A Comparative Study of Army ROTC Writing Pedagogy

Ryan Strader

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_diss

Recommended Citation

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.
ABSTRACT

As composition instructors, we often describe ourselves as capacitating students for complex work environments, and we often describe ourselves as capacitating students for civic responsibility. Meanwhile, there is a large community of young men and women preparing to work in a military environment, and we have very little understanding of their writing needs as future officers, or the writing exigencies of the military workplace. We work on campuses with Army ROTC instructors who teach writing strategies and prepare their students for a writing-heavy work environment, yet have very little understanding of what ROTC instructors do as writing teachers. It becomes easy for composition instructors to believe that the education of future military officers is a distant task, taking place in some far off space by people they have nothing in common with.
This qualitative project explores the writing pedagogy of Army ROTC instructors through interview data and curricular materials. A generalizable description of Army ROTC writing pedagogy is offered, using concepts from the field of writing studies to map and clarify the kind of writing processes, pedagogy, axiology, and epistemology that generally governs Army ROTC writing pedagogy. Interview data is described through the development of five interview profiles, presented with accompanying analysis. To further explicate themes that emerge from interview data and ground the description of Army ROTC writing pedagogy, there is commentary on Army Regulation 25-50 and the Army ROTC suggested writing assignments. These items reveal a unique pedagogical challenge that influences Army writing pedagogy: instructors are constantly trying to balance teaching the “science” of being a soldier with the “art” of being a soldier. The final chapter offers reflection on how this work opens up a new space in the scholarship of teaching and writing studies. This new space envisions military classrooms as sites of important composition pedagogy, and brings together composition and military instructors as pedagogical partners and colleagues.

INDEX WORDS: Writing pedagogy, Workplace-based writing, Writing studies, Army writing, Army instructors, Writing instructors
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ARMY ROTC WRITING PEDAGOGY

by

RYAN K. STRADER

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
2019
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ARMY ROTC WRITING PEDAGOGY

by

RYAN K. STRADER

Committee Chair: Ashley Holmes

Committee: George Pullman
            Mary Hocks

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University

May 2019

Comment [WU1]: The date here must be the month and year of your graduation—not the month and year of your submission.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Joel Strader, whose unconditional love, patience, and encouragement has seen me through this entire journey. When the going gets tough, he helps me to remember that my work is always about serving my students.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would not have been possible to write this dissertation without the help and support of many caring and knowledgeable people. It is only possible to name some of them here.

I would not have been able to organize and start my work without the patient guidance of my wonderful director, Dr. Ashley Holmes. Dr. Holmes enabled me to navigate the winding and mysterious process of procuring IRB approval, not to mention providing forthright and helpful advice on data interpretation when I had more than I could handle. Dr. Mary Hocks helped me get a handle on theories of writing pedagogy early on in the process which shaped the rest of the project, and allowed me to first explore the idea of “writing workplaces” in her class on academic publication.

The writing advice, support, and friendship of Dr. George Pullman has been invaluable on an academic and personal level. I wouldn’t be the writer, researcher, or scholar I am today without his encouragement and advice.

Thank you to Brian Arnold and Todd Patterson, who provided some initial perspective into the writing world of their military branch and helped spark the curiosity that drove this project.

Thank you to Evan Huelfer, Brett Bowser, and my helpers at Cadet Command, for making sure I got a close-up view of Army writing. Each of you opened important doors for me and made sure I had a comprehensive view of writing education in the Army.

Thank you to all of my participants, from every branch. You took risks for me and followed through even when it seemed baffling that a military outsider would be curious about your work. I’m sure you had other things you could have been doing, rather than explaining to me for the tenth time how to write an Operations Order.
A special thank you to my students, who have emailed me, called me, and kept up with me. I feel like I am the most blessed writing teacher that ever lived, thanks to my students.

Thank you to Niki, Amanda, and Beth, for friendship, for asking how I’m doing, and for making sure I took a break from my desk to play ping-pong or drink glühwein.

