are the 99% | Iraq Veterans Against the War.”
experienced in their encounter with war. This violation—as shown in the section on state violence, seen above—is tightly linked to the state-finance nexus.

IVAW’s letter of solidarity closes by stating:

As service members we are told that we fight for human rights and democratic freedoms. However, these rights seem to be continually denied at protests across the nation, often times by police using excessive force and violent tactics. We support our members, fellow veterans and members of this movement who have been subjected to this gross contradiction, and who have refused to remain silent.164

It is in the wake of the Scott Olsen incident that this statement was forged, as the violence that was perpetrated upon him exemplifies this denial of “democratic freedoms,” which he and other veterans fought so adamantly for. Furthermore, it is this denial of rights that pushes the veterans of IVAW to organize and resist the state-corporate nexus that continues to profit at the cost of the people. It is this kind of information and organizing that is at the heart of what Gramsci terms as the organic intellectual, as it seeks to counter the violence and create new forms of positive change. Similarly, Sgt. Shamar Thomas, as well as other veterans, can be seen as organic intellectuals who have grown from the violence inherent within this neoliberal western democratic system. It is because of this violence that Sgt. Thomas stands up and fights, stating:

This is a chance to voice our issues—police brutality, economic injustice, foreclosed homes... I’m a warrior, I don’t have any fear in the streets. So how do I sit on a couch and watch people fight for our freedom and not do anything about it? That’s cowardice. This is about my freedom and the freedom of my people.165

164 Ibid.
It is not just events like Occupy Wall Street that Sgt. Thomas has worked with to expose these problems, but rather his other organizing that needs to be examined. After the confrontation with police, Sgt. Thomas worked to start two organizations; the first being “Occupy Gangbangers,” and the second was “Global Veterans of the 99%,” which was coordinated with Iraq Veterans Against the War. The latter group would eventually become a sub-committee within the New York IVAW chapter, which Shamar would have little interaction with, but the group would also organize with groups such as Veterans for Peace, OccupyMARINES, Occupy Navy, Occupy Airforce, Occupy Coast Guard, and Occupy Military Families. His goal in engaging with the two organizations was:

...to engage gangsters and former soldiers in Occupy, transforming the destructive violence bred within warrior communities into a positive, unified power that challenges the corporate state actors who have victimized those communities—by sending them to fight in illegal manufactured wars, disenfranchising the inner-city poor, and failing to offer economic futures to either.168

The organizing done by Sgt. Thomas is evidenced in various ways. The first is that it can be seen as a uniting of the "deprived and the dispossessed." However, unlike Harvey’s notion of the alienated and discontent coming to help unite, Sgt. Thomas comes from these groups—veterans and gang members—thus making him more of an organic intellectual. Therefore, what Shamar is doing is organizing with gang members who have grown up in violence perpetuated by these systems, and

166 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Harvey, The Enigma of Capital. Pg. 239-241.
organizing with veterans who have been exploited by the state-financial nexus, and teaching both groups who their enemy should be. Then instead of fighting themselves, they understand where their oppression is rooted, and can thus work to fight the system that holds them down.

Sgt. Thomas’ focus is in his message, as he often asks the gang members, “How are you a gangster when you’re killing your own people in your neighborhood, your own army, somebody who’s poor just like you?”\textsuperscript{170} In this message, he aims to direct their rage towards the state and the corporate interests that are exploiting their communities.\textsuperscript{171} Sgt. Thomas’ work reverses the value of poor blacks, particularly gang members who are often seen as a problem within society who drain community resources due to the cost of policing them; thus he makes them a positive force, which seeks revolutionary change.

As for his message to veterans, he states:

They’re robbing veterans first-hand... How do you consciously give an 18-year-old $1,500 a month to fight a war where he’s on the front lines, so he can’t even save up enough money to get his own place when he gets out? We talk about supporting our troops and ‘honoring our veterans,’ but how are veterans going to send their kids to college or even buy a car on the pensions they’re paid? We all know in our hearts that there is one thing, or many things, wrong... Would you fight for freedom?\textsuperscript{172}

The violence that veterans are asked to perpetuate in the name of freedom comes at a high cost to the veteran, mentally, emotionally, and physically, as shown in previous sections. All the while there is little compensation for the trauma that

\textsuperscript{170} Levitin, “Occupying War: A Marine Vet Finds His Mission.”
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
comes with the wars they are asked to fight in. This not only damages the veteran to the point of injury, but also perpetuates into future generations, which often leaves the veteran and their families destitute. It is this destitution that often leads youth to join gangs, feeding into the cyclical process that Sgt. Thomas aims to break. He goes on to state:

We have a powerful weapon: our voice, We're getting veterans and gangsters around the country together into the movement—understanding why we're here, why we're oppressed. We make them question who they are, and help them to look at Wall Street—these are the people we need to fight against. Once we take money out of politics, we can take back our communities.\textsuperscript{173}

It is within this message that the ties between the state-finance nexus culminates with all the previous aspects that this chapter examines, exemplifying the different levels of violence—at home and abroad—that are perpetuated by those on Wall Street, those who send our troops to war, and the state apparatus that protects capitalism.

It is the functions of capitalism that are in part the reason Thomas was in a gang, joined the military, was sent to war, and became homeless upon return. As Gramsci states in his discussion of the intellectual, "he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is to bring into being new modes of thought."\textsuperscript{174} Similarly, Sgt. Thomas seems to be engaging on a different level—as opposed to the regular Occupy participant—as he attempts to

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.
draw the parallels between the war on the streets and the wars abroad. It is the immorality towards our citizens that he fights against as the neoliberal western democratic system perpetuates violence upon the people and upon the veterans it sends off to war. Sgt. Thomas seeks to change this by exposing the injustices and organizing others to stand up, speak out, and fight. This is evidenced in the above quote as he states the power of one’s voice and the ways in which it can be a powerful, invaluable weapon, very similar to how parrhēsia described in the previous chapter, as both seem to be compatible. The parallels between Gramsci’s organic intellectual and Foucault’s parrēsist seem uncanny. While Gramsci seeks a class rebellion from below, Foucault seeks truth to be spoken to power, which that truth often undermines similar hierarchies of power as Gramsci.

The organizing/social function is one of the most crucial points for Gramsci’s organic intellectual. While Gramsci states, “all men are intellectuals,” the defining characteristic for him is the “immediate social function... in the direction in which their specific professional activity is weighted, whether towards intellectual elaboration or towards muscular-nervous effort.” 175 It is this social function that Sgt. Thomas is engaged in, as he attempts to teach others of the perils embedded within capitalism, not only by organizing veterans and gangsters, but also by targeting inner-city youth. Gramsci goes on to state:

The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence... but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer, “permanent persuader” and not just a simple orator... from technique-as-work one proceeds to technique-as-

175 Ibid. 140.
science and to the humanistic conception of history, without which one remains “specialized” and does not become “directive.”

This quote highlights a number of things, from the social aspect to the need to be involved within the functions that one is theorizing. It is this firsthand experience that gives the organic intellectual their credibility and ability to re-conceptualize ideas. Similarly, it is Sgt. Thomas’ firsthand experience in gangs, in the military, and on the streets that gives him the ability to be an effective organic intellectual. This does a number of things but most importantly, as Gramsci points out, it ‘deepens and broadens the “intellectuality” of each individual,’ that the organic intellectual engages with.

It also works to transform what Gramsci terms as ‘the two major superstructural levels; civil society and the state.’

The “structure,” for Gramsci, is the basis in which the functions of capitalism reside, whereas the superstructures are where politics and ideology reside. The structure and the superstructure have a reciprocal relationship that transforms one another, which is what makes capitalism so elusive. Therefore, it is the duty of the organic intellectual to expose these transformations so that those who wish to disrupt the functions of capitalism can be more effective. Sgt. Thomas does this as he shows the relationships between war and poverty, which facilitates the disruption of the neoliberal western democracy. While Foucault does not divide substructure from superstructure in his analysis, the function of parrhēsia acts the same in

_____________________

176 Ibid. 141-142.
177 Ibid. 142.
178 Ibid. 145.
undermining the power structure of neoliberal western democracy through the same exposure of ties between war and poverty.

**Conclusion**

The participation of military veterans within the Occupy Wall Street movement creates an alternative narrative in the ways in which the movement can be examined. With groups like IVAW and individuals like Scott Olsen and Shamar Thomas working within the Occupy movement, a broader understanding of the breadth of the state-financial nexus can be seen in addition to the extent of violence that stems from the neoliberal western democratic system in that the state works to perpetuate. The oath of a soldier disrupts this violence as they have sworn to protect the very people that the state is violating. Paradoxically, it is then the state itself that can be seen as the very enemy that the veterans must fight, as it is in violation of the Constitution by not establishing justice, nor insuring domestic tranquility, by neglecting the common defense, by not promoting the general welfare nor securing liberty to ourselves or posterity, and by egregiously violating the First Amendment—the right to free speech and the right to assemble peacefully. Therefore, there is an interesting multilayered relationship between veterans and the state; the tension between loyalty to their country and opposition to the way the state acts, and the tension between truth and power.

Furthermore, veterans can often act as organic intellectuals as they seek to raise a new kind of class-consciousness that creates a condition of possibility in which a radically egalitarian, anti-capitalist, co-revolutionary space can be formed. The organic intellectual is a crucial component in making change, and groups like
IVAW, along with veterans like Sgt. Shamar Thomas, can participate in these roles, as they are able to reach across multiple levels of subjugation. Once on the front lines of battle in Iraq and Afghanistan, they now come home to fight on the front lines in the battle for America.
CHAPTER 4: ENVIRO-WARRIORS

“But the love of wilderness is more than a hunger for what is always beyond reach; it is also an expression of loyalty to the earth, the earth which bore us and sustains us, the only home we shall ever know, the only paradise we ever need — if only we had the eyes to see. Original sin, the true original sin, is the blind destruction for the sake of greed of this natural paradise which lies all around us — if only we were worthy of it.”180

-Edward Abbey

Growing up in Colorado afforded me many outdoor opportunities, from backcountry skiing to many camping trips. The summer before I joined the military I was a river raft guide on the Colorado River. I have always had a deep love and respect for the outdoors, which made the outdoor elements of my time in the military easier for me than it was for many others who did not spend as much time outdoors as I had. In basic training I remember hearing the kids from the big cities like LA and Miami complain about having to sit out in the cold rainy hills of Kentucky. Being a cavalry scout meant that we would be spending a lot of time out in the wilderness. In Germany we spent countless weeks training in the woods of Grafenwoehr, Germany. In rain or snow, we were constantly training. We traveled to the high hills of the Czech Republic where we found “Wham-Fuck-Hill,” a hill that we snuck across in the middle of the night where you couldn’t walk 5 feet along the steep and thickly wooded terrain without hearing the wham of a falling body followed by the soldier yelling “Fuck!” Our subsequent deployment in Kosovo allowed us a lot of time in the countryside and mountains of Kosovo. After that we would go to Hohenfels in 3 feet of snow to train for the hot deserts of Iraq, where we would spend a large portion of our time not only patrolling the dense cities but also the vast

farmland and empty barren lands as well. While some within my platoon would see some of these missions as boring and monotonous, I found the solitude of the wilderness exciting and I valued it as an escape.

My love for the outdoors has become engrained in my personality, as it is something I need, and I can now see the power of nature. This power comes in many forms, which I will explore; from the literal sense in the power generated by alternative sustainable energy, to the healing powers of spending time in the woods communing with nature. This power can be seen as a demilitarizing force as it works to not only help veterans deprogram from the traumas of war and the military, but it also pushes against the neoliberal model of militarism by maintaining that sustainability is better for national security. This chapter will explore some of the veterans’ organizations that seek to harness and preserve this power, organizations like: Veterans Green Jobs, Vets Voice Foundation, and Operation FREE. However, I will first briefly examine the military’s relationship to the environment and environmentalism.

A History of Violence

As discussed in the introduction, the military and militarism must be looked at as what Chris Cuomo calls a "presence." She states this because this presence is a force that can be felt and seen at all times because the violence that is inherent within the foundations of its construction. Her focus is primarily upon the ways in which the military is not only violent along gender lines (which is the focus of the next chapter), but also one of the largest perpetrators of violence towards the environment. This violence can be seen on multiple levels, from the direct impact

---

181 Cuomo, "War Is Not Just an Event: Reflections on the Significance of Everyday Violence."
that the military has upon environment (before, during, and after wars, as well as during peacetime on and around bases), to the ways in which the military will be used to combat violence due to global warming.\textsuperscript{182} Just in peacetime, Cuomo points out:

The military is the largest generator of hazardous waste in the United States, creating nearly a ton of toxic pollution every minute... A conventionally powered aircraft carrier consumes 150,000 gallons of fuel a day. In less than an hour’s flight, a single jet launched from its flight deck consumes as much fuel as a North American motorist burns in two years. One F-16 jet engine requires nearly four and a half tons of scarce titanium, nickel, chromium, cobalt, and energy-intensive aluminum, and nine percent of all the iron and steel used by humans is consumed by the global military. The United States Department of Defense generates 500,000 tons of toxins annually, more than the world's top five chemical companies combined. The military is the biggest single source of environmental pollution in the United States. Of 338 citations issued by the United States Environmental Protection Agency in 1989, three-quarters went to military installations.\textsuperscript{183}

The danger of this presence becomes evermore apparent when looking at the previous quote, and thinking about how many military flyovers have become so commonplace at American sporting events. These statistics only represent the environmental damage during times of peace and on the homefront. The threat becomes exponentially greater during times of war.

One of the most recent controversies in this American environmental violence is the use of depleted uranium rounds on the battlefield as they


\textsuperscript{183} Cuomo, “War Is Not Just an Event: Reflections on the Significance of Everyday Violence.”
contaminate the soil, air, and water sources across Iraq.\textsuperscript{184} These contaminations have led to the drastic increase of multiple types of cancer, leukemia, lymphoma, and birth defect rates.\textsuperscript{185} These increases have steadily risen in Iraq since the US began bombing Iraq during the first Gulf War, which the missile rounds used depleted uranium.\textsuperscript{186} But the environmental damage in war does not end with depleted uranium, as other toxins and metals produced by American bombs and rounds have caused “a 251 percent rise in the rate of neurological disorders, a 47 percent increase in the rate of respiratory problems, and a 34 percent rise in rates of cardio-vascular disease in military service members that is likely related to this problem.”\textsuperscript{187}

As the Costs of War project points out, during war time there is a drastic increase of fuel and oil use by military vehicles, thus contributing to greenhouse gasses.\textsuperscript{188} The increases are shocking as the US military used an estimate 1.2 million barrels of oil on average, per month while they were in Iraq in 2008.\textsuperscript{189} Most battlefield vehicles do not get very good gas mileage, from the most used vehicle the HUMVEE, which averaged about 6 mpg; ‘the M-1 Abrams tank can get just over a half mile on a gallon of fuel per mile or use about 300 gallons during eight hours of operation, and; the Bradley Fighting Vehicles consume about 1 gallon per mile

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{187} “Environmental Costs | Costs of War.”
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid.
driven.’\textsuperscript{190} Finally, war also has a drastic impact on the environment and the wildlife as it destroys the forests, wetlands, thus harming the natural habitats of many creatures that can no longer thrive in those areas.\textsuperscript{191}

These facts have become a constant source of criticism of the military, thus causing a push for reform, but are the changes just another case of green-washing, where there is only the appearance of change? Or are there substantial shifts in military policy that look to lessen this presence? While there has been substantial debate in the past over whether or not the environmental movement would be benefited or harmed by involving the military, the military has moved forward nonetheless. This change has partially happened out of the criticism from many environmentalists, but it has also happened due to what the military sees as a necessary turn as global warming is often framed as an issue of National Security. This debate is a part of what the rest of this chapter examines through veterans activism in the environmental movement, which often works to lessen this violent presence of the military.

\textbf{Operation FREE and Veterans Green Jobs}

Upon my friends’ and my exit from the military, I went to school, Jeff wandered the world, and Garett jumped head first into activism. Garett was initially hired by Nobel laureate Bobby Muller to work for him at his organization Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA).\textsuperscript{192} He was given enough leeway to also be able to be on the Board of Directors for Iraq Veterans Against the War. Since he was stationed in Washington D.C. he spent a

\textsuperscript{190} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid.
lot of time on Capital Hill advocating for veterans. Garett would eventually leave VVA, in order to get back to Colorado, where he became the Director of Veterans Programs for the organization Veterans Green Jobs (VGJ). This opportunity opened many doors for not only him but also for other veterans to get connected with the different programs that help to get veterans outdoors. While the mission of VGJ was to retrain veterans into the green economy, there were many other programs to which Garett had access. For example, Garett, 8 other veterans, and I went on a weeklong rafting trip on the Yampa and Green River in northwestern Colorado to work with BLM to clear tamarisk trees from the river. The trip would become not just a week of work and fun, but also a space in which we could reflect upon the military, the environment, and the things that tied these two things together. In general, the focus for VGJ was on the micro-political level as it sought to train veterans in the green industries, which affect not only their personal lives but also the communities they work in, to create global change.

VGJ’s main mission worked to help veterans gain employment after their military service. While many veterans attempt to utilize their education benefits after their service, many find it difficult to integrate into college life. This is primarily due to class related issues, since many come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and are first generation

193 My time as a river raft guide had already taught me of the dangers of the tamarisk, which is an invasive species that was introduced at the turn of the 20th century to help stop erosion. It however, has backfired as it has killed much of the biodiversity of the Colorado River because of it’s high release of salts into the soil and the large amounts of water it uses to sustain itself. Furthermore the rapid rate in which it repopulates makes it very difficult to eradicate.
students. VGJ gives these veterans an opportunity to learn—with fellow veterans—new skill sets that will make them successful in their transition to civilian life. As they say on their website:

We are working to reverse the high unemployment trend among military veterans by linking them with training and employment opportunities in the green sector. By equipping our nation’s former servicemen and women with transferable skills, tools and resources and connecting them with meaningful employment, we believe we will help veterans to maintain their sense of service, give back to their communities and environment, and contribute to a healthy, sustainable and secure future for people and the planet.