Last but not least, my beloved family. My children, Quinn and Elijah, have been preternaturally patient as they’ve grown up with a mom who is always studying or writing. Joel, you made my dreams your own and have been my biggest supporter. Thank you for taking this journey with me.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 CHAPTER ONE: AN OVERVIEW OF EVERYTHING</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Introduction and Conceptualization of Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Rationale and Motivation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Methods</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Initial Data Gathering and Narrowing Down</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Rigor and Ethics</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Analysis, Interpretation</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Description and Presentation</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 Review of the Literature</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8.1 Veteran’s Studies</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8.2 Writing to Communicate and Genre Theory</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8.3 Military Publications</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 Progression of the Dissertation</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 CHAPTER TWO: INTERPRETATION OF PROJECT DATA</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Overview</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 If writing is an activity, then it’s better done together</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Master practitioners, writing pedagogy, and a community of practice</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Axiological values: Writing to communicate and communicating right</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Axiological values: Genres and the magical language of action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Epistemological assumptions: “Put your own spin on it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CHAPTER THREE: DESCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW DATA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>There should be a word for this feeling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>What is a “profile”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Selecting interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Intermediation and profiles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1</td>
<td>Profile 1: LTC Andy Rubin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2</td>
<td>Profile 2: LTC Jesse Armstrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.3</td>
<td>Profile 3: LTC Gordon Parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.4</td>
<td>Profile 4: LTC Jeff Kaplan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.5</td>
<td>Profile 5: LTC Jon Colton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Is the Army full of people who are just like me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION OF CLASSROOM MATERIALS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Curricular context and caveats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>AR 25-50: “We have a manual for everything.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Writing assignments recommended for each Army ROTC course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>The science of being a soldier, the art of being a soldier.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5 Transition .................................................................................................................................. 133

5 CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS ............................................................................................... 134

5.1 Giving value to this chapter…and to the whole project......................................................... 134

5.2 Strengths are limitations, too............................................................................................ 138

5.3 Summary of discoveries.................................................................................................... 139

5.4 Looking ahead, for myself and the field. ........................................................................... 141

5.5 Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 145

WORKS CITED ............................................................................................................................ 1

APPENDICES ................................................................................................................................. 8

Appendix A: Interview Questions ............................................................................................ 8

Appendix B: Army Regulation 25-50, Cover And Pages I-6 ..................................................... 10

Appendix C: Army Rotc Writing Assignments By Course ....................................................... 17
1 CHAPTER ONE: AN OVERVIEW OF EVERYTHING

1.1 Introduction and Conceptualization of Study

It is not a minor thing to present research that is composed of others’ stories. The presentation and description of data deserves adequate context and preface, as there are several substantive and symbolic choices that are made in the collection, curation, and presentation of data.

To use Robert E. Stake’s words, research with human beings is “not a machine to grind out facts,” but an empathic foray into questions about the ways people work, and we make that foray by trying to understand what others are saying about themselves (Stake 36, 2). The project that I present in this dissertation is now part of my own story, and part of my participants’ stories. Like most good stories, my idea for the project and its unfolding story emerged organically from other experiences. My first moments of curiosity about military education and writing even pre-date my doctoral program.

For several semesters in a row, I noticed that several students would leave the smaller school where I taught first-year writing, and head to larger, nearby colleges where they enrolled in ROTC programs. A few students asked me to fill out recommendations for service academies, which were long, detailed forms with fillable boxes and directions about specific personality and leadership attributes to address. With no military background of my own, I often asked peers who had served in the military for some thoughts on the writing world of the military.

I am fortunate to be well loved by my students, and over the semesters several of them would contact me again. When I would ask what they were writing in their new programs, they would tell me about leadership essays, and Operations Orders. “They are like a five paragraph essay,” students would explain. When I would ask further questions, it became apparent that,
while Operations Orders are indeed five “paragraphs,” their similarity to the “five paragraph essay” ends pretty soon after that.

These experiences were in my mind, while I was doing my coursework for my doctorate. As I considered possible projects for my dissertation, I knew that I wanted to do something that connected my love of writing and teaching with some of my other personal idiosyncrasies, namely a tendency toward interdisciplinary work and a preference for finding new content that results in a constant pedagogical “wanderlust.” I am always curious about the writing forms and heuristics of other fields.

During this time, Dr. George Pullman recommended that I read the work of Clifford Geertz. In The Interpretation of Cultures, Geertz argues for an “interpretive” approach to ethnographic research: Geertz claims that social groups give meaning to “texts” (these may be objects or cultural acts) and that the job of the researcher is to “interpret” the meaning as best as they can. This conception of research, as something similar to literary analysis, along with Geertz’s emphasis on writing as a form of describing data and generating conversation between social groups, became a central part of my own methodology. It brought together my belief in writing as performative identity and as identity construction, and my curiosity about how other social groups—teachers, students, workplaces—do the act of writing and what it means to them.

Not long after that, Dr. Pullman also told me about Writing in Nonacademic Settings, by Lee Odell and Dixie Goswami, an older collection of studies by rhetoric and composition scholars seeking to improve their pedagogy by investigating—often through qualitative means—the writing done in non-academic professional environments. These teachers had surveyed corporations and spent time in trade schools, in order to learn about the workplace-based writing work of professions their students might enter.
It occurred to me that if other writing teachers had taken an ethnographic approach to corporations, then I could do something similar. As I looked over the Table of Contents in Odell and Goswami’s book, I realized that the right kind of project for me would be one that allowed me to use ethnographic methods to understand writing in a unique context that had engaged my curiosity. Geertz’s theory of culture as a matrix of texts, along with Odell and Goswami’s conviction that “writing workplaces” should be researched in the interest of expanding writing teachers’ knowledge of writing in “the real world,” could be brought together by a project that investigated the writing practices or pedagogy of a writing “culture” or workplace that I was curious about.

The writing workplace that immediately came to mind, was the military, and specifically the work of my students who had gone on to military programs. If it was productive and beneficial to know what kind of writing students might be taught to do when they were hired at a corporation, then it might be productive and beneficial to know what kind of writing students would do as military officers. If a composition instructor had studied the Xerox corporation, then I could study the military.

I formulated three simple and practical research questions to guide the study. These were questions that I had had for myself many times, and wanted to know the answer to:

1. What kind of writing assignments are used by instructors in military programs? What are the learning objectives/goals used to design writing assignments?
2. In what ways, and to what extent, do those writing assignments use concepts from composition theory?
3. For military instructors, what are their goals when they assign writing? What do they think is important for students to learn through writing, and how does that translate into their classroom practice?

The adequacy of a research method depends on the purpose of the research and the questions asked by the researcher. The purpose of my study was clearly exploratory. Exploratory research aims to make an initially foray into a new environment, to describe that new environment and develop some early understandings of variables and their interrelationships, in order to offer initial description and provide context for further research (Yin, Lauer and Asher). My questions were investigating the subjective understanding that ROTC instructors have of their role in the teaching of writing, something that was best investigated by interviewing. At the same time, one cannot talk about writing assignments and curriculum without having some concrete material to demonstrate what “writing assignments” means or what the “curriculum” is, so data gathering would have two forms: interviews and the collection of curricular materials.

These considerations led me to design the project as a series of one-time interviews with instructors, where I would request classroom materials and follow up with a short series of questions. The practical goals of the study were to understand what kind of writing ROTC instructors and programs use in an effort to expand our ability to think about writing pedagogy in non-English programs, and to understand writing as an important workplace practice in a new work venue—the military. As a civilian with no military experience, I hoped the words of instructors who had experiential credibility (“face credibility,” as Joseph Maxwell calls it) would help to provide veracity and insight, even as I knew it would provide additional responsibility for me as a researcher.
1.2 Rationale and Motivation

The military is a “writing workplace,” about which composition instructors know very little, if anything. There is no research in our field that investigates the writing needs of ROTC programs, nor is there interview-based research with ROTC instructors. When we talk about writing in the disciplines or writing in other departments, we do not typically include ROTC programs in our notions of the “disciplines” that write, even though ROTC classes use writing. Some of this is logical: not all instructors teach on a campus that has an ROTC program for any branch. But many of us teach on campuses with an ROTC presence, and we do not have any conception of what the program does, as far as writing assignments are concerned.