The mission of VGJ exposes the excess within the military apparatus produced by the neoliberal economy that veterans find upon their exit from the military. The military is often seen as a way out, since it provides educational opportunities and job skill training, though all too often their job skills do not transfer to the civilian world. The training that VGJ provides is similar to military training and can be seen as Foucault’s disciplinary power, as VGJ seeks to retrain the body through work. While the training that they are doing is in no way as intensive or repetitive as the military, it is a lesser form of disciplinary power in that ‘every disciplinary system tends to be an occupation of the individual’s time, life, and body.’ The work and tactics that VGJ deploys are similar to those deployed by the military, from the use of comradery, to using the outdoor skills learned in the military as those seem to be more easily transferable than the “job skills” they learned. For example, VGJ would do training sessions in remote locations of the Colorado Mountains where the veterans would be broken up into squads or teams, in

\[\text{Ibid.}\]

\[\text{“Mission, Vision, Values | Veterans Green Jobs.”}\]

which they were to complete specific objectives as a team. Each squad had a team leader, similar to the military. This hierarchalization is essential within disciplinary systems as the supervision ensures that transformation into the prescribed body occurs. In this case it is a transformation into a productive member of society that has the skills to work within the “green economy.” As mentioned above, many of the skills that are learned within the military are not translatable to civilian jobs thus causing many veterans to have a difficult time transitioning into college life after their service. This has led to high levels of unemployment and high levels of homelessness amongst veterans, which can again be seen as excess within the neoliberal western democratic state.\textsuperscript{199} The excess produced—the veterans who are now skill-less and unemployed—by the security dispositif, must find new skills to survive, which is where VGJ sought to be useful. Michael Dillon and Luis Lobo-Guerrero state that within a security dispositif there is a certain paradox where as “[s]uch biopolitical intercourse simultaneously both sustains and undermines itself.”\textsuperscript{200} Therefore, there is excess and a lack within the security dispositif, and as I will describe within my final chapter a constant need to try and fulfill the hole that war creates. War in general; dispositifs in general, are never satisfied. Because as Foucault points out a dispositif is a “thoroughly heterogeneous set consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and

philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid.”

Therefore, the security dispositif is a continual cycle, constantly growing, giving, taking, and destroying; those who are in the military are a part of the dispositif, and once they leave, they are no longer needed for the continuance of the dispositif, thus they are the excess. Which is where the many organizations come in, to pick up and reuse that excess.

Another opportunity that Garett made available through his environmental work, led me to work with the organization Operation FREE (OpFree), which is a subsidiary of the Truman Foundation. In 2009, I hosted and moderated a panel of veterans who were touring the United States speaking for OpFree. While VGJ and OpFree both see global warming as a major risk not only to the planet but also to “National Security,” each has a different focus as to their goals. OpFree is focused on more of a systemic level as they aim to shift the policies and doctrine of American policy. OpFree’s mission statement

Figure 1: From Operation FREE Email to members

Climate change is a catalyst for conflict

Another opportunity that Garett made available through his environmental work, led me to work with the organization Operation FREE (OpFree), which is a subsidiary of the Truman Foundation. In 2009, I hosted and moderated a panel of veterans who were touring the United States speaking for OpFree. While VGJ and OpFree both see global warming as a major risk not only to the planet but also to “National Security,” each has a different focus as to their goals. OpFree is focused on more of a systemic level as they aim to shift the policies and doctrine of American policy. OpFree’s mission statement
reads more like a risk assessment than a non-profit mission statement that often highlights values and goals. For example, within it they state:

America’s billion-dollar-a-day dependence on oil from hostile nations directly funds our most dangerous enemies, putting guns and bullets into the hands of our enemies. The Department of Defense has also stated that climate change poses a threat as well, destabilizing weak and failed states – the breeding grounds and safe havens for terrorist organizations like al Qaeda and the Taliban. With new, clean sources of energy to power our economy and fuel our military, we will no longer be forced to pay and protect regimes that support terrorism.

The shift in focus from the “contentious” environmental threat to one of national security is intentional. While Republicans’ often deny global warming, they cannot deny national security, which becomes a rallying point for both Democrats and Republicans. Furthermore, OpFree uses military veterans to deliver the message in hopes that the message of national security coming from the mouths of veterans who were fighting terrorism will carry more weight on both sides of the political spectrum. This has a dual effect; not only does it create credibility for the movement, but it also frames global warming as a threat to the species. This framing of focusing on global warming as a threat to the species is a biopolitical maneuver that can best be explained through Foucault’s inversion of Carl von Clausewitz’s aphorism, to which Foucault states, “…politics is the continuation of war by other means.”

The constant shifts, flows, and evolutions of biopolitics take place in order to make life live, and as Foucault points out:

One technique is disciplinary; it centers on the body, produces individualizing effects, and manipulates the body as a source of forces that

---


have to be rendered both useful and docile. And we also have a second technology which is centered not upon the body but upon life: a technology which brings together the mass effects characteristics of a population, which tries to control the series of random events that can occur in a living mass, a technology which tries to predict the probability of those events (by modifying it, if necessary), or at least to compensate for their effects. This is a technology which aims to establish a homeostasis, not by training individuals, but by achieving an overall equilibrium that protects the security of the whole from internal dangers.

Biopolitics is therefore focused upon the betterment of the species (or in other words producing more productive members of society), and that which does not transform within the dispositif is discarded as excess, and thus it is allowed to “let die.”

As Brad Evans explains, the western liberal wars of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been focused upon the betterment of the species by attacking those that seek to hinder progress or threaten stability. Each new threat produces new wars that lead to new policies and politics, in hopes of making new liberal societies that accept the biopolitical prescription that is being forced upon them. Evans states:

> While liberals have therefore been at pains to offer a more humane recovery to the overt failures of military excess in current theatres of operation, warfare has not in any way been removed from the species. Instead, humanized in the name of local sensitivities, doing what is necessary out of global species necessity now implies that war effectively takes place by every means.

Therefore, by framing environmental issues as one of national security shows that the aims are not that of peace but rather of protecting the species by any means necessary.

However, the species should not be looked at as the human species as a whole but rather

---

205 Ibid.
206 Ibid. 424.
as the population within the biopolitical system working to maintain itself, in this case the western liberal democracies, more specifically the United States. Therefore, while environmental issues are of global concern, these issues are being framed in such a way so that those within America are meant to fear a loss of their American ways and identity if change does not occur.

While OpFree’s mission statement puts energy independence from Arab oil center stage, they are much more focused on pushing any green initiative legislation that comes to congress. Furthermore, OpFree has been specifically focused upon “greening the military,” promoting the shift to a more sustainable military force.\textsuperscript{207} This not only shifts the military apparatus within the security dispositif, but also has the ability for more sustainable wars that can last longer for less of a cost. While there is a promotion for less violence as terrorism will be defunded and less people will be displaced by inclement weather patterns, there is still the ability for \textit{perpetual war}. This tactic therefore embraces the risk of terrorism but seeks to avert the risk of climate change. Thus, discourses of “greening the military” still problematically sustain the need and usefulness of war. Finally, the push for energy independence does not address the other forms of environmental violence that occur, including the use of depleted uranium and the destruction of foreign forests and wet lands which affects wildlife as well.

The strategy pushed by OpFree became clearer in my interview with OpFree member Jon Gensler.\textsuperscript{208} Our interview took place at his office on the 16\textsuperscript{th} floor in the downtown Manhattan offices of the Cambridge Leadership Associates, where he was currently working. Jon was born in the south part of West Virginia, and was one of the

\footnotesize{
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid. 421-422. \\
\textsuperscript{208} Jon Gensler, OpFree Vet Interview, October 28, 2013.
}
only kids in his town to escape the local coalmines by going to West Point. A couple of months after 9/11 he was deployed to Kuwait as a part of an advanced tank battalion that could deploy anywhere in the Middle East in response to the attacks. But he would not go to war until a few weeks after the initial push into Iraq in 2003, where he was attached to a mortar platoon. While he was there, he not only did regular patrols, acting as a “stabilizing force,” but was also charged with “retraining the local Iraqi police force.” In the first few months his battalion had lost a few soldiers, including a close friend that he played football with at West Point, which had a deep impact on him. His platoon would then be sent back to Baghdad where he was promoted to captain and became the night tactical operations commander for his battalion.

In 2004 Jon’s battalion would return and he was transferred to Fort Carson, CO. It was here he decided that he needed to get away from the military to clear his head. While sitting at his desk looking at the world map on his wall he decided to go as far away from everything as possible; he saw New Zealand sitting down at the bottom corner of the map. He soon got out of the military and immediately headed to the airport. The first couple of months he worked as a bouncer at a local bar in the south of New Zealand, but the hours bothered him and he soon quit to work for a landscaping company. He did this for about 6 months and then decided to quit and spend the next 2 months floating around to different wilderness areas. In an area called Doubtful Sound, Jon was kayaking when he:

...experienced some sort of epiphany out on the second day. It’s about a mile wide, and the cliffs are covered with green vegetation and waterfalls, there’s dolphins and they’re swimming beside us… and I’d been struggling with my experiences in combat thinking at that point, I had lost, my battalion had lost a few people. I had lost a good friend of mine that I played football with at west point, who died in the very early weeks of the war. Just kind of struggling
with the purpose of it all. And in this fjord kayaking, in the midst of all this massive grandeur… I felt extremely connected to the world as a system, as a thing, and felt myself disappear into the rest of the connection. And it all kind of made sense to me. The reasons I went to fight, not that they were justified, but it made sense to me, how the system that we’re in forced our hand to fight over resources. It was rooted in us not understanding what we’re doing in the system of the world. It was a very crude understanding at the time. I decided at that time to act on that. If I could see the system, then I could act on it and make a change for the better, to prevent future resource wars…

Jon then left New Zealand and got a job with Lutron Electronics where he would begin to learn the terrain of the Green economy. He helped to establish a Green counsel for the city of Bethlehem, PA, and in 2007 moved to Boston to go to MIT for graduate school. Here he became involved in issues of sustainability, rather than energy, feeling that he was still too emotionally close to the issue of energy, due to coming from a coal state and serving in Iraq. But then “the perfect storm” arrived, pushing him into energy issues. He tragically had two more close friends die from advanced improvised explosive devices that were primarily funded by Iranian oil money. That coupled with a recent 2006 mine explosion in West Virginia that killed 25 miners, and a recent email from the newly formed group Operation FREE, inspired him to jump into the energy fight. The trauma and violence of war and neoliberalism is what inspired him as he decided to be a productive force seeking to push against the current dispositif.

Jon was one of the first 100 veterans to work with OpFree, as they brought 100 veterans to Washington D.C., two from each state, to come and talk to Congress. While the bill that the vets were advocating was tabled, and eventually dismissed, Jon became

209 Ibid.
intrigued on the policy activism front. He spent the next two years bouncing between Washington D.C., West Virginia, and Boston, as he helped to look for new ways to educate the public and policy makers on the ties between National Security, foreign oil, and the military. He helped with a documentary called *The Burden*, which highlights these issues, as well as participated on panels telling his story as he went. At the time he had also started a job with a solar company that was working with the Department of Defense; however, with the 2011 sequester deal that loomed on the horizon, their work with the DoD came to a halt. This brought him to Cambridge Leadership Associates, which is a consulting firm that grew out of Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. The group works to bridge the stakeholders in different communities, including but not limited to: the politicians, policy writers, activists, community members, and businesses. It was this bridging of the communities that attracted Jon, as he saw a disconnect between the different communities that needed to be in touch with one another.

After our interview I was invited to a panel that Jon had organized. The panel was titled, “Mission Critical: Clean Energy and the U.S. Military,” and it was to take place in the law offices of “Simpson Thacher & Bartlett.” On the panel was: Richard G. Kidd IV (Deputy Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Army Energy and Sustainability office); Colonel Russell LaChance (West Point Academy Professor; Deputy Head, of the Chemistry & Living Sciences Dept.; and chair of the West Point Energy Counsel); Scott Sklar (President of the Stella Group, Ltd), and; Kitt Kennedy (President for the National Resource Defense Counsel). The panel was for an organization called E2 (Environmental

---

Entrepreneurs) that had hired Jon as a consultant. The panel was scheduled for a couple of hours after my interview so I walked over to the building in which it was being held.

The law offices of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett, were in a skyscraper that sits next to Grand Central Station. There were multiple points of security, as I had to show my ID at the entrance to the building and on the floor in which the panel was being held. I felt drastically underdressed for this more formal event as most everyone was wearing business suits, and while I was wearing a button up shirt, my jeans stood out like a sore thumb. Needless to say that this panel was not for just anybody who might be interested in the topic, which was obvious by the three confirmation emails that I had to send at different points over the previous month before it had taken place, and the thick security getting into the building. The crowd seemed to mostly be CEO’s, business owners, and Presidents or VP’s of a number of different organizations. The stories Jon had told me hours ago of being chained to bulldozers in West Virginia seemed like a very different crowd of activists then the suit and tie crowd here that made change with their pocketbooks and phone calls. It seemed that this was the type of crossover Jon had in mind in connecting different people and ideas.

The panel brought to light a number of interesting points about the current push to green the military. The first speaker, Richard Kidd, told us how the US Army is the largest utility consumer in the United States. It consumes 1.7 billion dollars worth of natural gas, electricity, steam, and water annually; it uses more than 65 ½ Trillion BTU’s of energy, which is more energy in a year than the countries of Jamaica and Iceland added together, with a bit extra left over; the Army manages as much land as the area of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Vermont combined; the US Army consumes enough
water to fill 53,000 Olympic sized swimming pools per year; and finally the Army spends 3 ½ billion dollars a year on liquid fuel. According to Kidd, all this means that the Army has a responsibility to lessen three types of risk: its financial risk; its “representational risk,” or in other words its impact on the communities it is around; and finally the “mission risk,” which is the National Security argument highlighted above. Thus Kidd in theory is working to make the military less of a presence. Furthermore, Kidd discussed the ways in which the Army is working to make “NetZero” bases, which produces as much energy as they consume. It is doing this not only by implementing the technology but also through institutionalizing this doctrine through policies and guidelines in their official memos and documents. The shift has been a challenge due to the sequester which froze federal funding in 2013, which Kidd states over 250 million dollars that would have gone to the green industry was lost in the first month. Kidd closed his comments by returning to Jon’s story, which Jon had told as an introduction to the panel:

[Jon’s story] represents an opportunity, because it exposes a collective memory that can be leveraged, anyone who has been there (Iraq) for a year or two can tell you a similar story, we want to leverage that experience in order to make change… We want every bullet to hit its target… Same with energy… we want energy to become a consideration in everything we do… So that we can change the way we build our doctrine.

This returns to the use of veterans as a tool to get a specific message out, particularly playing on the nationalism and patriotism of congress. Similarly, the other speakers also spoke to shifting the dialog, from the “Al Gore” environmentalism debate—which has

---


213 Ibid.
obviously become a scandalous position to take, especially amongst Republicans—to one of National Security and a pro-business capitalist argument, as it is the private sector which will aid this greening of the military, thus benefiting all. By the end of the panel I concluded that the aim of the panel was to educate business executives about the progress the military has taken in greening the military and to promote the future opportunities to work with the Department of Defense, so long as the sequester ends. It also seemed to be suggested that these business leaders could contact Congress and to try to end the sequester.

“This is what I fought for!”

While many of the veterans I interviewed were focused upon trying to make changes to help the environment, many others were focused upon using the environment as a tool to help themselves and other veterans heal from the trauma and violence of war. Furthermore, most of the veterans I talked with, who are working on issues of sustainability and the environment, all had similar stories to Jon, as they often found a future purpose and an activist cause while in nature. Some find it on the water, some in the woods, and some on a mountain. While veterans find this on their own, there are a number of organizations that work to help returning war veterans with issues such as PTSD. Many of these organizations use nature as a medium to reach these veterans. These organizations often have duel missions: one is to help veterans to heal, and the other is to expose them to the issues facing the environmental movement, with hope that they can become voices to aid the movement. Organizations like the Vet Voice Foundation, where Garett currently works, have had much success on both fronts, as they
connect veterans to a number of these different organizations, as well as take veterans to Washington DC in order to lobby Congress about these environmental issues.

While Vet Voice Foundation is not solely focused on environmental issues, it is a big part of their mission. The Board of Directors and Advisors is comprised of a number of veterans, and as I have heard Garett tell many times, they all feel that it is their duty to take care of the land that they swore to defend; it is these beautiful natural parts of America that many of them claim they were fighting for when they went to war. This sentiment is not exclusive to the vets of the Vet Voice foundation; as Stacy Bare describes in an article about bringing veterans to the wilderness, Stacy and a couple of vets were standing upon a mountain looking into the scenic vistas of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado when one of the veterans declared, “this is what I was fighting for!”

Furthermore, at a veterans’ retreat that I attended in the mountains this summer, the same discussion was had, as we felt that it was these beautiful parts of America that make it so great. The interesting thing about this common theme of fighting for nature is that it often comes in contrast to the hustle and bustle of the city. It’s not that they feel like the happenings of the city are less important, but rather that it is the beauty and grandeur of wilderness that moves and inspires veterans. Also, as was discussed in many of my interviews, in the Bare article, and other veteran circles I have been a part of, one of the difficulties many veterans have in returning from war is readjusting to everyday society. From the stresses of dealing with a busy parking lot, to the seemingly petty

---


215 The program was called “Huts for Vets,” which is a new program seeking to get veterans out in the wilderness by taking them up to the WWII 10th Mountain Division Huts, in the middle of the Rocky Mountains. It is discussed later in the chapter.
issues of the people around them, the stresses of war seem monumental in comparison. Every veteran who has been to war that I have talked with expressed something along these lines—within and outside of these interviews—as the reintegration into this daily life is very difficult. This often makes the veteran angry; for example, one of the veterans I interviewed, Brock stated:

...everyone was just so obsessed with their little trivial problems and their lives, and I was like I just came from a place where every day there is some baby that is brought into our base because it fell on the fire, cause they heat their homes with brush that they gather out in the desert and they have fires in their homes and babies fall in them. And little girls getting beat by their fathers, or have acid thrown on them, or little boys that have to work to be able to raise money for their families getting their fingers chopped off in tractors and people dying and getting shot, I don’t understand why you guys are complaining about these things...216

In nature, the veterans do not have to deal with these issues: there are no questions from ignorant civilians, there is no rush to be anywhere, there is only you and the wild. Though as Garett once said, “it’s not the wilderness that is wild and crazy, it’s the city.”

The healing happens by not only getting away from the stresses of everyday life, but also due to a number of different other factors. First, exercise has shown to be valuable in helping to reduce stress for many veterans, which nature and hikes are good at providing.217 This exercise does not necessarily have to be done in nature; however, when in nature one is usually getting some sort of exercise. The second factor comes from just being in nature and/or the woods. Over the past 15 years the Japanese have been studying what they call Shinrin-yoku, or forest bathing. One study shows the affects

216 Brock McIntosh, OpFree Vet Interview, October 25, 2013.
of taking walks through forests, and while cortisol levels in the brain rise whenever one goes for a walk, there are higher cortisol levels and they last longer when walking in a forest. They have even found that hospital patients who can merely see trees from their rooms will have lower levels of stress than those who cannot. Finally walking through the woods enacts Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). EMDR has become a therapy treatment used by psychologists across the country to help veterans with PTSD. Oddly enough Dr. Francine Shapiro discovered this in 1987, while walking through the forest. When walking by the trees, the eyes are constantly catching new targets to focus on, which makes the eyes rapidly move, which allows the brain to take the traumatic experience that the veteran is dealing with and reassociate it with something less traumatic—especially when walking as a part of a veteran group focused upon dealing with one’s war experiences. While the actual therapeutic process that is used by psychiatrists is much more involved—in that the therapist is getting the person to focus upon the traumatic experience and is doing cognitive work with the trauma directly—walking through the woods enacts that same eye movement. As inferred above, when a part of a group that is specifically focused upon dealing with these traumas, then it benefits the veterans because they are more than likely thinking about those experiences that they had while in the military.