That desire to familiarize myself and other instructors with the writing work of ROTC programs was certainly functional as a rationale for the study, and it was motivating enough to begin the project. As I worked through clarifying the goals of the project and began to build my literature review, I found that my project also addressed a wide research gap, discussed in my review of the literature. This gap in the research was also motivating, because I felt the project had a certain pragmatic value: our field just didn’t have an answer for very basic questions about ROTC instruction and writing. The study also felt exciting and “special” in the sense that it was the first one to interview ROTC instructors and present them as “writing teachers.”

Having an intelligent rationale for a project is not the same as having adequate motivation to complete it, and it is difficult to follow through on a year-long research project without a great deal of intrapersonal motivation.

As the study progressed and I began to gather some interviews and develop my first ideas about what writing meant for ROTC instructors, I also found that my participants and I shared many pedagogical values when it came to writing. Far from being “drill-sergeants” in an
authoritarian role with their students, many of my participants had pedagogical approaches similar to mine, and were personally invested in their students’ intrapersonal growth and success as military writers. None of that should have been surprising to me, considering that I did not know what to anticipate when I started approaching ROTC instructors for interviews. Some of it may have been due to a phenomenon that Joseph Maxwell has described, wherein researchers tend to attract participants like themselves, a type of “self-selecting” that happens when people respond to a recruitment email like the one I used (87-88). Whether that was the case or not, these connections between the teaching that I value and the teaching values of my participants became important to me, and very motivating to me. Gradually my conception of the importance of the project was shaped by these same factors, and so my motivation and my rationale became very intertwined.

My participants all enjoyed their work as instructors, and felt that they were doing something important and valuable in their work with students, not just because they enjoyed the content (most of them did) but because they believed in the university experience for young people. They felt that the ideal college experience was one that gave students exposure to new ideas, new perspectives, and taught them how to think critically. This aspect of college life was important to the development of officers as effective leaders.

My participants’ tendency to value learning and thinking connected well to my own teaching philosophy and values. I am very influenced by Gerard Hauser’s description of rhetoric as a teaching tradition that seeks to capacitate citizens by inspiring students to look “beyond the pugnacity of the agôn and the dazzle of seduction, to seek arête through rhetorical practices aligned with the narratives of their intellectual and moral traditions” (42). I like being a writing instructor in the “rhetorical tradition” (to use both Richard Fulkerson’s and Hauser’s description
simultaneously) because this is a tradition in which pedagogy encourages students to be “externally oriented,” because “speaking and writing reaches out into the world” (42). Hauser points out that rhetoric envisions education as integral to capacitating students for effective civic life. In addition, I have always appreciated the work of teacher-scholars like W. Michael Gray, who argue that the scholarship of teaching and learning needs to develop connections between instructor groups, and to help them see each other as colleagues. Research between different fields should look for opportunities to understand and learn from each other.

While the content of our classrooms was very different, these connections between my personal values as an instructor, and my participants’ values as instructors gave me a sense of commitment to their stories and the story of this project. I have always been of the opinion that teaching is a vocation and a worthy calling. My participants often had a similar view. We both want the best for our students: we want them to be able to think clearly and well and to be able to deliberate between choices in a world full of competing narratives and conflicting ideas.

I also came to feel that my project was helping to fight against the unfortunate cultural reality that teachers’ roles in the transmission of culture is misunderstood or dismissed. I realized early on in the project that while my participants had sought their positions as instructors, and while it was a very selective process, being an instructor is not necessarily admired or understood by others in the Army. Our field has always struggled to be seen as integral to the work of the university, to avoid being seen as a “side service” that English departments provide. Humanities instructors often have to work to make people understand the fundamental worth of what we do. ROTC instructors can find themselves engaged in a similar debate. Since they are trained as soldiers, “some people think that teaching is taking a knee,” explained Charlie Brooker.1 “They

1 I have assigned pseudonyms to all of my interviewees for this project.
feel that these men and women left the flag pole, so to speak,” he explained. Conversations like these encouraged me to see that my project, in giving Army ROTC instructors the opportunity to share what they do, was empowering the teaching profession as a whole.

At the same time that I was developing my initial perceptions of my participants, I often fielded questions from other composition instructors about what kind of involvement writing classes could possibly have with military programs. This line of questioning assumes that there is a separation between educational fields or bodies of content that I do not think is a reality for writing instructors. To borrow Charles Bazerman’s phrase, writing is the thinking that underlies education, and so to talk about writing is to talk about all subjects (505). As composition instructors we should enjoy a sense of liberty in the ways that our field touches other fields, without consuming them. Part of that liberty is to understand the writing heuristics of other fields, without becoming that field. If we believe that writing is important to thinking (I do), then the writing pedagogy and the writing heuristics of other fields is important knowledge for us to have, and we can only have it by making exploratory forays into those fields.

As I considered how to articulate the ways that I thought writing and military education could see themselves as connected in a joint endeavor, I read the work of military historian Michael S. Neiburg, who traces the development and evolution of ROTC in his book Citizen Soldiers. Neiburg argues that traditionally, college administrators have understood ROTC “not as an example of the military in the university, but as an example of the university in the military” (4). He traces the development of ROTC as a reflection of the American preference for a “citizen-soldier” instead of the professional soldier. Professional militaries carry with them the threat of heightened militarism, whereas the citizen-soldier is influenced by, and part of, the civilian community. In the tradition of ROTC programs, this means that soldiers who are
educated and part of non-military communities are better able to understand and serve the public that commissions them. As university instructors, including composition instructors, distance themselves from their military counterparts and become less aware of the pedagogical aims, goals, and interests of military instructors and students on our campuses, we also waive our interest in the education of our military officers and give up both the university’s opportunity to complement military affairs and our own opportunity to learn from military instructors. We are all more isolated than is good for us.

1.3 Methods

As an exploratory study, I started out with methods that were broadly conceived. Participation was open to any instructor in any officer-producing classroom. This could include ROTC programs, military colleges, and service academies, in any branch of the military. With no military experience of my own to base my perceptions on, and no idea who might respond to my study, I decided to approach any and all military preparatory programs. I received my IRB approval from Georgia State in November of 2017, and began to recruit my participants.

I solicited instructors through email to participate in the study. Consent forms were provided to instructors who responded to my recruitment email. Instructors who participated were asked to provide copies of a course syllabi in which they teach writing, along with their assignment directions/descriptions as they are provided to students, and any rubrics or evaluative items they use when assessing/grading writing. These materials were intended to help me understand the context of the instructor’s classroom, and also to help ground my interview questions. The consent form indicated that instructors may participate in part of the study but not all. For example, they may want to contribute their classroom materials but decline to be interviewed. In fact, most of my service academy participants did both, but most of my ROTC
participants chose to only be interviewed. All participants have pseudonyms, and I do not name their institutions.

Second, I followed up with instructors who were willing to do interviews. Interviews took place on the phone and were approximately 45 minutes, and focused on the instructor’s writing pedagogy. My interview questions (Appendix A) asked how they integrate writing into the course, their objectives when developing writing assignments, and how their military service is connected to how they teach writing (i.e. How they have determined what students need to know as writers in the military?). Interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The interviews gave me an understanding of the meaning of composition in the classroom for these instructors and clarified their pedagogical process and reasoning when it comes to writing assignments.