---

219 Ibid.
221 Ibid.
I experienced this in a recent retreat into the mountains of Colorado with a group called *Huts for Vets*. The mission of the organization is simple, “To help veterans adjust to and enjoy civilian life by gaining tools for enhancing mental, physical, spiritual and emotional health.”\(^{223}\) The trip is comprised of around 9 veterans, 1 psychologist, 2 group facilitators, and 4 volunteer assistants. The trip is gender specific, so there are trips for all males and all females, in case a veteran’s trauma is tied to military sexual trauma. The trip started with a dinner and a night in an expensive ski home donated to them, in Snowmass, CO, where we all got to initially know one another. The next morning we got up early and headed to the trailhead. We would spend the day hiking just under 7 miles, gaining around 3,500 ft. of elevation. In the weeks prior to the trip the main facilitator sent out a number of emails encouraging the participants to do the readings and to exercise in preparation for the hike. Having lived in the mountains for a majority of my life, the elevation change was not a huge issue for me, but I definitely could have been in better shape, as the steady climb was a long difficult trek. Those from lower elevations definitely struggled a bit more; however, everyone went at their own pace. We would clump into packs and supported each other up the mountain.

The cabin we stayed at was 11,300 feet above elevation. It was originally a hut used by the Army’s 10\(^{th}\) Mountain Division, which was a special high altitude ski unit trained to fight in the alps of Germany during WWII. In the 70’s, former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and his wife frequented these huts and decided to refurbish them. The hut we stayed in was named after his wife: Margy’s hut. I found a certain amount of irony in the idea that our refuge for healing was the same as that of the

architect of the Vietnam War. Though there was also a certain poetry to it in his asking for forgiveness and his shift in thinking, and the parallels to what we sought in those high mountains.

Each day had a number of readings tied to it, where we would sit around and discuss the readings in relation to our experiences. The readings ranged from quotes and poems about the wilderness to an account of surviving a German concentration camp during WWII. Each reading had a purpose, whether it was to get us to reflect on the fragility of life or to understanding the grandeur of nature. The facilitators would guide us through the readings as we would discuss the meaning and content of each. Two of the sessions were guided by the psychologist who worked to teach us tips and tricks on how to deal with some of these traumas on our own; this included a sort of in-depth journaling and a self-Socratic conversation that forces one to interrogate oneself. The latter evokes Foucault’s idea of constantly turning in on oneself, asking why, and digging deeper to make one’s own truth more clear. In a seminar discussing a history of how the self has been situated philosophically and in religion, *Technologies of the Self*, Foucault states, “Often the discussion gravitates around and is phrased in terms of the Delphic principle, ‘Know yourself.’ To take care of oneself consists of knowing oneself. Knowing oneself becomes the object of the quest of concern for self. Being occupied with oneself and political activities are linked.”224 Therefore, this turning in on oneself, not only is to understand one’s truth, but this reflexiveness is political, as they understand how their truth fits into a larger picture.

On the third day we began our descent back to the trailhead. Everybody went at their own pace; at times walking with others, but often times walking alone, reflecting. These hours of reflection were calming, helping to soothe the anger and depression that had been building within my own personal life over the past few months before the retreat; it is something that I have dealt with regularly since my departure from the military, as my emotions have ebbed and flowed due to my PTSD. My times in nature healing from the traumas of war have been much more helpful than anything that the VA has provided. Everyone from the group praised the trip and the healing nature that it provided, and leaving was difficult. We had formed a bond, some said that it almost felt tighter than the bond that they had with those they served with. The bonds formed in the military, as outlined in chapter one, become longed for outside of the military. Often times veterans feel more comfortable talking and working with other veterans, who have been through similar situations, and are less likely to judge them for things they may be ashamed of or things they would have to explain because a civilian may not understand. The healing power of nature, coupled with the forming of these bonds, exponentially works to heal the trauma and violence of war. These experiences not only show the power of the environment to heal but also become another reason for us to protect and advocate for the environment as VA clinics fall short on helping returning veterans.

**Tying It All Together**

There is a long history of veteran activism on behalf of the environment, from President Roosevelt’s creation of national parks to David Brower’s founding of the Sierra Club. However, there seems to be a massive resurgence in the movement to protect the environment in the wake of 9/11. Perhaps it is a sign of the times, with the rise of
information and “debate” about global warming. More likely, it has become resurgent due to the motives of the most recent wars, which have been for and about resources, primarily maintaining and managing the global oil supply. This attempt to push away from these “resource wars” forces the security dispositif to alter not only the debate, but also the tactics of war, thus attempting to lessening the military’s presence. This can clearly be seen with the huge shift of dialog within the military around global warming, as it is now seen as a “threat to national security.” There has been a response and shift within the military, as it attempts to shift from the world’s largest polluter to a sustainable, responsible, steward of the land; though this stewardship is limited to the bases in the United States, as the lands on which the military fights is often left and treated as a wasteland—contaminated with many different toxins, but most common is depleted uranium. While there is still a long way to go for the military to actually achieve a NetZero status, there seems to be a shift that goes against the currents of the military industrial complex of the 20th century and the current neoliberal forces that seek massive environmental deregulations, even though environmentalism often works in favor of neoliberal ideals as it is more cost effective. Furthermore, while this seems to be a positive and responsible shift, there seems to be dangerous possible effects of a fully sustainable military, from a perpetual war apparatus to the machines of war that no longer need human interface. While these dangers seem imminent, the growing veterans’ movement on behalf of the environment is inspiring, though the military as an institution has a long way to go before it can really be considered green and no longer a presence.

I put debate in quotes because while it is a political debate within the United States, it is not a scientific debate.
From veterans organizing for local issues, like the Montana Wilderness Association—which is attempting to make more protected state and national parks in Montana—to national groups like Vet Voice Foundation—which works to put a spotlight on these local groups and helps to lobby these issues in Washington D.C.—getting outdoors and protecting nature has become an important veterans’ issue. The neoliberal discourse of “less government involvement and regulation,” which allows for businesses to exploit the land, is being contested by veterans who see their telluric bond as a motivating factor of what they swore to protect as soldiers. Furthermore, they see the land as sites of healing. With the lack of resources for the VA, primarily due to neoliberal cuts, programs like Huts for Vets, Veteran Expeditions, the Sierra Club’s Military Outings program, and many others, act as an alternative form of care that veterans can engage in to help combat issues like PTSD. Finally, this push for environmentalism acts as a site of resistance within the US neoliberal discourse that positions environmentalists as radicals or “eco-terrorists,” and instead uses the patriotism and reputation of veterans as tools to shift the framing of land stewardship into something that should be a social responsibility.

“The old Lakota was wise. He knew that a man’s heart away from Nature becomes hard; he knew that lack of respect for growing, living things soon lead to a lack of respect for humans too.”

-Luther Standing Bear (1868-1939/Oglala Sioux Chief)
CHAPTER 5: FIGHTING VIOLENCE IN THE RANKS

Kirby Dick’s 2012 documentary The Invisible War shocked much of the United States as to the epidemic level of sexual assaults within the armed forces. While this was not surprising to most demilitarization activists who have for years pointed to the high levels of sexual violence in and around military bases, it definitely shocked the general public and those within the government. Weeks before the documentary’s release it was screened by Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, who two days later would call for a change in policy when dealing with sexual assaults.\(^\text{226}\) The Invisible War would win over a dozen awards and was nominated for an Academy Award for best documentary, gaining national acclaim.\(^\text{227}\)

The documentary highlighted the story of a number of women who had been sexually assaulted while in the military. Most of the women were not only raped but also physically beaten by men who were often their superior officers within their chain of command. The trauma continues to follow many of the participants of the documentary in the wake of their tragedy as they try to pick up the pieces, and as they move forward in their lawsuit against the military. The film also highlights the numerous military sex scandals that had happened over the past 20 years including: the 1991 Navy Tailhook scandal, the 1996 Army Aberdeen scandal, and the 2003 Air Force Academy scandal. These scandals show that this is not a recent phenomenon,\(^\text{226}\)


but something that has long existed within the military. In an age of heroization of the military it was a shock for many that this was such a systemic problem, thus causing an uproar of activism calling for change within the military. Leading the charge was an organization of veteran women known as the Service Women’s Action Network (SWAN), who was highlighted in the documentary.

Throughout the movie and in the months following the film, a number of revealing statistics came to light around sexual assault and the military. A 2012 report from SWAN reveals:

- 3,192 military sexual assaults were reported in fiscal year 2011, an increase of 1% from FY 2010 and a 1.1% decrease from FY 2009.

- While sexual assaults are generally under-reported, under-reporting is exacerbated in military settings. In 2010, out of the 19,000 sexual assaults that occurred in the military, the Department of Defense (DOD) estimates that only 13.5% of survivors reported assault. It is difficult to determine the actual number of assaults in 2011 since the Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Member (WGRA) was not conducted in 2011.

- In 2010, approximately 55% of women and 38% of men reported that their assailant sexually harassed or stalked them prior to the incident of rape or sexual assault.

- In 2011, 1,518 of the 3,192 reported sexual assaults were considered actionable by the military, a decrease of 22% from the previous year. Prosecution rates for sexual predators are astoundingly low in 2011, less than 8% of reported cases went to trial. Of the cases that went to trial, 191 subjects were convicted, resulting in 148 offenders serving jail sentences and 122 being discharged. An estimated 10% of perpetrators resigned in lieu of courts - martial (RILO), which effectively means the military allowed rapists to quit their jobs in order to avoid facing charges. Additionally, 2 out 3 convicted sex offenders’ cases are discharged or dismissed from the military.
1 in 3 convicted military sex offenders remain in the military. SWAN advocates DOD policy should discharge all convicted military sex offenders, eliminating the need to establish a military sex offender registry. Currently, the Navy is the only branch of the military that discharges all convicted sex offenders. Convicted navy sex offenders that are not punitively discharged are given an administrative separation.\textsuperscript{228}

The statistics highlighted by SWAN in this report only cover through 2011, and as the Pentagon released a new report, there was a 50% increase in sexual assaults reported.\textsuperscript{229} The 2012 report shows an estimated 26,000 women and men were sexually assaulted, though some claim that this is not an increase in sexual assaults but rather an increase of people who feel comfortable in reporting their assault, due to the changes made in the reporting process.\textsuperscript{230} The most recent report shows even more cause for concern as the changing of how the question was asked raised the amount of “penetrative assaults” substantially. Under the new methodology 11% of men reported before, whereas now 35% said they were assaulted; for women the number jumped from 29% to 43%.\textsuperscript{231}

However, any changes that have occurred in the military’s procedures dealing with these incidents have been minimal. For many activists the main issue is the removal of decision making from the chain of command, which has not been

\textsuperscript{228} Service Women’s Action Network, Rape, Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the Military, July 2012, http://servicewomen.org/media/publications/#factSheet. These statistics are pulled directly from this report.


\textsuperscript{230} Ibid.

addressed. This has been the focal point of most of the activists’ calls for change. By keeping the commanders in the loop of the reporting process, many who are assaulted fear retribution from their chain of command, as often the perpetrator is of a higher rank than the survivor. This causes a number of different possible conflicts of interest, from the command choosing to protect fellow officers and friends, to not wanting their command to be tarnished with allegations of sexual assault, which would be a reflection of their leadership. As one veteran told me in an interview, “Adding impartiality is a necessity because the conflict of interest is too great even for the good ones. Because sometimes even those who want to do the right thing are caught between a rock and a hard place.”

Furthermore, not only is the investigation pursued within the direct chain of command of those who are accused, but they also decide the punishment. This is highlighted in the final statistic above, in which one in three convicted military sex offenders stay in the military; more often than not they are barely punished.

One woman who has been fighting to make a change in these policies, while also working to help survivors, is founder of the website militarysexualtrauma.org, Jessica Kenyon. In 2005 Jessica joined the Army as an Apache helicopter crew chief, and while in her advanced training unit, she was constantly sexually harassed by one of her training instructors. After reporting the incident she was treated as a pariah by her chain of command, and nothing came of her report. Once she went to her first duty station, her troubles did not go away but rather intensified, as others had heard of her reporting of the incidents while at training. She was stigmatized for

---

this past report, which made her weary of reporting future incidents to her chain of command. Her hell would intensify as she not only faced discrimination, but then was sexually harassed again, as well as sexually assaulted while in Korea.

The sexual assault would leave her pregnant with her perpetrator’s baby, while her command threatened to reprimand her rather than her offender. Only after telling them her story, and after they conducted a lie detector test on the perpetrator, which he failed, did they determine that her story was true. While they sided with her and did not punish her, they only gave him a slight reduction in rank and 45 days of extra duty. This worked out in his favor as he wished to retire early and the reduction in rank allowed him to do so.

Jessica wanted to stay in the military, but her bout with depression was too great and she received a medical discharge tied to her pregnancy. Upon her exit from the military she started the website mentioned above in order to help other soldiers navigate the processes within the military for reporting sexual assault. She has worked with SWAN and Senator Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY) on some of the suggestions for changes to policy, as Jessica’s first hand knowledge of the system was beneficial for forming a more comprehensive policy. SWAN has also referred survivors of sexual assault to her in order for them to find help with how to deal with their cases, as she has become a sort of private case manager for these issues. Most recently she has had to take a break from the activism because the stresses

---

233 Extra duty in the military is an additional 2-6 hours a day of work. Lower ranking enlisted soldiers will usually have to do manual labor, from yard work to cleaning common areas. Upper enlisted soldiers and officers who receive extra duty usually only have to supervise the lower enlisted soldiers conducting extra duty, or spend time doing office work. So really it is just a slap on the wrist.
have become too great and she has needed to take time to practice self-care. She also is working on her own case with the military as she seeks to upgrade her discharge status from a general medical discharge to an honorable discharge, and she is also trying to navigate the VA system to get help and reparations for the Military Sexual Trauma (MST) that she got from her experiences.

**Sexual Violence in War**

This epidemic level of sexual violence is nothing new within the military, as there has been a rape culture within and around militaries for a long time. In Ruth Seifert’s essay “The Logic of Sexual Violence,” she examines sexual violence within war, but this also helps to expose violence against women more broadly. Seifert’s essay looks at both rape and torture as tactics of war and seeks to understand the ways in which rape is used strategically and politically in order to exert, gain, and maintain power. Seifert first debunks the notion that rape—specifically used in war—is an act of sexual desires, as it is so often framed. To do so she looks at the biological aspects of aggression and testosterone, and while she does find some correlations, this still must not be seen as a reason for rape in war. Seifert states:

> Wars, violent conflicts between people, as well as sexual attacks on women, are historical and social processes that are carried out collectively and, thus, must have collective meaning. They are not the sum total of a couple of hundred thousand genetic predispositions for aggressiveness. Biology cannot claim to have an immediate and privileged access to reality. On the contrary: Biology, itself, is a social construct that—like all other modes of knowing—can only become a way of knowing within a certain
Therefore, knowing that the act of rape is not at all about sexuality, but rather is an act of power, we see certain parallels between rape, torture, and war in general. Each is meant to dominate, humiliate, and destroy the enemy. These forms of violence not only target the individuals who are personally subjected to the violence and not only shatter their sense of self, but also targets the social and cultural identity of a community and/or nation. As Seifert points out:

Torture is an act of hatred and destruction of humankind. Yet, it is a highly political and, thus, “human” act. The characteristics of rape fit with this script. For what happens in rape, that is, forcible entry into the body is a characteristic of severe torture and constitutes the severest attack imaginable on the most intimate self and the dignity of a person.

Cynthia Enloe takes this instrumentalization of rape a step further by linking it to a specific military tactic called Low-Intensity Conflict (LIC). Rape is now used as a tactic, it is now used to promote fear, get information, shame a population, shame individuals, and to try and create a hierarchy of power. This doctrine of LIC has become imbedded within a military doctrine that is taught to countries across the globe that have been trained by US forces. Enloe states:

The hallmarks of the LIC doctrine, taught in American military academies, war colleges, and training courses were (1) official denial of

---


235 Ibid. 150.

236 Ibid. 151-152

open warfare; (2) a view of rural development projects as instruments of national security; (3) *a presumption that civilians can be as dangerous as uniformed armed guerrillas*; (4) the imposition of the label “communist” to discredit a wide range of government critics; (5) a strategic emphasis on psychological pressure; (6) the selective removal of populations; (7) the organization of local militias; and (8) *the refined use of sophisticated methods of surveillance and interrogation.*

Furthermore, Enloe shows how this LIC doctrine blurs the boundaries of violence on the “warfront” vs. the “homefront,” as it is implemented specifically upon women in the community that seek to strengthen the community, like teachers, nurses, and doctors. This is meant to destroy the civil society of the target population. There is a penetration into the mind, body, and soul, in order to not only destroy communities but it also creates a machine, that of the soldier who perpetuates these crimes, that hates the enemy and can kill on command. For a recent example of this, one can look south to the current trial of former dictator Jose Efrain Rios Montt. Many women have recently come out and testified to the brutal rapes that were committed by the Guatemalan Army. As one survivor has stated, “After women suffered sexual violence, they were often rejected by their communities and not accepted back. There’s still stigma attached to sexual violence.” Furthermore, there is substantial evidence that the United States trained the Guatemalan forces and that there was CIA operatives and military officials on the ground helping to coordinate

---

238 Ibid. [Emphasis Added]
240 Ibid.
Guatemala’s LIC operations. These characteristics of rape and torture as a tactic within war partially shows the presence of the military as it describes the violence, humiliation, and reaffirmation of a masculine hierarchy inherent within the military. Enloe describes this sort of rape as an “instrument of National Security.” She also describes another sort of rape, “recreational rape.” This not only covers historical tragedies such as Japan’s comfort women, but also the way in which soldiers who rape local women in countries they are deployed to, is often not punished or investigated by either the military or the local police forces. This lack of accountability for soldiers in foreign lands creates a space in which rape becomes normalized, which allows the common occurrence of soldiers raping those whom they work with.