1.4 Initial Data Gathering and Narrowing Down

Early in the data gathering process, I sat down with my first set of interviews to re-think my focus. I had interviewed four instructors from a service academy, two from military colleges, and four from ROTC programs. From this set of interviews, plus the background research I had been doing and interviews with other people who worked in military education across three different branches, three things were apparent:

1. The education style of the different military branches cannot be equated with each other. Curricular decisions and design vary greatly. Obviously there are strong parallels, but it was apparent to me that they were different enough that in order to make incisive observations, a researcher has to focus on one branch.

2. The branches are not equally welcoming to outsiders.

3. The educational philosophy between ROTC programs, military schools, and service academies is so different that it cannot fairly be lumped together or discussed as a
group curricular phenomenology. The philosophy about how to “make an officer,”
how to teach content, and how to use writing as a pedagogical tool, are different
between these three contexts.

With these discoveries in mind, I looked over my interviews and thought about how to
focus the rest of the data gathering and the subsequent writing of my dissertation. I could
certainly have chosen to use service academies as a data set, and the themes that would have
emerged would have focused more on the concept of the military career and its effect on
pedagogy, and the pervasive—even oppressive—amount of academic “mentoring” that goes into
producing military writers in those contexts. I did not have as much data from military colleges,
but there were some interesting, and unique themes emerging from the interviews I did have,
predominantly the way that writing is often done in imitation of service academies and the heavy
reliance on writing centers. Both of those options would have produced different dissertations
than the one here.

I decided at that point in the project to focus on Army ROTC instructors. This was an
ideal set of instructors to focus on for several practical reasons. First, the Army was by far more
responsive to my project and my recruitment email. I had less trouble finding participants, and
most of the people who made a phone appointment with me kept it. Furthermore, my participants
from the Army were more interested in talking about their work and their assignments. They
were simply more open to an outsider.

Second, my research on the presence of ROTC programs had made it clear that the Army
has the largest ROTC presence in our region, and Georgia has one of the highest per capita
ROTC enrollments in the region. According to information provided to me by the Research and
Diversity office at Cadet Command, as of November 1st, 2018, there were 1688 students enrolled
in Army ROTC programs in Georgia. Aside from military-associated universities, Georgia Southern University and Georgia State University have the most enrollees. Georgia is among the higher states in per capita enrollment consistently over time, probably because there are so many Army installations nearby, and Georgia has a high number of Army retirees and veterans. Several instructors and curriculum developers that I came into contact with over the course of my project had been to meetings on Georgia State’s campus. There is a significant amount of ROTC activity in our state, and it reflects a large Army population in general.

In other words, there are far more Army ROTC students taking writing classes on campuses in Georgia than any other branch. Therefore, data from the Army is the most relevant to me and the campuses that I will teach on, which made the project more personally meaningful when it became Army-focused.

A few times while doing this project and explaining it to other composition instructors, I heard the comment “I’ve never taught an ROTC student, and I don’t think I’ve had any students who were going into the Army.” If an instructor has taught composition courses for a number of years in Georgia public universities, they have taught students who went on to be Army officers. They may have taught more or fewer of them, considering the size of the ROTC program at their school. But statistically, the likelihood that they have taught a future officer at some point is high. It sounds corny to say that a writing instructor may have a future General in their class, but it is a live possibility.

Choosing to focus my data collection on Army ROTC instructors helped me to achieve iteration of data much more quickly. Prior to focusing my project on Army ROTC instructors, I

---

2 All of the statistical data cited here was sent to me via personal email after I requested it from Cadet Command.
was concerned about the amount of data I might have to deal with. Seidman and a number of other researchers have written about “saturation” of information: at some point, an interviewer begins hearing the same thing over and over. When the researcher isn’t learning something new, and the interviews are iterative, then the practical exigencies of time, money, and the physical management of data (files, transcripts, etc.) and other resources become very pressing. Janice Lauer and J. William Asher also caution researchers to be careful of cognitive limitations; there is such a thing as having too much information to analyze, especially for a researcher working on their own and especially in qualitative projects (46-47). Focusing on Army instructors helped me learn more rapidly because the approach was focused, the data was no longer overwhelming, and the data became iterative very quickly because my participants had all served in the Army, been trained by the Army as teachers, and were teaching students who would be in the Army.

The data set that I have used to write this dissertation includes interviews with twelve instructors at nine different programs, mostly in Georgia and Alabama. My data is supported by interviews and correspondence with four other military education professionals, some of whom worked in Cadet Command or who worked as Commanders overseeing military education for an entire branch at some point in their career. The curricular materials that I have used as data are Army Regulation 25-50 (“AR 25-50”) and a year-by-year list of recommended writing assignments, which was provided to me by Army Cadet Command, the office that oversees Army ROTC and develops curriculum for ROTC instructors.

1.5 Rigor and Ethics

Qualitative work suffers from many stigmas, and one of them is that it lacks rigor. I wanted to design a study that was effective in answering my questions and did so in a suitably rigorous manner as to be considered contributive and valid, while still allowing for the fluidity
and context-bound experiences (the “natural-ness”) that would help me—and others—to explore a new intellectual path. At the same time, one of the problems with research in general is to insure that methods are followed in an ethical manner, contributing to the overall perception of the study as suitably rigorous.

My methods and methodology followed qualitative practices recommended by Irving Seidman, Robert K. Yin, and Robert E. Stake. I used a very structured approach: the length of interviews was determined ahead of time, the questions were both pre-determined and provided to my participants ahead of time. Instead of in-depth interviewing (multiple, longer interviews) I opted for a short, single interview with each participant that almost functioned as a long questionnaire, but gave me the face-time gravitas and opportunity to connect interpersonally with participants, an invaluable part of the experience. The structure and focus of the questions made narrative analysis and pattern matching much easier, as the questions themselves provided guidance on what to look for and it kept the interviews shorter and focused. Consent was informed, participants were allowed to participate to the level that they wanted to, and they were guaranteed pseudonymous participation.

In the interest of validity, I decided to incorporate concrete texts to base the interviews on, by asking participants for classroom materials. In a sense, while very few instructors provided personalized classroom materials, this request—and the unexpected way that my participants both filled and didn’t fill it—became very important to my overall understanding of the way that these instructors experience themselves as teachers. Most of them provided military-issued materials. There were a few syllabi provided, but writing assignment “descriptions” were almost entirely absent. Every single instructor referred to military regulations that govern writing. This isn’t surprising—it’s similar to everyone in the same writing department referring
to the department-recommended textbook. Yet, it was surprising to me—a fact that might be indicative of my own idealistic notions of what writing should or could mean to other instructors. I discuss my findings related to classroom curricular materials in Chapter Four.

I struggled a great deal with the ethical responsibilities of interviewing. While projects like mine don’t have life and death stakes for anyone, the risks and need for respect for participants is not trivial. It is a privilege to hear others’ stories, but the notion of turning others into subjects so that their words can be appropriated by someone from “outside” of their community, was an issue that bothered me often. I have often interviewed other people in other contexts, but those contexts always privileged the interviewee in ways that this study couldn’t. I have guest speakers in my classroom each year, but they are physically present in the room, and they are perfectly capable of correcting me if I misunderstand something. I interview translators for my work with a Philadelphia-based literary magazine, but my interviewees often see my work before it is printed. If I make a mistake or they feel mischaracterized, it’s easy for them to text me and let me know.

For a research project, this kind of transparency isn’t a reality, nor is it fully desirable. There are simply too many perspectives involved. As a researcher, at some point it’s my responsibility to synthesize the data and answer the research questions. I still feel that this is a large responsibility, and the fact that I use other people’s experiences and words to do it continues to raise questions and generate a certain amount of internal struggle for me.

I dealt with this burden of responsibility in four ways. First, from the beginning of my project, I sought to deepen my understanding of the military by reading Army publications and seeking input from every source I could find, including talking to people at Cadet Command. While I valued my “outsider” status because it was allowing me to make connections between
two educational contexts that don’t typically have contact with each other, I wanted to insure that the perspectives of my participants were adequately contextualized by me, an Army outsider. I also wanted to represent my own field well, and to lay groundwork for further research in a way that enabled teacher-scholars who may come after me.