**Violence in the Ranks**

The affirmation of this masculine identity within the military is not just perpetuated inside the military but also throughout civil society. As many feminist scholars have discussed, the military is seen naturally as a masculine institution where feminine attributes are not only discouraged but also often punished. Furthermore, the military is often seen as an institution that one joins to ‘find one’s masculinity,’ especially in an age where the youth is often seen as an emasculated culture. As V. Spike Peterson points out, though, within the military there are multiple competing

---


243 Sjoberg and Via, *Gender, War, and Militarism*.

244 Ibid. 20-24.
masculinities, and these masculinities are hierarchalized. At the top you have the hypermasculine fields that encompass the combat arms occupations, and on the bottom you have the more feminized desk jobs. With combat arms positions seen as the most valorized, there is a drive by those in other fields to try and compete with the combat arms fields. This drive is not just a personal competition trying to satisfy one’s own ego, but it is also professionally driven, as those who have served in war are often promoted much more quickly then those who have not. Both the need to satisfy the ego and the opportunity for advancement are apparent on a daily basis, especially in daily banter and jokes, for example, those who are not combat arms are often called names by combat arms soldiers, like POGS (Person Other than Grunt), REMFS (Rear Echelon Mother Fuckers, for those who don’t deploy), or FOBBITS (bases in the combat zone are called Forward Operating Base’s or FOB’s, thus the FOBBIT is a reference to JRR Tolkien’s mythical hobbits, who never leave home). Thus there is a constant culture of attempting to remasculate oneself, which often happens through violence.

This remasculating violence is a part of the presence, which resides on and around military bases, tied to issues like domestic violence and rape. The Invisible War has given considerable attention to the problem of Military Sexual Trauma, and there has been a lot of news recently as to the statistics of sexual assaults within the military, as highlighted above. The most recent stories have exposed perpetrators like Sgt. 1st Class Gregory McQueen, who was Fort Hood’s sexual abuse coordinator. McQueen is accused of not only sexually assaulting a female subordinate, but also of

---

245 Ibid. 23.
running a prostitution ring, in which he was prostituting lower enlisted females to other male soldiers. There was also the recent case of Air Force Lt. Col. Jeffrey Krusinski—who was in charge of the Air Force’s sexual abuse prevention program—was charged with sexual assault for drunkenly groping women. In both of these cases the men were not only high ranking officials but were also in trusted positions, in which they were supposed to act as allies, and in both cases they abused their powers; one even used his position as a tool for sex, which highlights the lack of agency that many women face within the military. However, this betrayal is not limited to the sexual assault of women, as the stories of the sexual assault of men in the military are becoming more prevalent.

*Male MST*

While the stories of the sexual assaults of men are now becoming more common, they are not new. The 2014 GQ expose on men sexually assaulted in the military highlights veterans as far back as the 1960’s. The article opens by stating, “Sexual assault is alarmingly common in the U.S. military, and more than half of the victims are men. According to the Pentagon, thirty-eight military men are sexually assaulted every single day.” With the high number of male soldiers being sexually assaulted on a daily basis, it is a wonder that this has not come to light earlier. However, as the article details, many of the men who are sexually assaulted do not report the incident for a number of reasons. First, they state that they were ashamed

---


247 Ibid.
of what occurred.\textsuperscript{248} Secondly, many of the assaults were perpetrated by a group of soldiers, and they often outranked the survivor.\textsuperscript{249} Therefore, they not only feared for their lives, which were often threatened, but also they feared for their careers. Aaron Belkin’s work, \textit{Bring Me Men}, highlights similar stories of male rape throughout the military.\textsuperscript{250} Some of the rapes were acts of masculinization, some were rituals approved by those in command in order to either punish or put soldiers in their place.\textsuperscript{251} While in the military, I witnessed something similar in what at the time I thought was a funny prank. One of the mechanics, often thought of as a “know-it-all,” was tied down by fellow soldiers and was rectally penetrated with a banana. There were no repercussions for those who perpetrated this heinous assault, as many in our unit not only saw it as funny and as “boys being boys,” but he was also victim blamed as many thought that the sergeant “had it coming to him.”

As Judith Herman points out, ‘almost one in five (19.2 percent) of rape survivors attempt suicide.’\textsuperscript{252} This coupled with the high rates of suicide by soldiers and veterans due to war trauma, makes male survivors of sexual assault a particularly vulnerable population with possibly high rates of suicide. Studies point to a number of reasons for the high rates of suicide recently within and around the military, from the longer and more frequent deployments to the higher incidents of

\textsuperscript{248} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{249} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{251} Ibid. 92.
\textsuperscript{252} Judith Herman, \textit{Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence--from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror} (New York: Basic Books, 1997). Pg. 50.
nonfatal trauma. Sociologists Harold Braswell and Howard Kushner agree that these are factors; however, they also feel that the culture of the military embeds a "masculine fatalism" into soldiers. This masculine fatalism is in part what I described in my autoarcheological chapter where the individual is stripped down and the value of the group is elevated to supreme. Furthermore, this devaluation of the individual is tied to a particular kind of masculinity in which the value of life is lessened, and thus becomes expendable, whereas the group is the higher value. Therefore, when individuals become the weakest link within a unit, their trauma becomes feminized, and they become a target that must be toughened up. If the individuals are not able to become a part of the group again, a particular shame makes them feel ostracized, thus leading them to suicide. Again, if we pair this conceptualization of a masculine fatalism amongst soldiers with sexual assault of male soldiers, there is the possibility of higher incidents of suicide.

The masculine fatalism concept relies on the social bonds created within the military. These bonds are often similar to and sometimes stronger than familial bonds. Thus, when Jessica told me in our interview that after sexual assaults there is often the deep feeling of betrayal, she compared this to the betrayal of a survivor of incest. In Herman’s extensive work on trauma, she looks at child incest survivors, and this sense of betrayal is aimed at the family as the child often feels that both

---

254 Ibid.
parents are complicit in the act of sexual assault.\textsuperscript{255} One survivor that she interviews states, “I have so much anger, not so much about what went on at home, but that nobody would listen... At the time nobody could admit it, they just let it happen. So I had to go and be crazy.”\textsuperscript{256} Similarly, in my interview with Jessica, she talks specifically about this betrayal when she states:

Part of the problem is that nobody is on the victims’ side, because if you support the victim your career is on the line because you are betraying the brotherhood... I treat many of the survivors as incest survivors, because in basic training, they break you down and you are told this is your family, you listen to your commander more strictly than your parents, they are in charge of your food, your cloths, and wellbeing, and everything under the sun. So when an incident happens there is a high level of betrayal. And when that betrayal happens it is much closer to treating a case of incest than a regular case of sexual assault because the system broke down, like a family betrayal. This person was supposed to be a father figure, or a brother, and they have betrayed a level of trust not often found in the civilian world outside of the family. The betrayal is huge. Many times they will say that the sexual assault was bad but the betrayal was much worse, because they tried to get justice, help, or support, and they all falter. The betrayal is not just by the perpetrator, but also from the command, other soldiers, the whole system.\textsuperscript{257}

While this feeling of betrayal is general to all survivors of Military Sexual Trauma (MST), Jessica states that this becomes even more intense for male survivors. As the GQ expose points out this is in part due to the hypermasculine culture in and around the military and the stigma attached to MST, in that it is supposed to only be a problem for women.\textsuperscript{258} While the idea of it being a “women’s problem” is problematic in and of itself, it is not just a problem within the military but also a

\textsuperscript{255} Herman, Trauma and Recovery. Pg 101.
\textsuperscript{256} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{257} Kenyon, MST.org Interview.
\textsuperscript{258} Penn, “Son, Men Don’t Get Raped.”
problem once these soldiers leave the military and seek help from the VA. As the expose highlights:

Unfortunately for male victims, the VA's facilities for MST focus largely on women. In fact, the statute that establishes these programs makes mention only of female victims. Interviewees for this story indicate that the quality and availability of outpatient treatment for men is spotty at best. Some men report being denied care altogether.\(^{259}\)

While the care for women survivors of MST at the VA is not great, it is much better for them than it has been for male survivors of sexual assault. However, the level of care varies greatly from VA facility to VA facility; some facilities have counselors and often support groups, which is probably the most important part of the healing process for these veterans. This restoration of social bonds is important not only for survivors of sexual assault, but also for veterans suffering from PTSD, as these groups are able to relate stories and experiences which allow the veterans to know that they are not alone in the traumas that they have experienced.\(^{260}\) I extend this group cohesion and healing to all veterans activist groups that I am looking at throughout this project. As Herman points out:

> When groups develop cohesion and intimacy, a complex mirroring process comes into play. As each participant extends herself to others, she becomes more capable of receiving the gifts that others have to offer. The tolerance, compassion, and love she grants to others begin to rebound upon herself. Though this type of mutually enhancing interaction can take place in any relationship, it occurs most powerfully in the context of a group.\(^{261}\)

\(^{259}\) Ibid.  
\(^{260}\) Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*. Pg 215.  
\(^{261}\) Ibid. 215-216.
While Herman is discussing groups specifically geared towards healing, activist circles have many of the same elements involved from a goal-oriented drive to the need for empowerment. There is also a parallel in this mirroring process whereas when one heals they understand what the military is, and what is needed in order to heal from war. There is a similarity between war and healing from war, a mirror of sorts.

*Male Sexual Trauma Activism*

There is only one national organization focused specifically on exposing the issue of male MST (Mr. MST). There are also a number of organizations offering services to treat men with MST, organizations like: Protect our Defenders, Male Survivor.Org, Rape, and the Abuse & Incest National Network. Mr. MST is a small organization that is headed by survivor Brian Lewis, who has become one of the faces for the subject, appearing on many different news programs. They seek to make change in coordination with groups like SWAN, working to raise awareness and make legislative changes to the military, which seek to help survivors.

Most of the activism around this subject though is being done by individuals acting as geocorporeal actors seeking to create more of a critical mass of survivors coming forward in order to make the problem more known. As Basham states of the geocorporeal actor, “Such attempts to order bodies can affect how corporeality is experienced and ‘the corporeal power or capacity’ of differentially embodied soldiers ‘to act in various ways,’ and as ordering practices in the everyday lives of geocorporeal actors, gender, sexuality and race can also reinforce wider rationalities
While Basham is discussing the way in which bodies are ordered within the military, the trauma of rape coupled with that militarized body, and the subsequent call to action through activism, makes their subjectivity an interesting cross section of understanding. One survivor who embodies this geocorporality, Heath Phillips, has taken to multiple forums, from Twitter to YouTube, to expose his trauma and to encourage other veterans to come forward. In one interview Phillips states:

I’m speaking out now, partially because of how I was treated, also because I don’t think that other people who have had this happen to them should stay hidden anymore. I think we all need to speak out. There’s unity in voices. We could move mountains together if we pushed. If we stay hidden, we’re not going to get anywhere. Every single time I talk about this, I feel like I’m shedding a piece of skin off me that has been holding me in, and yeah it hurts, but afterwards the calm is so much better than that hurt.263

In this testimony we see a couple of things. First and foremost we see a call to arms for male survivors to come forward to try and make change. This call to arms is especially important since male MST is not commonly known nor is it thought of when thinking about the sexual assault epidemic within the military. Secondly we see a testament to the healing aspects of parrhēsia discussed in chapter 2. If more men came out and spoke of their experiences with MST, perhaps we could see a reduction in suicide rates within the military. While I am not directly correlating the two, I do think that there could be some parallels.

Conclusion

The push to expose sexual trauma for men does a number of things. First and foremost it shows the rampant sexual trauma throughout the military, against both women and men. It shows the inefficiencies that the military has in dealing with sexual assaults, both inside and outside the military. Finally it works to shift the discourse of who gets raped. As Belkin points out:

The prevailing frame of rape as a crime against women should be seen as both a cause and effect of broader set of gendered discourses about sexual violence in the military and civilian culture... Even the most subtle decisions about how to tabulate and report data can contribute to the framing of sexual violence in the military as a women’s issue. Because affirmative male response rates to survey questions about sexual violence tend to be low, Pentagon studies can downplay and even erase the incidence of male-male rape by reporting percentages rather than absolute numbers of men and women who indicate that they have been victimized.  

Therefore activists such as Jessica, Mr. MST, Heath Phillips, are geocorporeal actors trying to push the sexual dispositif in the military by exposing those inefficiencies of military surveys. They do this while also trying to heal from traumas and the ways in which they were told to be certain types of subjects by the sexual dispositif of the military. Their activism also seeks to effect current and future military policy. The shifting of military policy has the potential to shift the gender/sexual dispositif within the military. The shift means that the way in which the military forms, controls, and maintains gender subjectivity is thus tempered. If the militaries grip on gender subjectivity is tenuous then there are less formations of hypermasculinity

264 Belkin, *Bring Me Men*. Pg. 86.
and less of a need to prove ones masculinity. Furthermore, the ways in which women experience the military can be more equitable.

Their activism is also seeking more accountability within the military. This accountability would lessen the hierarchical power within the military, thus creating space for truth to be heard and justice to be served. This would more than likely not just affect the gender/sexuality dispositif within the military, but all hierarchical aspects of the military, including racial hierarchies. Furthermore, this could allow the space for accountability around injustices such as war crimes committed, and subsequently voiced by groups like Iraq Veterans Against the War, in forums similar to the Winter Soldier testimony. Therefore we see the importance of the activism of these activists who seek to shift the gender/sexuality dispositif of the military. However, it is important to remain vigilant in this fight against the patriarchy imbedded within the military because as Cynthia Enloe points out, “[P]atriarchy has survived because of its facile adaptivness, not because of its rigidity.”265

Finally, the maintenance of the hypermasculine male within the military, which is created through this imbrication of masculine discourses and tactics, highlights the ways in which violence is used to maintain the neoliberal order. From using rape as a tool of war to the continuance of rape being swept under the rug “recreationally,” rape will continue to be accepted in the military, unless a massive cultural overhaul takes place. But as of now, it is sadly too valuable of a culture to tear down as it protects the western neoliberal democratic state and its ideals, which is why we still live in a perpetual rape culture.

---

265 Enloe, Maneuvers. Pg. 285.
CHAPTER 6: SERVICE, CITIZENSHIP, AND THE “AMERICAN DREAM”

Since the dawn of the nation, immigrants have served within the US military in times of war. Craig Shagin points out in his article Deporting Private Ryan, “Over a half-million served in the Union Army during the Civil War. Similarly, large numbers of foreign-born fought in World War I, World War II, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars.”266 Many came to become a part of a new nation, many were leaving behind treacherous situations, and many were merely seeking a new life. While the range of reasons are vast, there is often a common thread that many of these immigrants held: the idea that by joining the US military and serving the country they could become citizens of the United States of America. As of 2008, there were more than 65,000 immigrants currently serving in the Armed Forces, with about half of those naturalized due to their military service.267

With a sizable amount of immigrant soldiers serving in times of war, this chapter will examine the “war imaginaries” that these immigrants are a part of and the ways in which these war imaginaries interact with the concepts of service to one’s country, citizenship, and the idea of the “American Dream.” To do so I will primarily look at three stories: the story of Hector, a Mexican immigrant who honorably served in the US Army and was deported after committing a crime following his exit from the military; Jules, the grandson of a WWII Filipino war

veteran, who joined the Army and later fled to Canada to become a war resistor; and
the story of Matt Zeller and his Afghan interpreter Janis, who saved many American
lives as Matt fought to get Janis US citizenship.

What is a War Imaginary?

Most uses of the concept “war imaginary,” have primarily been within a conception
of a “cold war imaginary.” What is being discussed here is similar but has a more
multifaceted meaning, as it is more spatially diverse. The jumping off point here is
from a larger concept, which that of a “social imaginary.” Manfred Steger poignantly
frames the social imaginary in his book *The Rise of the Global Imaginary*, by stating:

> Constituting the macromapping of social and political space through
which we perceive, judge, and act in the world, this deep-seated
mode of understanding provides the most general parameters within
which people imaging their communal existence... the social
imaginary is neither a theory nor an ideology, but an implicit
“background” that makes possible the communal practices and a
widely shared sense of their legitimacy.\(^{268}\)

Charles Taylor, whom Steger is drawing from, goes on to explain that it is
“background,” because, “It can never be adequately expressed in the form of explicit
doctrines because of its unlimited and indefinite nature.”\(^ {269}\) With this “unlimited and
indefinite nature” in mind, the use of it here becomes a bit more focused, as this
chapter examines the way in which war is imagined in relation to the US military.

There are a number of aspects to this imaginary, from the image of war to the
image of the military apparatus. Furthermore, there is a multiplicity of war
imaginaries that relate to and can be tied to the imaginary being proposed here, i.e.

\(^{268}\) Manfred B. Steger, *The Rise of the Global Imaginary: Political Ideologies from the
French Revolution to the Global War on Terror* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2009). Pg. 6.

the war on drugs, the war on women, the war on men, the war on Christmas; the list is again unlimited and indefinite. However, the scope of this chapter is focused on the war imaginary within and around the US military apparatus, those who join the military, and the wars in which it has historically and is currently engaged in.

The war imaginary can be seen as the *chameleon skin* of the US security dispositif as it is a constantly shifting image meant to perpetuate and maintain US militarism. The war imaginary has a reciprocal relationship with the security dispositif as it is formed by and helps to shape the policies, institutions, practices, ideology, and discourse of the security dispositif. However, there is not a singular war imaginary within the security dispositif, as there is a multiplicity of imaginaries, though it is the security dispositif that holds them all together. For example, within the military a soldier who has a racist construction of the war imaginary, who fights so that he can kill Muslims, can fight next to and be intimately bonded with a soldier who has a more liberal construction of the war imaginary, and fights to promote democracy and freedom. The differing war imaginaries are the product of an unlimited amount of variables, from personal experiences to media constructions of war. Cynthia Weber’s work, *Imagining America at War*, attempts to capture the multiplicity of war imaginaries within the United States, post 9/11. Her focus is upon film representations of society—primarily around war movies—in order to examine the moral identity and to find out who the “we” is in the American imaginary.\(^{270}\) As Weber points out, the films she examined, “were mobilized in post-9/11 cinema to construct US individual, national, and international subjectivities as

well as diverse historical trajectories for ‘becoming a moral American’ and a ‘moral America.’”

The subjects of this chapter further this variety of a war imaginary. Hector holds his service as the most honorable thing he had done in his life and would join again in a heartbeat. However, his crime and nationality pushes him outside the US soldier “hero” narrative. Jules on the other hand saw the things he was doing in the military as unhonorable, which is what drove him to go Absent Without Leave (AWOL), which has now made him a criminal as he tries to stay in Canada. So we already see here two similar yet very opposing views of veterans and their time in service. The story of Matt and Janis is a bit more nuanced in that while Janis was a contractor for the US Army in Afghanistan, his service to the soldiers created a sense that he was “one of us” and deserves US citizenship.

The next section will specifically examine the image of war. War is often depicted as a clean fight for democracy, a process that defines who “we” are in opposition to “them,” and portrays the idea that “we are safer here because we are fighting them over there.” Within this image of war we see how the immigrant soldier fits into the war imaginary.

*The Image of War*

The image of war has transformed with the evolution of media technologies. As time and space have become condensed due to the transportability of information and images, we have the ability to view the war from anywhere at anytime. However, while the image of war is available at all times, through multiple mediums, it is often...
filtered through particular lenses that sustain the need for war. Walter Benjamin’s essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* exposes the way in which fascists have politicized art in order to portray war as an aesthetic of beauty within formations of violence. Benjamin goes on to say, “The destructiveness of war furnishes proof that society has not been mature enough to incorporate technology as its organ, that technology has not been sufficiently developed to cope with the elemental forces of society.” Over the course of the next fifty-five years after this essay, society would learn to incorporate this technology as an organ, though not as Benjamin might expect. In Jean Baudrillard’s book, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, he explains how technology has become a virtual organ, where war is viewed through the multiple screens that render the enemy as an imaginary threat. This simulacrum of violence creates an image of war that is clean, where the dead are erased from the image of war. The cleansing of war is primarily in response to previous wars, specifically Vietnam, where the atrocities of war like the My Lai massacre shocked the world and shifted the imaginary of the war to a more negative perception. In recent wars, the dead are rarely viewed, in order to preserve the cleanliness of war; for example, President Bush Sr. banned the photography of returning caskets of fallen soldiers. The viewing of atrocities has the ability to shift the image of war, so when the photos at Abu Ghraib or the videos exposed by

---

274 Ibid. 252.
275 Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. Pg. 34-36.
276 “U.S. Lifts Photo Ban on Military Coffins - The New York Times.”
the Wikileaks and Chelsea Manning (discussed in Chapter 2) came to light, the image of the Iraq war thus became dirty, and support for the war began to wane.

Another aspect that comes with the image of war is the question, “what are we fighting for?” The current struggle within the Middle East is often framed in the context of a “struggle for democracy and freedom.” This struggle works on two levels: creating democracy and freedom for those that the US is purporting to “liberate from oppression;” while preserving the democracy and freedom of those in America. While the former includes a global market rhetoric, the latter perpetuates a nationalistic characteristic. The image of war within the current wars being fought is intimately linked to the events of 9/11, whereas “we” are fighting “them”: “We” being democratic nations who promote free trade and capitalism, versus “them” being Islamic terrorist assemblages that were the aggressors on 9/11. The US maintains the constant backdrop of 9/11 in order to maintain the moral boundaries and justify its need for war, whether through the rhetoric of needing to get those responsible, or in the rhetoric of fear of another 9/11 happening. By fighting wars across the globe, the US maintains that it is safer here while it fights the enemy over there.277

These moral justifications within this image of war also work to erase certain parts of history. So when the US portrays itself as the innocent victim, asking “why do they hate us so much,” those who are asking this are forgetting the years of US involvement and tampering with Middle Eastern politics, and ignoring the constant

bombing and harassment of Islamic nations.\textsuperscript{278} As Michael Shapiro points out in his book \textit{Violent Cartographies:}

\begin{quote}
...the legitimation narratives of state power that suppress the violence through which the territorial systems of states became virtually the only recognizable map. Without recognizing what this map has repressed, we cannot recover an important dimension of the history of warfare and therefore develop an effective ethical and political apprehension that engages peoples who are not easily coded within the dominant system of sovereignties. It is necessary, therefore, to elaborate the forgetfulness and repression that accompanied the production of the international imaginary, the dominant territorial moral geography.\textsuperscript{279}
\end{quote}

This passage highlights the ways in which histories—even atrocities—can be erased in the name of promoting a moral and righteous need for war, which brings the image of war full circle as it is thus cleansed of moral apprehension. This opens a multitude of justifications for people to join the military, thus creating an image of the military that is a morally justifiable organization whose sole function is to perpetuate democracy and freedom worldwide.

\textit{The Image of the Military}

Since the events of 9/11, more than 3 million+ people have joined the military, with a large portion citing the events of 9/11 as a motivation for joining.\textsuperscript{280} Their perceived patriotism perpetuates the image of war described above, as it also creates a hero narrative in which the soldier is the defender of freedom and fighter of injustice. This narrative has been revived from the WWII image of war and the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{278} Steger, \textit{The Rise of the Global Imaginary}. Pg 218-220.
\item \textsuperscript{279} Michael J. Shapiro, \textit{Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War} (U of Minnesota Press, 1997). Pg 21-22.
\end{itemize}
milita

ture.

Whereas soldiers were needed to fight the evils of Hitler’s totalitarian Nazi regime, today “we” fight the evils of Osama bin Laden’s terrorist assemblage, al-Qaeda. Because soldiers are perceived as sacrificing their lives for others’ freedom, they are thus revered as the pinnacle of honor, which often carries down into multiple generations, making joining the military a family tradition.281

While patriotism and tradition provide a large justification for joining—especially between the years of 2001-2005282—another reason lies in the benefits provided to those who join the military. With as little as a General Equivalency Degree (GED), a fairly clean criminal record, and no major health problems, anyone can join the military. If the military is behind on their quota for recruits, there are waivers that can supersede any deficiency the recruit may have. By joining the military, soldiers are paid a meek but steady salary with opportunity for advancement, given training to their field of work,283 given the opportunity for higher education support, given free health care for themselves and their family, paid extra for food and housing, paid more depending on family status, and often given the opportunity to travel the world.284 The recruitment process often glorifies the benefits and patriotism aspects of the image of the military, while mitigating the drawbacks and perils, thus reinstituting the clean war imaginary explained above.


283 The training is often sub-standard, often leaving the soldier unprepared for civilian life, often needing retraining once they exit the military.

Furthermore, the multiple benefits that the military provides can often be seen as a “way out” for many people who are in desperate situations. With the rising cost of education and an unstable economy, many have turned to the military to get out of the socioeconomic situations they are in. Since the United States ended the draft, and transitioned into an “all volunteer” military, many understand that the military now works through a poverty draft, often-recruiting people from lower socioeconomic areas, which often has the largest impact on communities of color, though little is said by academia. Meanwhile, many conservative think tanks and organizations constantly work to debunk this notion in order to preserve the patriotic imaginary of the military.

Another benefit of joining the military, for some, is the path to citizenship often promised by the US military. As highlighted in the introduction of this chapter, there is a deep history of migrants joining the military in order to gain citizenship into the United States. This view of the military can be seen as a “way out,” as discussed above. Many of the immigrants who have joined the military come from...

---


286 James Tracy, *The Military Draft Handbook: A Brief History And Practical Advice for the Curious And Concerned* (Manic D Press, 2005). Pg 50-53; The only academic that I know that addresses this is Teresia Teaiwa, who is addressing it in the context of it being a way out for many Pacific Islanders; It was also a prominent part of the documentary *When I Came Home*, the story of a young Black man from the Bronx who joined to escape poverty and came home from war, only to become homeless again.

poor families and are looking for a way to take care of their families. As immigration laws have become more stringent in “the land of opportunity,” joining the military has become one of the few ways to become a citizen. The military has often offered a path to citizenship for those who serve a minimum of 4 years, but there is no guarantee, which leaves the path to citizenship as an imaginary view of the military. This imaginary view is both “imaginary” in the ordinary sense of “made up, not true” and in the conceptual sense of Taylor and Steger, etc., because you have served 4 years there is no guarantee. It is seen as a reward for being a good soldier, which is part of the imaginary, but it also acts as something that is not guaranteed.

Hector, Jules, Matt, and Janis all share ties to this imaginary view of the military. Hector, who was born in Mexico but migrated as a child with his parents, joined to gain citizenship, but also to try and escape the ghettos of Los Angeles. While in the military he was a part of the 82nd Airborne, and he was honorably discharged a month after 9/11. While he never served in combat, he still holds that he would go to war for the US in a heartbeat. As mentioned above, he feels his service is the best thing he has ever done in his life. To this day, while protesting his deportation, he still wears his uniform with pride as he marches through the cars at the US/Mexico border. He feels his service and sacrifice to the US allow him a right

---

to be a US citizen regardless of his crime, for which he also served the full time in prison.

Jules, already an American citizen, was the grandson of a WWII Filipino war veteran. Many Filipino’s were offered citizenship to fight for the US, yet very few were actually awarded it. However, Jules’ grandfather was one of the few to actually receive citizenship, which then allowed him to relocate his family to Southern California. The next two generations within Jules’ family would be filled with aunts, uncles, brothers, cousins, and his father who would also serve in the military. So it was a bit of a family tradition to serve, but Jules grew up listening to punk rock like NOFX, Bad Religion, and the Dead Kennedy’s, all of which carried an antiauthoritarian tone. While he felt like an outcast, he still joined, mostly to escape his family and the “dead ends” he saw in Los Angeles, thinking that perhaps the military and offers like the GI Bill could help him find a suitable future. While in Afghanistan Jules’ view of the military would shift due to the tactics he saw being used. Tactics such as: “recon by fire,” which is a highly dangerous and unreliable tactic of going into areas trying to draw fire from the enemy; raids on innocent peoples, or going into folks homes and searching for evidence of a crime and usually taking all males of “fighting age” (usually anyone who appears over 16 years old) in for questioning, though most raids are based on bad intelligence; and the dropping of bombs “with no eye’s on target,” which means there is no one to confirm whom is being targeted, which often leaves the high probability of an innocent person being

hurt or killed. Towards the end of his deployment he was injured by shrapnel from an IED that tore through his hand. It took a week for him to get medevac’d to a hospital, and until then he was assigned to stay in the tactical operations center (TOC). It was here that a real bad taste got in his mouth as he “realized that it was all bullshit, since command was constantly sweeping things under the rug, misutilizing funds, paying people off with shovels and basic equipment.” Jules returned stateside in 2006, and was told shortly after his return that his unit would be going back to Afghanistan the following year. Instead of suffering through another deployment where he would not only be fighting a war he had lost all faith in—also dealing with the daily racism of the military—he instead decided to go AWOL and fled to Canada. This was not an easy decision as there was a “quiet shame” within the family. His mother continues to tell people at her church that he is still deployed and they pray for him to return from “Afghanistan” weekly. She has been telling this story for the past 7 years. At first his family thought he had left because of his PTSD, but as Jules told me the PTSD was a factor but in the end it was more of an unwillingness to fight that war anymore.

Matt Zeller’s family has been in the United States since the 18th century and his family has fought in every major war since the Revolutionary War. Like his grandfather who joined the military in the wake of Pearl Harbor, Matt joined in the wake of 9/11, with his ancestors’ service in mind and a desire to serve his country for his children. Upon exiting bootcamp for the Army National Guard, he decided to go to officer school, since he was close to finished with college. Upon completing his degree he won a national security scholarship, which allowed him to learn a new
language, Arabic, that was "critical to national security." Soon after he was recruited to work with the CIA, and was then deployed to Afghanistan with his Guard Unit in 2008. His job was to train Afghan military and police, and he chose to be out on the frontlines. Matt had a very patriotic view of the war and of his service and believed in why he was there.

Janis, Matt’s Afghan interpreter, fought to liberate his own country, and thought that the US Army would be able to help him and his family make it safer for future generations. Janis was proud of working with the US military. However, after years of working with the Army and the situation not getting better in Afghanistan, his life became endangered. He turned to the man he considered to be his best friend, Matt, who had recently left the military. They talked on a daily basis, as Matt worked hard to get Janis citizenship, and hit many dead ends, because the Army refused to help Janis. Matt’s tenacity and ability to reach the right people eventually succeeded and Janis and his family were eventually granted passage to the US and will be allowed a path to citizenship. Within Janis’ story, though, there is an interesting shift in this image of the military. It goes from one of hope as they are the would be liberators, to one of betrayal as the Army was not able to make conditions better in Afghanistan. As the Army turned its back on Janis when militant groups in Afghanistan were threatening his life and his family’s life—because he worked with the US Army—Matt’s subsequent struggle to push the right buttons, pull the right strings, eventually got Janis stateside.
Activating the Imaginary

This section examines my interaction with these veterans and their activism, as it exemplifies what, why, and how they engage in trying to shift the narrative of the imaginary. Furthermore, their geocorporeality becomes apparent in the geopolitical spaces they inhabit by the ways in which their everyday experiences are ‘continually defined and redefined.’

Deported Veterans

I initially met Hector Barajas through Facebook, in June of 2013 after hearing about a group of veterans who had been deported. They were calling themselves Banished Veterans. I started following the group on Facebook and through their website, and when I was ready to start my research I started reaching out to the folks mentioned on the website and on Facebook. Hector was the first to get back to me and we promptly scheduled a Skype discussion.

At the time, Hector was running a veteran community house in Rosarito, MX. In our Skype discussion we ended up talking for a little over an hour as we discussed a number of different topics, from our military service to what it was like there in Mexico. The Skype interview was emotionally heavy and I began to realize how big of an issue this was since Hector highlighted not only all the vets that he had come in contact with but also with his estimates of how many deported veterans could be out there. While there are no official government numbers or estimates, Hector believes the numbers could be in the tens of thousands. In a

Playboy article Hector states, “From my understanding, we have had more than 10 veterans in each detention center. There are about 250 centers in the United States. Let’s say 16 years of deportations since 1996. Ten times 250 equals 2,500. Twenty-five hundred times 16 equals 40,000.”292 While this estimate seems very high, we can neither confirm nor deny these numbers, but we have both tried to get more solid number from the Department of Homeland Security to no avail.

A few months later I would make it to Tijuana to do an in-person interview with Hector.293 Over lunch he told what led to his deportation. Upon his honorable discharge from the military he returned to his hometown of Compton, CA. Compton is thought of as one of the rougher neighborhoods in the United States as gang violence is often prevalent there. It was here that he met his daughter’s mother, and here that they still reside. He began hanging out with his childhood friends and began getting into the same trouble that he tried to escape by joining the military. One night after having a few drinks and smoking laced marijuana, he was driving around with some friends and thought that a car was following them. Hector, who was not afraid to stand up and fight, shot at the vehicle, which fled the area immediately and reported Hector and his friends to the police. Hector was arrested and charged with aggravated assault. While no one was hurt, the prosecution

---

293 Hector Beragas, Banished Veterans Interview, September 30, 2013.
bumped the charges up to a felony, which is a common occurrence when dealing with immigrants.294

While he had served in the military, he was never counseled by his chain of command on the steps to become a citizen while in the military, and upon his exit he was told to contact a VA center, stating that maybe they could help. However, when Hector left he had no idea that he could be deported, especially since he was honorably discharged from the military. In fact since Bill Clinton’s 1997 Immigration reform more veterans have been deported for minor drug offences. While Hector’s offense was not minor and he was sent to prison for 3 years, upon his discharge from the prison he was deported. He thought he would be free to go, having served his time in prison, like any other American citizen would have, but he was then deported.

He was lucky enough to run into some other veterans shortly after his deportation, who inspired him to do something about the injustice that he saw. He stated many times throughout our time together, “I never asked for any of this, I’m not an activist by choice.” But while he did not choose this life of activism, he does it with a restless and inspiring passion. Everything he does throughout the day is towards a goal to help others in his situation and to help him become a better person. At the end of lunch he said something that made me think for a while, “…those who fight for their country, they sacrifice a lot, for their families, for their brothers, for their friends’ families, for everyone… People should remember and

know that.” It’s this sacrifice that I found time and time again not only amongst veterans but amongst the activists who are fighting for a change, and while Hector may not have chosen this life of activism, he continues to sacrifice like he did when serving in the military. I see this in his daily work, as he is constantly looking for newly arrived deported veterans, none of which he would ever turn away. He would give the shirt off his back if need be to help whoever he had to.

Hector spends most of his time on the San Ysidro border crossing, which is one of the busiest border crossings in the country as it connects San Diego to Tijuana. Each city has an estimated population of 1.3 million, while the region in general carries over 4.9 million.295 On the average day, a total of 74,000+ people cross the border, around 165 buses a day, over 35,000 cars a day, and 20,000 people walking across everyday.296 The steady stream of cars and people leaves a large backup, primarily on the Mexico side of the border since the authorities care little about what goes into Mexico, but there is a high securitization of what comes into the United States.

The crossing is broken up into a number of sectors: on the far east is the walking entrance into Mexico, then as you move west, there is the walking entrance into the US, then the driving entrance into the US, and finally on the far west part is the driving entrance into Mexico. There is a walking bridge on both sides of the border that goes over the roads. In the middle of the Northbound (into the US)

entrance there is a small park that we stopped at before Hector got to work. At first I just watched Hector as he marched back and forth between the cars in his uniform and with one of his two signs, this one read “STOP DEPORTING US VETERANS,” the other one read, “I AM A US VETERAN DEPORTED.” The second sign seemed to get more attention when he switched after about an hour at the border. I start to follow him in order to get a closer look at everything. There are a number of vendors drifting in and out of the cars selling everything from trinkets to churros. At the front of the line stands Homeland Security officials, who walk through the cars with their M4 carbine rifles. I recognize the weapon immediately since it was one of the same weapons I carried while in the military. This militarization of the border makes an interesting setting for the activism of a deported veteran. Hector is being held out of the United States by the very thing that is his claim to citizenship.

Many people listen to his story as they wait in the seemingly endless line to get into the United States. He tells them of his service, his mistake once out of the military, the time he served in prison to repay his debt to society, his subsequent deportation, and of the other veterans who have been deported. He carries old leaflets that has information for his organization Banished Veterans, and tells folks where they can find out more information. The geocorporeal struggle is apparent as his uniform and sign play on the hearts and minds of those returning into the United States, playing on their patriotism and their constructions of the war imaginary as he attempts to spread awareness and shift the way in which those who pass by think about veterans, citizenship, and migration.
We take a break back in the little park and talk for a bit. He tells me that the thing that hurts the most is those who do not care about the sacrifice, and says that sometimes people say hurtful things and you just have to let it go, otherwise fights occur. All in all, Hector wishes that he was not so alone out there and wishes that more deported veterans would become vocal. He knows and has dealt with many deported veterans but many of them have become hopeless thinking that there is nothing left that they can do. Many, he says, have turned to drugs and alcohol, a temptation he knows very well since it has also been his escape mechanism for a long time. “When out telling my story,” he tells me, “you have to bare it all, it will affect people, you have to be honest, it will eventually tug at their heartstrings.”

We continue to walk through the lines of cars for another hour. The day was a short day as Hector usually spends 8 hours a day marching back and forth talking to people. He’s thankful that the day was a cool day since some days it easily breaks 100 degrees. As we near the gate for me to return to the United States the tone turns somber, as we both are a bit saddened by my departure. We give each other a goodbye hug and promise to keep in touch with one another.

Since my departure, Hector has been able to get the ball rolling on his own deportation case, and also on a number of other veterans’ cases: he has appeared/will be appearing in a number of news stories and upcoming documentaries; and he has founded a safe house in Tijuana for deported veterans, where they can come to get resources to fight their deportation, and also to fight the dangerous streets of Tijuana. Hector has had some help from fellow veterans
stateside, and a number of lawyers who are working on his case pro bono; however, it is a very slow bureaucratic process that could take years.

*No One Left Behind*

Matt Zeller was deployed to Ghazni, Afghanistan in January 2008 as an Army Intelligence officer sent to train Afghan police and military. While out on patrol in the city of Wahgez, on April 28th, his squad got lost. Their maps were over 20 years old and they were trying to get back to their base. While going through a small town the squad was ambushed. The lead MRAP was hit by an IED leaving it inoperable, instead of leaving it they were commanded to stay and protect it until a wrecker could come and take it back to base. The four men in the MRAP had severe concussions and they were tactically disadvantaged as they were on low ground with high hills all around them. It was a very hot day, and as Matt stepped out of the vehicle to go to his defensive position, another explosion went off, knocking Matt on the ground. An hour-long firefight then ensued, as the Taliban was firing mortars and shooting their AK-47’s at the downed convoy. Low on ammo, they finally received reinforcements, which turned the attention of Matt towards the incoming support fire. Not paying attention to what was going on behind him, he heard, AK-47 fire, and as he turned his head he saw Janis firing at two armed Afghans who had been sneaking up on Matt. Had Janis not fired Matt would have surely died. This event brought Janis and Matt together to become best friends. Matt would not leave base without Janis and would not allow anyone else to use Janis as an interpreter. They took care of each other throughout the deployment.

---

Upon Matt’s unit leaving Afghanistan, Matt swore to bring Janis to the United States, which at the time Janis did not think was possible. When Matt returned he got involved with the CIA Afghanistan office in Washington D.C. This was unhealthy as he not only obsessed about the war but also was dealing with severe PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), which caused him to self-medicate with alcohol. He initially went to the VA for help, but after receiving a bill from the VA he decided to turn to the bottle instead. In 2010 he decided to run for political office in his home area of upstate New York, which forced him to sober up. He lost the election, which made him slip back into alcohol. His wife at the time forced him to clean up and get help from the VA. While his marriage still eventually came apart, he was able to sober up and deal with many of the emotional problems tied to his PTSD.

The whole time he and Janis had stayed in touch via Facebook. In July 2012, Janis contacted Matt telling him he was in trouble. He had applied for a visa 2 years earlier but there had been no progress. He had received numerous threats from the Taliban, because he was one of the few interpreters to work and fight without covering his face to protect his identity, so he was known. The criteria to get a visa as an interpreter is twofold: first, they have to have served at least one year “faithfully and honorably,” and second, there must be an active and ongoing threat on his life. Both of these applied to Janis; he went through a lot of different panels and hearings. At the final stage, there is a backlog due to the number of different agencies (Dept. of Homeland Security, FBI, CIA, Dept. of Defense, and the State Department) that all have to signoff on the person’s packet. Because it is a bureaucratic mess almost no one is granted this visa unless someone is vigorously
advocating for the person. Janis made it to this stage, but the unit employing him then laid off all its interpreters. At the time the unit and the Afghan military unit in the area did not trust the interpreters and saw them as “collaborators” with the Taliban. This raised a red flag for his application process. He contacted Matt, who started reaching out to his political contacts. Matt contacted a friend at Huffington Post who made a video to show others and try to gain support. The video appalled people, as they could not believe we were not helping people like Janis. This led Matt to an organization called the Iraq Refugee Assistance Program (IRAP), which was started by Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who are now going to law school; they offer pro bono defense for interpreters trying to get US visas. The organization has more cases to work on than it can handle, primarily due to the bond that often occurs between interpreters and soldiers, since the interpreters are making similar sacrifices. In many ways this relationship between the interpreter and soldiers complicates the war imaginary as it makes those who are seen as the enemy by most, friends. Another interesting aspect is the geocorporeal connection between the interpreter and the soldier; the military creates the activism because the military has let them down on two fronts, by not making the interpreters’ country safe and secure, and by leaving them behind once they left the unsecure country.

Matt has also started a Change.org petition, which drew the attention of the press. The day after the article came out the Change.org petition hit 100,000 signatures, causing the State Department to notify Janis that his visa was being granted. Janis then quit his job and sold his house, preparing to come to the United States, when the embassy revoked his visa due to a call by an anonymous caller
(most likely from the Taliban according to Matt) identifying Janis as a national security threat. Matt then contacted all the media contacts he had made and wrote an Op-Ed that went viral, trying to shame the State Department, because all the reports indicated Janis as no threat.

With Matt receiving so much media attention, IRAP asked Matt to lobby congress for a piece of legislation that held thousands of Iraq and Afghanistan interpreters lives in the balance. Matt then founded a 501c4 called “No One Left Behind,” (NOLB) which he still runs to this day. On the eve of the government shutdown Matt and his partners in NOLB went door-to-door on Capital Hill to get a 90-day extension on the government program that acquires visas for interpreters. While on Capital Hill he got a meeting with Congressman Jim McDermott (D-WA), who in-turn called the Undersecretary of State to advocate for Janis. He was then put back on the visa list. As Matt stated, “I won! I beat State [department]! They were so damn afraid of a media fiasco that I was causing that they caved. He was polygraphed 2 more times by the CIA, and now he will be here next Tuesday!” He was happy that he was able to get Janis here, but realized that the system is still problematic and there are thousands more interpreters being left behind; this includes 2 other interpreters that he worked with in Afghanistan, one of whom he says will never be able to come to the United States due to a failed security screening that caused him to get fired a few years earlier.

He and Janis continue to work with NOLB, telling their story to members of Congress, to community groups, and different policy makers. Another aspect of their
work is to help the incoming interpreters adjust to life in the US, as they often only come with a single suitcase worth of belongings. As their website states:

We provide furnished apartments, modest financial support to help cover the weeks it can take before their social service benefits (food, medical, etc.) begin, and assistance with seeking employment. We also pair up newly arrived refugees with other Iraqis and Afghans who have successfully immigrated to the US -- to help smooth the transition.298

The view of these interpreters is as a fellow veteran, comrade, and brother in arms. So much like the comradery that comes with soldiering, there is a level of comradery that is shared between interpreter and soldier. As Matt told me, “Many of these guys have done more for this country than most of the people in it, they deserve citizenship.” So like Hector’s story, there is a level of sacrifice and service, which is tied to this idea of citizenship. Those who serve are often considered to deserve citizenship. However, because of the current geopolitical climate around immigration, particularly from south of the US border, coupled with his crime, Hector has lost that “deservingness” of citizenship. Though it is Matt’s tenacity and ardent advocacy that allows for Janis’s “deservedness” to come to light, had he not advocated so passionately, Janis would definitely become another victim of US bureaucracy and more likely than not, of Taliban violence as well. Furthermore, there is a shifting geocorporeal relationship at work here. Matt’s historical familial relationship as a soldier, his going to Afghanistan and becoming intimately close with an Afghan. Matt’s return to the US and his shift into activism, becoming critical of the state because his brother has been left behind. This is similar to Hector’s story.

as he too feels left behind by the same government that left Janis behind. While Matt works to subvert the state, Hector does all he can to work with it. Their subject positions are constantly shifting as they encounter different parts of the security dispositif.

*War Resisters*

We decided to meet at the Canadian United Steel Workers Union Hall building at noon, because the War Resisters office was based out of that building. I arrived a bit early and waited for Jules to arrive. While waiting out front I saw a large Asian/Pacific Island looking male approaching me, and I saw a US Army Afghanistan War Veteran hat on his head, and knew that it is the guy I had been waiting for. Jules gives me a nod and a big smile, and we do the “handshake/hug.” He asks me how my trip was and apologizes for being late. I was illegally parked so we decided to cruise back to his place for a bit, since there was more parking by his house.

He tells me that his place is a kind of “anarcho/commune-shared space,” but that they don’t really live by any particular dogmatic politics or guidelines. As we climbed the cluttered and dirty stairway it opened up to a big room. The first thing that caught my eye was a large skateboarding half-pipe in the middle of the room, and then the very stylish kitchen at the other end of the room. The space is known to the public as *Soybomb*, and it often hosts local bands, art events, activist events, and fundraisers.

In 2007, Jules went AWOL and arrived in Vancouver, Canada. He started living and working with a number of activist communities, from anarchists and

---

communists to other war resisters. It was here that he met his future wife, who was also engaged in a number of radical organizations. Nicole had duel US/Canadian citizenship since her father is Canadian, but she primarily grew up in Kansas and Illinois. It was in the Midwest that she found radical politics as she worked with a number of anarchist activists in her youth. When the wars began she moved to Vancouver to become a part of the anti-war movement. She currently works at a noodle shop, while trying to make money also as an artist of political comic books; she also spends as much time as possible with the numerous activist organizations that they both put their time and energy into.

After lunch we returned to Soybomb to conduct a conference call with an organization they worked with called Frontlines International. The call would have a number of different folks from around the US and Canada, spanning different eras of activism. While waiting for everyone to get on the call, Jules and Nicole explained what Frontlines International was about. The basic idea was a collaborative space between the “occupier” and the “occupied,” thus bringing together soldiers, activists, war resisters, refugees, and immigrants from many different countries. The group’s mission statement states:

We envision this project to act as a shared "Toolkit" or "Clearing House" for our common interests. Largely through social media, resources can be shared and voices can be amplified. For this we will establish our central social media hubs. Once established, these will lay the groundwork for an infinite amount of focused sharing and organizing. This organizing could include any number of public events, from film showings and book tours to protests and vigils.300

300 Ibid.
The agenda for the day was to help one of the members with an upcoming event and discuss other issues members may have. The event was a talk that was to be given at a coffee shop in Philadelphia by a female veteran who was a drone operator in the military.

After the conference call we went to the Anarchist book fair in downtown Toronto. As we traveled to the book fair we talked about a number of subjects, from the precariouslyness of his status, to their search for Canadian veterans who would speak out against the wars, both of which were connected. He explained that he was an “illegal immigrant” who was applying for citizenship through two different processes: first, requesting political asylum and second through his wife’s citizenship. On the day that he received a letter saying that he had a case for citizenship through his wife’s status as a citizen, he also received a letter stating that his request for citizenship and asylum was denied due to him being considered a criminal in the United States. Part of the case that Jules is trying to make with the Canadian courts relies on the fact that in Canada they do not prosecute those who refuse to go to war; in fact they only send those who volunteer within the military to war, and if you do not want to go to war then you do not have to. Therefore, being a war resistor in Canada is not illegal, which was the grounds that Jules was arguing from. This geocorporeal subject position is written on the body as the geopolitical affects his status of being legal, yet “illegal,” a criminal in the eyes of the US, for something that is legal in the Canada, the country from which he seeks refuge. However, the Canadian government decided that his case was invalid, so he now stays in Canada, undocumented. Part of their current work seeks to find Canadian
veterans who resist, but they have not been very successful. Furthermore, it has been difficult to find any veterans who speak out against the government since there have been recent issues around veterans who speak out. They have had their benefits revoked, and as stated above, only those who wished to go to war went.\textsuperscript{301}

As we said our goodbye later that evening and I prepared to leave, we all made plans to stay in touch. In March I returned for a conference and we met up after they attended one of my panels. At lunch they gave me an update about one of the other war resisters, Kimberly Rivera. Kimberly is a mother of four and was pregnant with her fifth when the Canadian government deported her.\textsuperscript{302} She had been living in Canada since she fled in 2007 after having been deployed to Iraq for a year in 2006. The military police were waiting for her on the other side of the US/Canadian border, and she was promptly put into custody. She would have a swift trial that sentenced her to 10 months in a military brig, where she would have her child, Matthew Kaden. While pregnant she went through strenuous activities and chores put forth by the military command.\textsuperscript{303} When she went into labor she would be given substandard treatment and her son was immediately taken away from her and sent home with her husband; she was not even allowed to breast feed, but rather had to pump her milk during visiting hours.\textsuperscript{304} Kimberly applied for a 45-day

\textsuperscript{301} Tindugan, War Resisters Interview.
\textsuperscript{304} Ibid.
amnesty to be released early, but was denied. Upon release she and her husband moved to Texas where they still reside and are both struggling to survive.\textsuperscript{305}

As for Jules’ case, he is in the process of an appeal to the courts decision and is still currently waiting to hear a decision. His lawyer and those familiar with the case do not seem hopeful, especially with the current conservative regime in power within the Canadian government. Though he thinks that the Rivera case served as a test for deporting war resisters, with the uproar and protests that occurred in the wake of her deportation, he thinks that his deportation could be delayed or abandoned. As of now he waits, not sure of whether he will be swooped up in a raid by the Canadian Border Services Agency and deported. If so, he would surely be greeted by military police at the border. There is a complexity within his activism, where he must fight, but not be too visible because he could be deported. Loud so that others can hear and fight with him, but not so loud that he angers those who could deport him. Similar to Hector and Matt, his geocorporeality is constantly shifting depending upon his current relation to the state.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The nuances between these three stories are stark, as well as the differences. Both Hector and Jules are in precarious situations put forth by the neoliberal state: while one fights to survive on the mean streets of Tijuana, longing to return to the US, the other fights the bureaucracy of the Canadian judicial system in order to remain in Canada. On the other hand, Matt has been able to navigate the US

\textsuperscript{305} Ibid.
bureaucracy to get Janis on a path to citizenship, most likely due to not just his tenacity but also possibly due to his own white privilege.

Both Hector and Jules feel alone and rejected, but both cling to hope. All three fell into activism, and while there is much self-interest in their personal cases, they all fight not only for other veterans, but also for other people who are disadvantaged and/or down on their luck. For Hector there is a religious aspect to it, whereas he seeks penance for his sins, and through his good deeds and tribulations he hopes to be redeemed. I have often felt this myself through my own activism and it seemed to be a somewhat reoccurring theme throughout my interviews, as many veterans seek some sort of penance for their time in the military. Many veterans come home feeling that they have done wrong and seek to right those wrongs through social justice movements. This was clearly seen in both Hector and Jules, from Hector’s work with his fellow homeless friends and his work to help other deported veterans, to Jules’ work with indigenous populations and other war resisters. Matt works still works with NOLB, but also works with organizations such as the Truman Foundation\textsuperscript{306} and Team Rubicon (a veteran organization that does disaster relief).

Both Hector and Matt work to shift the narrative of “who is deserving” of citizenship. Hector’s service does not supersede his “criminality,” nor his place of birth; however, he works to redefine his subject position so that his service to the country is seen as more important than anything else. Similarly, Matt has successfully made Janis into a “war hero,” who may have only been a private contractor if not for Matt’s efforts; the fact of his service has become the case for him

\textsuperscript{306} The Truman Foundation is the same umbrella group that runs Operation FREE discussed in the Environmental activism chapter.
winning his path to citizenship. Jules on the other hand seeks refugee status and/or citizenship from the Canadian government; however, he has also been labeled a criminal by the US government for having a conscience, and for refusing to fight, which is a right given to Canadian soldiers.

These three stories exemplify how veteran activism can shift the narrative around the war imaginary. It can shift the idea of who serves, what is honorable, what is not. They highlight a history of veterans’ images of the military, from Jules and Matt’s family tradition of service, to Hector and Jules seeing it as an opportunity for escape from their current situations. While the success of their activism varies, they have all seen some victories in the face of difficulty. Their service acts as a hinge for their activism as they work to make change, not only for themselves, but for those who share the same difficulties that they face. Their activism collectively works to uphold many of the democratic ideals that this country was founded upon, as well as to shift the narrative to become more inclusive of who is included in that American Dream. The current construction of the American Dream is set within neoliberal ideals and their activism and narratives works to disrupt this construction.

Furthermore, the military works to create specific subject positions, and these vets are working to shift their subject positions in relation to the subject position created by and in the military. Hector for example, works to make his service the main force of his subject identity, over his citizenship status so that he can return to the United States. Matt works to shift the subject position of his interpreter, by attempting to manipulate and push the state. Jules seeks to shift his
subject position within his status as an immigrant to Canada, though the military has labeled him, as a criminal making it difficult for him to shift his subjectivity.
CHAPTER 7: REMAKING SENSE

Mad Lonely World

as I walk along and wonder
devour demons with my bare hands
thoughts exposed for a moment
feeling lonely
with people surrounding me
feeling lonely
hey yo Jonas, its gonna be ok
feeling lonely still
reject the drawers for the pills
taking over, expand the blood vessels
controlled thoughts no longer random
imagination held at ransom
only to exist, through terror tantrums
exists in the deepest abyss of my expression
feeling lonely
the most high is overshadowed by dark thoughts
not allowed to succeed so easily
not without struggle
try to break away hesitation, no concentration
friends look at my face and think they know where I’ve been
but have no idea
they think they know where I’ve been
they think they know what I know, where I’ve been
they’ve been thinking, they know what I know
what I think, I think that I know
where I’ve been, I think that I know where I’ve been to know why
for a moment, I’m feeling lonely

-by Jonas Lara

The trauma of war remains within our minds, bodies, and souls. Some memories are now old fading scars, while others remain a scab that we constantly pick at. All of the veterans I interviewed experienced some sort of difficulty in their return to civilian life. For some it was nearly impossible to integrate back in to daily life, for

---

others it came more naturally. A recurring theme in the attempt to return to normalcy was the use of different crutches, from drugs and alcohol as many tried to forget, to art and activism as they tried to transform their experience into something positive. This chapter primarily examines the latter, in that it looks at how art possesses a transformative quality that not only deals with the wounds of war and the frequent turn to drug and alcohol use/abuse; it also seeks to undermine militarism as it explores more productive and peaceful ways of being. Furthermore, this chapter primarily looks at two organizations that are intimately bonded, the *Warrior Writers Project* and the *Combat Paper Project*. The latter takes soldiers’ uniforms and transforms them into paper, while the prior allows veterans to transform their experiences into art, often times on the paper constructed from their uniforms. To examine these two projects I draw not only from my personal experiences with them as a combat veteran, but also from an interview conducted with *Combat Paper* founder, Drew Cameron.

*The Warrior Writers & Combat Paper Project affair*

Sometime in late 2007, while at a *Vets for Vets* peer group therapy session, I met Lovella Calica, and while she stands just less than 5’ foot tall, her passion and courage makes her seem like a giant. At first I remember thinking something like, ‘who is this little girl in this room with all of us crazy ass combat vets… She wants us to do what? Write poetry? What the fuck is this? This is a waste of my time!’ Thus exposing my own gendered perceptions of poetry as I saw it as something women did, not battle hardened men. As with most of her sessions that she would moderate, and still does moderate, she told us, “it doesn’t matter what you write, it doesn’t
have to make sense, just write! Keep writing and writing until I tell you to stop... It isn’t about what you write, it is about getting the pen on the paper!” And so we wrote. I remember the first time I did this drill, by the time I was done I was bawling my eyes out. My tears flowed like the words on the page, uncontrollable, deep, passionate, and full of rage, sorrow, and regret. Like the tears of Odysseus on the beach of Calypso’s island, I sought to heal from the moral injuries that I had incurred while in the military. I had come to realize the power of writing, and the gift being given to us by this elfin woman. The poetry worked to deprogram the hypermasculinity, the dehumanization, and trauma, as it shifted the way in which we looked at our time and experiences.

Lovella continued the Warrior Writer Project, and to this day she travels the country leading workshops and currently has three books in print filled with veteran artwork, poetry, and short stories, with another book on the way. It is not exclusive to Lovella, as she has trained many others on how to conduct Warrior Writer workshops, and there are many veteran writing workshops all across the country, many independent of Warrior Writers all together. But it was early in 2007 when Warrior Writers was initially conceived, and at the second ever Warrior Writers event, in Burlington, Vermont, Lovella conducted a workshop at a small papermaking studio. Iraq War veteran Drew Cameron ran the studio at the time and it was here a collaborative vision was born, as the process of making paper out of

---

308 Protevi, Political Affect. Pg 155.
309 This work was not originally started by Warrior Writers and Lovella, but rather has been happening for a long time. One of the first to deeply engage in this work is Maxine Hong Kingston, who began by working with Vietnam Veterans in the early 90’s, trying to turn their traumas into poetry.
uniforms could be coupled with using them for art and poetry. Cameron had been using art as medium for channeling his experience for the past year, and *Warrior Writers* worked as a conduit that could help others as well.

The subsequent art show that ensued, highlighted Lovella’s photography, a couple of veterans’ art and poetry, and a couple of exhibits by Drew. One of Drew’s pieces was titled, “Basic Combat Load,” which was one of his storage trunks from Iraq put out on display. It contained, “photographs, it was my knife, my dog tags, my zippo, you know the ear plugs case, you know, rank left overs, weird lighters that I had found, you know, like shit.”

The piece was inspired by Tim O’Brian’s book *The Things They Carried*. As Drew described O’Brian’s book he states:

That hit me fucking hard because Tim O’Brian wrote about this way of telling a war story, like he gave permission to be able to, cause it’s like he’s showing his cards in that book… and gave permission to tell a story that evokes a truth… not sort of like this happened and so that’s why this is true, but that you can tell a story that helps you realize a truth. And I don’t know, I read that book and I felt like it gave me permission to do a bunch of shit.

Tim O’Brian, a veteran of the Vietnam War, has found the power of healing through art and storytelling. Furthermore, his writings have aided in the transformative process of others, specifically veterans, to examine their experiences and transform them into art of their own. There is currently a debate within the veteran writing and art community about the idea of art as a form of healing and therapy versus it as purely art. While in San Francisco, I got into a discussion with Drew’s business partner, as it was her contention that the art should be looked at and judged upon its own merits and to label the process and product as a form of therapy cheapens

---

310 Drew Cameron, Combat Paper Interview, October 5, 2013.
311 Ibid.
the art. I would again hear this argument from veteran and founder of the Veteran Print Project, Yvette Pino. The Veteran Print Project couples artists with veterans, as the veterans tell their stories to the artists, they then create a piece of art; it sometimes takes hours, it sometimes takes months. The art is then showcased with the veteran’s story. While both Yvette and Drew’s business partner rejected the label of art therapy, all agreed that it was a transformative process and had the potential for healing and remaking sense of veterans’ experiences as myself and many other veterans have attested.\footnote{Justine Browning, “Turning the Page, U.S. Soldiers Home From War Rebound Through Writing,” \textit{Occupy.com}, March 7, 2014, http://www.occupy.com/article/turning-page-us-soldiers-home-war-rebound-through-writing.} Yvette told me how one of her first pieces had transformed her relationship with her father, as she was finally able to express her experience at war to her father in a way that she could not find the words for before. So whether or not one person may place hierarchical value on art over therapy, there is nonetheless an affectual impact of the art: on the veteran, on the artist if it is not the veteran, and on the viewer of the art.

These stories were primarily transformative for the veterans, but many times they were also aimed at working towards telling their stories to a broader audience; thus aiming to be transformative for society. As Kathy Ferguson reminds us in her discussion of anarchist art and poetry, “[T]he state will never be in the clear if artistically-inspired shocks to thought allow events to travel, to take up new residences and do unanticipated work.”\footnote{Kathy E. Ferguson, “Shocking Us to Thought: Anarchist Art and Poetry Concerning Political Prisoners,” 2014.} It is this Deluzean notion of art as a “shock to thought,” that veterans seek, whether it be to inspire the viewer or to
inform the viewer, it seeks to affect the viewer in a way in which critical thought is induced. Some of these art pieces expose the atrocities of war, some the banality, each expressing a personal truth of the veteran, whether through poetry, paintings, short stories, or any number of other mediums. Protevi seems to look at this “shock to thought,” as a form of affect tied to a shifting in one’s political physiology; whereas the encounter between the art and the subject not only shifts the viewers perspective on the art but also on their political understandings. Furthermore, as Protevi describes Deleuze and Guattari’s pedagogy of thought, he highlights that in order to think and understand properly, one must be pushed outside of their comfort zone.

As Cynthia Enloe states in her book Meuners, “Militarization is the step-by-step process by which something becomes controlled by, dependent on, or derives its value from the military as an institution or militaristic criteria. What has been militarized can be demilitarized. What has been demilitarized can be remilitarized.” Similarly many of these veterans aimed to demilitarize their selves, through a deconstruction of their experience and a reconstruction through art. This ontological shift from the militarized mind to more of a demilitarized mind is long and arduous. For myself, each time I retold my story or created a new poem, my perspective had changed and I felt one step closer to being less militarized. One misconception of this line of thought may be the idea that demilitarization means an absolute void of militarization, but this is a flawed way of thinking. Rather, we

---

314 Protevi, Political Affect. Pg 187.
315 Ibid. 90.
316 Enloe, Maneuvers. Pg 291.
should look at it as a ‘step-by-step process where we no longer are controlled by or dependent upon the military.’ From the mitigation of the symptoms of PTSD to being able to tell our stories in nonthreatening ways, art creates this space. This is most clear in the process of papermaking, as done by Drew Cameron and the Combat Paper Project.

Drew’s longtime affair with papermaking began with his father who was also an artist and a veteran, and was the one who had taught him to make paper. Many of his artistic abilities lay dormant while in the military, but when he returned to college in 2005, an art class allowed him to bridge the things he was learning in his International Relations courses with his experiences. He soon became an apprentice at the above mentioned papermaking studio, and then the manager. It was here that he really fell in love with the art and the process of making paper, especially as he studied forestry for his major. Drew’s art encompassed a number of mediums from the countless photos he took in Iraq to using the letters he wrote home from Iraq. Some of these appeared in the Warrior Writers books, and some appeared in places like Monica Haller’s project called the Veteran’s Book Project.\(^{317}\) The reuse of his old photos and letters was transformative and healing for Drew, as he explains:

> It’s like revisiting, returning, remaking sense... To redefine, and transform those memories to your own, to have them, become, to embrace them more, and have them become more understood as a story. Instead of kind of a memory trap. A way of thinking about the same thing again, again, and again, but instead to kind of open it, take it apart, not even to necessarily put it back together but to just to kind of have it in another form. And that’s been one of the most helpful things for me for

sure. Being comfortable with the experience, and what to make of it, and who I am because of it.318

This quote is telling on a number of levels. The art is not only transformative of the memories and experiences but also acts as a source of subject formation. The art becomes an external source of reflection that is not only meant to impact the viewer, but also affects the artist and perpetuates a constant state of becoming.

The constant reflection and turning in on himself and his art brought about what I found to be a very poignant insight that I found as a reoccurring theme throughout my interviews. Drew states:

...that war is absolutely and totally unfulfilling and I think that feeds into this addictive nature of it. Cause there’s never enough, you never feel that even when you come out in a twisted way like I came out on the other side, knowing that I never wanted to be a part of that again and I still wanted to go back.319

Many of the veterans that I had interviewed described something similar to this; from the excitement and subsequent sorrow that came with rushes of adrenaline and power while in combat, to the need or want to return to war. The reasons were always personal, but all carried a hint of something left unfulfilled in their experiences in war. In a TEDtalk, war journalist Sebastian Junger discusses this desire to return. He states that we need to understand this desire for a number of reasons, so that we can reintegrate returning soldiers and so that we can end wars. For Junger, the problem is that there is not “a simple neat truth.”320 This complexity of war can be seen throughout our society from their desire to return, to our own

318 Cameron, Combat Paper Interview.
319 Ibid.
enjoyment of war films as a society. Junger pushes to not think of war morally, but rather neurologically, as the adrenaline of war creates a high level of excitement. This affects people differently, often times leaving veterans with multiple traumas. However, Junger goes on to hypothesize that what many of these veterans miss is the brotherhood that came with these traumas; those who experienced similar traumas and who were there by their side daily, are no longer there, thus leaving a large hole in their life and everyday experience. Art works to fill that hole, mend the trauma, and transform the pain. As Drew explains:

...then so for me the art and poetry was a literal way that I could do it, I could talk about rejecting the idea of being assigned an enemy. Or I could talk about how fucked up it is that I loved my rifle like my girlfriend and I felt naked and empty without it. And how that was sad. So it was a way that I could begin to evoke a truth for me, just exploring one thing and getting words out that could draw people in.321

As Drew states in the above quote, the art also is meant to draw people in. It draws them in so that they can empathize and understand some of the aspects of the military, militarism, brotherhood, and war that others may not be able to understand otherwise.

One of the most important aspects of this transformative process is the communal aspect. This is important in many of the different groups, from papermaking to writing poems at a Warrior Writers workshop. In all Warrior Writer workshops veterans are encouraged to share what they wrote. The voicing of these poems does a number of things. First and foremost it allows veterans to share their experiences and feeling’s which builds a bond between one another. The shared

321 Cameron, Combat Paper Interview.
experience is also an affirmation of their own experiences; they are able to understand and realize that they are not the only ones who have been through the things that they did, saw, felt, and feel. The positive reinforcement of this bond is very similar to the bond of camaraderie of the military. In fact many of the veterans that I interviewed commented that the veteran organizations that they were involved with had many similarities to the military, and the unity aspect was key. Thus highlighting the brotherhood Junger described above, and the complexity of the interaction between these activist veterans and the military. Furthermore, many stated that these groups were very helpful in their reintegration process, because they are able to struggle and fight together, and like in the military, they had each other’s backs.

The place where most of the healing and transformation takes place is within the group experience, from reading poetry with one another to making paper. As Drew points out:

The process used to write... or the process used to make paper, which was very communal for me. It was more important than what came out, cause it’s like your changing, certain pathways in the process, and it doesn’t matter if the paper that you make is given all away; because it’s been done, and your memory and you were there in the moments that you shared with other people, and that can never be taken back. That’s another kind of truth, or a remake... or a redefining, transforming, something from it's literal sense, removing how static it is, not irresponsible but scary because it is compartmentalized in a memory and in a static state of symbolism and then you open it up, there’s no way of telling where it’s gonna go.\footnote{Ibid.}
Therefore the group process affects the art, the poetry, and the individuals, as they interact with one another. The following section is a narrative account of my experience at a Combat Paper workshop that I attended in the Fall 2013.

**Combat Paper**

While traveling the country conducting interviews, I planned on stopping in Philadelphia, PA to visit one of my Army buddies, Gordie. There happened to be a national Warrior Writers Conference going on in Philly that weekend as well, which happened to be within walking distance from my buddy’s house. I have done Warrior Writers many times in the past, and knew that I would enjoy sitting in on at least one session. Years of going to these workshops have transformed my experiences as once they regularly brought tears and remorse; they now bring excitement and energy as I look to bond with my brothers. I tried to get Gordie to join but for personal reasons he declined to accompany me, mostly due to not wanting to deal with and face some of the traumas he still carries. At the workshop I ran into my friend Eli Wright.

I have known Eli since 2008, when we did actions at the 2008 DNC protests in Denver with IVAW. Eli is one of the prominent members of IVAW because of his work with Combat Paper and from the popular slam poet Andrea Gibson’s poem *For Eli*. While at the Warrior Writers workshop Eli invited me to come to his Combat Paper site in Branchburg, New Jersey if I had time. I wanted to bring a colleague to the workshop so he suggested that we come to the “Friends, Family, and Allies

323 Because I knew Eli fairly well I had chosen not to interview him for my project, as I had decided to not interview anyone that I had a close friendship with—though subsequently I have made many close friends with many of the participants.
Workshop,” that they were having in the near future, though he told me that there was always an open door for me to come and bring people whenever I wanted.

The event was held at a community print making studio, one of the only open centers for paper making in the North East. We arrived at the studio promptly at noon, and there were a few people already milling about the studio, including Eli. We all sat around and chatted for a few minutes as people slowly trickled in. The large room/communal studio took up half of the small 3-story building. In the basement was the pounder and the storage area, upstairs a few offices and smaller work spaces. In the large room we were in, there were tables that surrounded the border of the room, as well as large tables in the middle of the room. It was here that we would do a majority of the day's work.

That day the work would be the physically strenuous/labor intensive part of the process, which was termed as the “Deconstruction” phase. Eli floated around the room answering questions and guiding people as to what they were supposed to do. Some people had done this before, for some it was their first time. More people came in, many bringing food, which sat on a table at the western wall of the studio. The “Deconstruction” phase went as follows: we were to break the uniform down to its most basic elements. We were to remove all buttons, patches, zippers, and unnatural fabrics. Most of the camouflage uniforms—or Battle Dress Uniforms (BDUs) and Desert BDUs (also known as DCUs)—are made of 100% ripstop cotton. The uniform we chose to work on was a Class A Dress uniform. The outer part of the uniform is all cotton, while most of the inside has nylon and polyester. This needed to be separated because it is natural fibers that make the best paper. Furthermore,
all the seams needed to be separated. There was two ways to do this, one was with a knife as you cut each of the stiches that held two larger pieces together, or the way that I preferred to do it, with brute strength tearing the two pieces apart with my bare hands. On some of the seams the latter did not work and a knife was required, but for the most part I tried to use my bare hands as much as possible. Tearing the uniform to pieces with my hands felt good as I released my anger, hate, and resentment upon the uniform. I thought of all the things within the military that really made me mad, from my experiences in places like Iraq and Kosovo, to all the stupid uniform inspections we had to go through. I tore with fury, until my hands hurt; they would be sore for the following two days.

Once all the different parts are separated the different patches, buttons, and insignia get saved in a bucket for possible future use as a part of the art, which can be glued to the paper. The nylon and polyester gets thrown away. All the natural fibers are salvaged from the uniform and it is then cut up into little pieces about the size of a stamp, which takes a bit of time as well.

Each uniform is separated into individual buckets since each uniform is each person’s personal story and history. One of the participants at the workshop was an older lady who brought her late father’s uniform that he wore in the Korean War. She told us about their relationship, about what the military meant to her, about what it meant to him, and about what this experience was like for her. The uniform that she cut up would be bagged and saved for the following weeks workshop where they would turn the uniform into pulp and then put onto a screen to dry and be pressed, the week after that it would be paper. The uniform we were working on
was not my own, so it went into a general bucket that would be used by those who were not able to participate in the first step of the process. As Eli stated, “there is always more cutting to be done, it is a never ending processes.”

As we worked people weaved in and out of the different groups, introduced themselves, talked about who they were, and they were always genuinely curious as to who you were. There were a number of Vietnam era veterans there, which was a great experience as we talked story about our experiences. I overheard one of the vets call out a name to one of the other vets who replied; this caught my attention, as it seemed that Jan Barry was attending the workshop. Jan was one of the primary founders of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), and according to Andrew Hunt’s book *The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War*, VVAW would not have formed had it not been for the dedication and hard work of Jan Barry. As we chatted he said that he recognized me, to which we went back and forth trying to figure it out. Finally we realized that we had met at the Warrior Writers workshop in Philly a few weeks prior but we had never exchanged names then. In some ways I felt in awe of someone who had such an impact on history, but this friendly elderly man was very humble and rather nonchalant about his past activism. He told me that most of his time now was spent doing art, writing, and talking to different groups of people around the country. We talked for a bit and returned to our work of deconstruction.

I ended up talking to a number of different Vietnam era veterans, which was probably one of the most rewarding aspects of the day for me. My interview with Drew Cameron from two months earlier kept jumping into my head. I remember
him saying something at lunch to the effect of all war stories are the same, no matter what generation of veteran it comes from. I realized this truth, as I saw a bond and brotherhood with these guys that parallels my bond with my war buddies. I also noticed the diversity of folks, from the more reserved to the loud and boisterous, which makes me think of my crew of vets that I am close with. There are many similarities, and it felt all too familiar. In some ways this invigorated me, in some ways it saddened me. I am energized by the generations of activists, people who feel like I do, people who want the same things that I do. I am sad that we are still fighting unethical wars, that soldiers are still coming home and being not only forgotten but also ignored.

The day rolled on and we continue to cut, tear, and deconstruct the uniforms in front of us. As we did so, other parts of my interview with Drew Cameron start to come together. For example as mentioned above, he said, “War is completely and absolutely unfulfilling” and later that “the process of making paper is a value adding process.” I did not realize it at the time but these two statements are a part of each other; they compliment one another, as they are two sides of the same coin. “War,” as Cameron explains, “always leaves you yearning for more, you are never satisfied, even if you leave horrified by war and not wanting anything to do with it ever again, you still want to be in it, to go back, to experience it again and again.” At the time I completely agreed and understood what he was talking about when it came to the unfulfilling nature of war, but I did not completely understand the “value-adding” process of making paper because I had never done it. The experience of war becomes inscribed within the uniform, much the way it is inscribed into the mind
and body. It comes to signify that experience, the horrors, the violence, the laughter, the camaraderie, the sadness, the fear, the anger, etc. It becomes embedded within the uniform as much as it was in our minds and bodies, as you can still see the blood and sweat within the uniform, the old dried up tobacco leaves from cigarettes long ago smoked, the heavily uneven threads from patches self-sewn on, ink from a pen, etc. They all remain in the uniform, and as we deconstruct the uniform that reinscription is brought out, the stories become fresh, the memories are relived. Questions begin to arise, and the stories as well as the uniform begin to be deconstructed. And when it is all torn apart, it is then cut down to the size of a stamp, then mashed and beat to its smallest fiber, and cleansed with water. It is then ready to be put back together; it is time to “Re-make sense.” The pulp is strained and put onto the screens where it dries as the fibers bind together; with pressure and time it coagulates into paper. With the paper we then write, draw, and paint our experiences, we “value add,” we fill the hole of the unfulfilling nature of war, through this deconstruction, through this examination, through the art and writing that we put onto the paper.

This deconstruction and value adding process is an ontological shifting process as the nature and being of the uniform and all that has be inscribed into it is literally and symbolically broken down to its bare fundamentals and reconstructed into something new, with new meanings, ideas, thoughts, memories, etc.; Thus the process makes the uniform into a floating signifier. Even on the Combat Paper website, they state:

Coming home from war is a difficult thing. There is often much to account for as a survivor. A new language must be developed in order
to express the magnitude and variety of the collective effect. Hand papermaking is the language of Combat Paper. By working in communities directly affected by warfare and using the uniforms and artifacts from their experiences, a transformation occurs and our collective language is born.\textsuperscript{324}

And through the process of cutting up, purifying through water, beating to a pulp, and rebonding into paper, all of this is possible. It is a new language, a new community, new meanings and articulations, all filling the unfulfilling nature of war. Furthermore, these new languages are an act of demilitarization as we took a part of the war and reinscribe it with a nonviolent action meant for healing and for art.

It was all this that I realized and was thinking about throughout the day. As we said our goodbyes, exchanged contact information, and gave departing hugs, a calm settled over the day. While we had spent most of the day cutting and destroying uniforms, while thinking about the horrors of war, it was as if there was a feeling of contentment that spread throughout the participants. We had all learned a new language, all experienced a new bond, built a new community, and grown internally.

**Conclusion**

With an estimated 300,000 veterans returning with symptoms of TBI and PTSD, there must be alternative forms of healing for veterans, especially in light of the 22 veterans, on average, who commit suicide every day.\textsuperscript{325} Furthermore, many of these

veterans who have committed suicide have already reached out for help. All too often the VA prescribes anti-depressants, which do not interact well with alcohol, often the veterans’ favorite escape mechanism. With the continued stripping of benefits due to neoliberal ideals, the problem will only continue to get worse unless more alternatives like this are utilized.

As highlighted throughout my project there are a number of issues that come about in the militarization process, from issues of masculinity to PTSD. The military does a poor job dealing with these issues once a soldier comes home from combat as there is little time to heal and no real attempt to deprogram a soldier from the training meant to dehumanize and kill the perceived enemy. There needs to be a space of demilitarization, where soldiers can heal and come home in a safe manner. The programs like Warrior Writers and Combat Paper fulfill that space as they disrupt the processes of militarization, and all that comes with it: racism, sexism, hypermasculinity, and dehumanization. While much of their work undermines the goals of the US security dispositif, by exposing the atrocities of war, it also helps those who have sacrificed a lot.

“Rags make paper, paper makes money, money makes banks, banks make loans, loans make beggars, beggars make rags.”

-Dard Hunter

or the way that I like to reframe it...

Rags make paper, paper makes money, money makes banks, banks make countries, countries make wars, wars make rags...

---


326 Ibid.

327 Dard Hunter, Papermaking: The History and Technique of an Ancient Craft (Courier Dover Publications, 1978). Told to me by Drew Cameron in our interview.
CLOSING THOUGHTS

The title of this dissertation is *Fight to Live, Live to Fight: Mapping Veteran Narratives of Violence in Peace*. The first half of that title was drawn from one of my favorite bands songs, The Bouncing Souls song *Fight to Live*. The song and the band both have deep meanings for me, as my friends and I met the band just before we left for Iraq. After a couple of long nights of drinking, we all exchanged emails and they eventually gave us a forum to speak our minds; we wrote them letters and they would post those letters on their website. They then took one of the posts by Garett and turned it into a song called, *Letters From Iraq*, which was about us writing to them. This concreted a tight personal bond that will last our lifetimes. The song *Fight to Live* is personal because it constantly reminds me of who I am, what I need to do, and who I want to be. It reminds me to never give up my quest for equity. As the Bouncing Souls say in the song, “Fight to live is the only fight, I got left in me.”

There were many dark and depress filled nights that I would turn to the Bouncing Souls and their music, as every song seemed to relate to my life. I often feel that had I not had their music in my life, I would not be where I am today. I also feel that many other veterans are fighting to live in their everyday struggles, and it is through activism that they find that will to live, thus live to fight.

The second half of the title of my dissertation, *Mapping Veteran Narratives of Violence in Peace*, is an examination of those vets who are living to fight, and it looks at what they are fighting. While I look primarily at social justice activists, there is a wide range of veterans coming home and getting involved in various forms of activism. This ranges from activism with traditional groups such as the American
Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), to activism with radical right wing groups such as the KKK and other militias. While I will probably look at these other forms of activism in future projects, my focus here was more congruent groups and veterans because in many ways this is my own act of parrhēsia, and my own truth.

Much as the music of the Bouncing Souls kept me sane, my own activism, involvement, and fighting for social justice kept me driven and inspired. These were positive forces in my life that worked to shift the traumas I had experienced. The wins in activism left me soaring high, while the losses crashed me to desolate lows. This has led me to believe that the power of activism is very important for returning veterans, though it is a double edge. While veterans are receiving the comradery and brotherhood that comes with military service, there is still a sort of isolation that they battle on a daily basis. This became clear to me in two different instances. First was the recent suicide of 3 tour Afghan veteran and peace activist Jacob George. While I did not know him personally, many of my friends were very close with him. While he struggled with his own experience, he was a very energetic activist as well as a talented songwriter. As he played his banjo and sang with his Arkansas accent, he rode across the country on a bicycle singing songs about farmers in Afghanistan and farmers in the US, and the absurdity that it was the farmers who were often sent to kill each other. Many of my friends told me that his energy and passion was


329 “Soldier’s Heart: Remembering Jacob George, Afghan War Vet Turned Peace Activist Who Took Own Life,” Democracy Now!, accessed January 23, 2015,
infectious, in a positive way. But in Fall 2014, when the US began sending troops back into Iraq, Jacob was devastated, and he took his own life. The end of combat operations and the withdrawal of troops in Iraq felt like a win to many within IVAW and other peace movements, and to have soldiers sent back in felt like a crushing defeat. I feel that what has saved many of us from suffering the same fate as the 22 veterans a day who are committing suicide everyday is our activism as it has had a positive affect in shifting our subjectivities and worked to demilitarize our lives and minds.\textsuperscript{330}

The second time I came to deeply understand this isolation I often felt was in a reading for one of my seminars, assigned by Jairus Grove. The reading was Tiqqun's, \textit{This is not a Program}, it is lengthy but worth reciting. Tiqqun writes:

Contrary to what THEY have told us, the warrior is not a figure of plentitude, and certainly not of virile plentitude. The warrior is a figure of amputation. The warrior is a being who feels he exists only through combat, through confrontation with the Other, a being who is unable to obtain for himself the feeling of existing... The warrior is in fact driven by a desire, and perhaps one sole desire: the desire to disappear. The warrior no longer want to be, but wants his disappearance to have a certain style. He wants to \textit{humanize} his vocation for death. That is why he never really manages to mix with the rest of humankind: they are spontaneously wary of his movement toward Nothingness. In their admiration for the warrior can be measured the distance they impose between him and them. The warrior is thus condemned to be alone. This leaves him greatly dissatisfied, dissatisfied because he is unable to belong to any community other than the false community, the \textit{terrible} community, of warriors who have only their solitude in common. Prestige, recognition, glory are less the prerogative of the warrior than the only form of relationship compatible with his solitude. His solitude is at once his salvation and his damnation.

\textsuperscript{330} Basu, "Why Suicide Rate among Veterans May Be More than 22 a Day."
The Warrior is a figure of anxiety and devastation. Because he isn’t present, is only for-death, his immanence has become miserable, and he knows it. He has never gotten used to the world, so he has no attachment to it; he awaits its end. But there is also a tenderness, even a gentleness about the warrior, which is this silence, this half-presence. If he isn’t present, it is often because otherwise he would only drag those around him into the abyss. That is how the warrior loves: by preserving others from the death he has at heart. Instead of the company of others, he thus often prefers to be alone, and this is more out of kindness than disgust. Or else he joins the grief-stricken pack of warriors who watch each other slide one by one towards death. Because such is their inclination.

In a sense, the society to which the warrior belongs cannot help but distrust him. It doesn’t exclude him nor really include him; it excludes him through its inclusion and includes him through its exclusion. The ground of their mutual understanding is recognition. In according him prestige society keeps the warrior at a distance, attaching itself to him and by the same token condemning him... 

Jacob George had a song that addressed this, talking about how he could no longer have a normal relationship, and that he didn’t want to cause pain to those he loved. This is something almost every veteran I interviewed related to in one-way or another; something that I relate to as well, as we all seem to try and reconnect with society upon our return. And while we struggle to make these connections, activism is a common space where the healing can begin. However, we are the exception not necessarily the rule.

While I was conducting interviews around the country, I had a very interesting encounter that I still often reflect upon, tied to this feeling of isolation. I was in New York, doing an interview with Jon Gensler about his environmental activism, and was then invited to the panel I discuss in Chapter 4. I decided to walk from his office to the building the panel was held in, and found myself with some

---

time to waste so I walked around Grand Central Station, which was across the street from the office buildings I was going to. While walking through this iconic landmark I came across a man my age holding a sign that said, “Homeless Veteran, anything helps! God Bless!” I stopped to talk to him and he immediately realized I was a veteran, as if we could smell our own. As we talked we came to the realization that not only were we in Iraq at the same time, but also that we were in sister units. He was in 2/2 Infantry, in the same brigade as me, meaning he literally lived right across the street from me in Germany. We shared many of the same experiences, been to many of the same places, and even knew some of the same people. It was times like this that the world truly felt small. As he told me his story, I couldn’t help to think how easily I could have went down his path. Upon his return, like most of us, he turned to the bottle. What hurt him the most was that he got pulled over for multiple Driving Under the Influence (DUI) tickets, which caused him to go to jail for a short bit. This made it difficult for him to return to college, and ruined his chances of what he said was his dream of going to the police academy to become a cop. While he was living in his parents’ basement, he felt isolated, and said he couldn’t relate with any of his old friends. His parents tried to stage an intervention, but instead he left his upstate New York home and headed for NYC. He had been there for a couple of months, mostly panhandling, but was trying to seek help and a job from the Veterans Administration. I gave him the number and email addresses of a number of activists I knew in the area, including my own, but to this day I have not heard from him. When I returned from Iraq I turned to drugs and alcohol, and many times drove under the influence, which I realize now was not smart to do, but had I been caught,
I may have went down the same road as this veteran, or maybe worse.

It’s stories like this that make me say that activist veterans are the exception not the rule. And while there is often too much, and yet not enough written on the topic of veterans, they are able to articulate an important political critiques that are often not heard. The encounter that takes place when veterans’ narratives and theory are put together is interesting, as I have tried to show. Veterans have the opportunity to act as organic intellectuals, practicing Foucault’s concept of parrhēsia, as they speak truth to power that works to shift the hierarchies and power dynamics of the military dispositif, that is to blame for the traumas they have experienced.

They confront these traumas by actually working for more peaceful solutions, for the sake of veterans, their families, their communities, and for the planet. No veteran wants a civilian to have to experience the things that they experienced. While they will honor the role of the soldier, many are fighting for it to be the last time, the last conflict, the last war. Unfortunately that is not beneficial for the security dispositif, because it seeks to maintain itself, it must have a sustained level of insecurity so that it can thrive. While the world is a variety of shades of gray, the security dispositif continues to paint the world as black and white, good versus evil, much as it did with the current film sensation, American Sniper, which is as much a part of the security dispositif and the war imaginary as the policies that the military sets forth. These veteran activists seek to shift these narratives in order to create what many of them consider a better world, whether that is a world without war, one that is more environmentally sustainable, or one that is more equitable on
racial, class, gender, or lines of sexuality.

I would like to close this project by describing where I began when I started conceptualizing this project. In Michel Foucault’s *Society Must Be Defended* lectures, he states a proposition in which he inverts Carl von Clausewitz’s aphorism of, “War is a mere continuation of policy by other means.”

Furthermore, Foucault states:

> Power is war, the continuation of war by other means... the role of political power is perpetually to use a sort of silent war to reinscribe that relationship of force, and to reinscribe it in institutions, economic inequalities, language, and even the bodies of individuals... politics is the continuation of war by other means.

Foucault places his inversion of Clausewitz—“politics is the continuation of war by other means”—in-between two conceptions of power, what he terms as “Reich’s hypothesis,” and “Nietzsche’s hypothesis.” According to Foucault, “Reich’s hypothesis” is one that formulates power solely as a repressive force, whereas “Nietzsche’s hypothesis” sees power as a “warlike clash between forces.” Furthermore, he stated that these hypotheses are not mutually exclusive, as they are tied together. Therefore, this makes power something that is not only repressive but also productive at the same time.

The inversion of Clausewitz for Foucault was a reinscription of power, so that the “conditions of possibility” could be exposed and ‘relations of force could be coded within a grid of intelligibility.’ To this, Beatrice Hanssen states:

---


333 Ibid. 15-16.

334 Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*. Pg 16.

335 Ibid.

...Foucault here appeared to push politics to the point where it became mere strategy, or the “strategic codification of these points of resistance.” War, violence, and politics were different noninclusive encodings, ways of coding points of resistance in the strategic field of power relations, which could “circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy.” 337

Therefore, war, violence, and politics were not merely instrumental as other theorists—like Hannah Arendt—had held, but rather they were products of force relations that could be coded in such a way that one could see what was being repressed and what was being produced. So war and politics are not necessarily synonymous, but rather they carry similar attributes that have similar affects. For example, war will carry with it many deaths through direct violence; however, politics can cause large amounts of deaths as seen by the sanctions on Iraq where over 576,000 children died of malnutrition. 338 Similarly, on a more local but systemic level, one needs to only look at the high rates of deaths due to diabetes within the food deserts in the inner cities throughout the United States, which is not only a function of biopolitics, but also one of neoliberalism. 339

It is within these concepts that we find my project as it locates the conditions of possibility for war veterans and maps the force relations that these veterans have experienced and continue to experience violence on a day-to-day basis in war and in politics. My aim was to both try and disentangle the messiness of war and politics at

times, and also to make it more complicated and messy at others, as I sought to break with the normative analytic constructions. I also wanted to understand how these veterans came to become activists. Imbedded within this how, is a narrative that falls outside the empirical normative expectations for war veterans, in which we can see a resignification of patriotism take place. This resignification of patriotism is the push back against the security dispositif, which many within the general public might normally see as problematic, however since it is war veterans who are doing the pushing it blurs the boundaries of who and what signifies as patriotic. My ultimate goal was similar to Foucault’s in my focus to locate when resistance takes place and to understand what it looked like.

I believe I achieved this, from examining the activism that took place at Occupy with Shamar Thomas and Scott Olsen, to the way in which veterans resubjectify their experiences through art, and all the other chapters in-between. These points of inscription upon the body, where the imbrication of war, politics, and neoliberalism can be found are what I was looking for. I wanted to know in what ways do these identity politics intersect, impact, and relate to how the veterans I interviewed, got to where they are. One of Foucault’s many descriptions of a genealogy—and my personal favorite—describes it as ‘a history of the present, not made for understanding but rather for cutting’ and it is within this idea that “the how” can be found, as stated above, which showed the war like relations that these veterans face upon their return home.340 Furthermore, we were able to see the resistance that is created which acts as what Hanssen describes as a

340 Hanssen, Critique of Violence. Pg. 49.
“counterforce.” 341 In Hanssen’s description of this counterforce, attributed to Foucault, she states:

...Foucault remained situated squarely in the tradition of counterviolence (Gegengewalt). Aligning this “counter-“strategy at times with the mechanisms of dialectical “reversal,”... Foucault devised a subversive strategy that sought to breach—not transcend—present conditions by pressing at the limits from within. At the very least, Foucault’s critical counterstrategies raise the question of what the place of “anti-dogmatic violence” might be in the context of his reconceptualized Kantian critique.342

The reconceptualized Kantian critique that Hanssen is describing is Foucault’s focus upon Kant’s essay “Was ist Aufklärung,” or rather “What is Enlightenment.” To which, Foucault pushed the idea that Kant’s essay was a rupture in philosophy that promoted a self-awareness/critical attitude. Therefore, my project had two major components: one is examining the excess and at times untangling the messiness of war and politics as described above, but also complicating it at times—which is directly tied to the inversion of Clausewitz; the second part was an examination of the technique of self governance that is articulated through these veterans and their pushing against the security dispositif to expose the excesses produced by it and the subsequent challenge to the everyday assumptions of what life must be like or the life that is proposed by the security dispositif. It is an examination of an “ēthos,” which looks at “their mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people, in the end a way of thinking and feeling.”343 In other words, it is an attempt to understand these veterans reflexivity of the self upon the self, or

341 Ibid. 39.
342 Ibid.
343 Hanssen, Critique of Violence. 69.
as Hanssen puts it, “a radically experimental attitude, meaning the essaying of oneself through reinvention. In inventing a historical ontology of ourselves, we might then, it seemed, be able to reclaim the other enabling, no longer simply determining, meaning of power, telescoped in the French term *pouvoir* which literally meant ability and potentiality.”\textsuperscript{344} The reflexivity I mapped is in relation to the war/politics that are occurring within these veterans’ everyday lives caused by neoliberal western democratic forces.

Perhaps it was my experience at war and then as an activist that made me see the connections between war and politics, the messiness of it all, how they work in a reciprocal fashion, always feeding one another. Or perhaps it was my academic track that led me to the conclusion, double majoring in Political Science and Sociology, and then moving to an Ethnic Studies MA, ending at a Political Science PhD, within a department heavily influenced by Foucault. I’m not 100% sure as to why the commingling of war and politics became such a fascination of mine. However, what I do know is that the first time that I read *Society Must Be Defended*, which was my first encounter with Foucault, something in my gut knew that the tenets of this inversion held a lot of certainty within it. It forced me to perform a sort of self-reflexive examination of my own experiences as a combat veteran and as an activist. All that I had done, had come into focus, and gave me a purpose to move forward. I wanted to continue to untangle the intricate webs of war and politics, and to complicate the simplistic aspects. It is because of this that I branched out to different people, experiences, activists, collectives, organizations, etc. As I stated

\textsuperscript{344} Ibid. 73.
before, my work is not to solely understand my own experience, nor myself, because I feel I have a personal understanding of those, as it is my truth. Rather, my aim has been to understand war through cutting and penetrating the layers of knowledge that hold the current conceptions of war together. In some ways I would say I also came to answer what Foucault sought to know when he said, “the last thing that I would like to study would be the problem of war and the institution of war in what one would call the military dimension of society... the question of military justice: what makes a Nation entitled to ask someone to die for it.”345 While I have not completely answered that question, I feel my work gets us that much closer to understanding it.

In all, my project can be seen as one that examines the products of war—specifically soldiers and veterans—that were produced through violence and war. These veterans are able to locate and be located within grids of intelligibility in which violence, war, and politics are (re)produced and which we find our current understanding of the present in the post 9/11, War on Terror, neoliberal world. Throughout this project, I have looked at the multiple layers within the security dispositif. While my work will continue on after the completion of this dissertation, I will continue to spin off and branch out into other areas of contention where war and politics meet.

“In a time of universal deceit - telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”
-George Orwell

“I’m for truth, no matter who tells it. I’m for justice, no matter who it’s for or against.”
-Malcolm X

---

345 Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth (Semiotex*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, 2nd ed. (Semiotext(e), 2007). Pg 143.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


———. *The Politics of Truth (Semiotext)*. Edited by Sylvère Lotringer. 2nd ed. Semiotext(e), 2007.


Kenyon, Jessica. MST.org Interview, November 25, 2013.


http://www.nooneleft.org/.


http://forthoodtestimonies.com/.


Service Women’s Action Network. Rape, Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the Military, July 2012.


Thomas, Shamar. Occupy Vets Interview, October 27, 2013.