Second, I made sure to follow my IRB protocol, especially when it came to informed consent and protecting the identity of my participants. I often looked over the three ethical provisions of the Belmont Report (respect, beneficence, justice) and considered my project through those lenses (the Belmont Report is easily found online, or see Seidman 58). The design of my project seems inherently non-threatening but just as important was my own personal agenda and the degree to which I, as the primary research instrument, was engaging with my participants from an appropriate stance of curiosity and humility, while at the same time keeping in mind my responsibility to think critically about information and to make value judgements that would produce effective and meaningful findings. In other words, it is my view that the ethical provisions of respect, beneficence, and justice can only be present in a study when they are present in the researcher doing the work. I made sure to constantly remind myself that respect is an issue of the heart more than it is an issue of an IRB. But I tried to design the IRB-approved version through the “heart lens” of respect, and so the two remained intertwined for me.

The third way that I dealt with ethical responsibility was to adopt Doug Hunt’s criteria for choosing which students he would describe in Misunderstanding the Assignment, an ethnographic study of a first year writing course. Hunt felt especially conflicted when it came to writing about young people. To counter his qualms and ensure that his young participants enjoyed an additional level of protection from his own inevitable biases, Hunt drew on his experience as a parent. He decided that he “would not write extensively about a student until he
or she engaged my affection, even my admiration” because this mirrored the way that he could feel affection for his daughter, even in moments when he was critical of her (146). I have actually practiced this rule for myself since I first read Hunt’s work: I apply it any time I write about my students, and even when I discuss my students or their work with other instructors. I have found it to be a healthy and easy way to check my own motivations.

For this study, my participants were not students, and most of them were older than I am. I also did not interact with them enough for there to be the kind of “affection” generated that Hunt is referring to or that I have relied on when dealing with my students, who I see regularly for at least 16 weeks. However, in the process of interviewing and sometimes emailing back and forth with a participant, there were obviously participants who engaged a greater degree of my respect or admiration, based on how they expressed themselves and how they treated me. While all of my interviews and interactions with ROTC instructors were important for checking the overall validity of my conclusions, and while I took every participants’ perspective into account, I chose to write about individuals that had engaged a greater degree of my respect and admiration. In that way I hoped to guard my participants from any analytical comments that lacked sympathy or came from petty motivations.

The final way that I have dealt with the ethical problems of doing research with fellow teachers is to constantly remind myself (and others) that descriptions are inherently “homemade…they are the describer’s descriptions, not those of the described” (Geertz 145). In Works and Lives, Clifford Geertz addresses the fact that ethical concerns about description can lead to a “moral hypochondria,” where researchers are so worried about being exploitative that they become ambivalent toward writing about others in general (137). The only way to counter this kind of paralysis, he says, is to understand that descriptive writing is “intermediary,” that
writers are creating a “work” that tries to “make things out” without “making them up” (140-142). There is no other way to encounter people in contexts and discourses different from our own, unless we embrace the paradoxical reality that we are describing real people, and that the description is always our own, to some degree a work of our own perceptions and imaginations. By embracing that perspective in my own work, I have found the freedom to cross societal lines easily and develop relationships with people very different from myself. It has also given me the liberty to write my conclusions, knowing that even as I depict real people, it is a work of my own creation.

1.6 Analysis, Interpretation

As I conducted interviews and transcribed them, I was looking for patterns in the data that could be matched with other interviews and my other data. Following the recommendations of Robert K. Yin, Robert Stake, Irving Seidman and Joseph Maxwell, I continually took notes on these patterns, did further research and re-read the transcripts or re-listened to the interviews, asked other military professionals about them, and evaluated the degree to which the patterns I was noticing were addressing my research questions and were/were not influenced by my own personal biases or perspectives. All of my research texts that I relied on emphasized focusing on the research question as a way for researchers to insure that they are looking for the “right kind” of patterns, and my own rhetorical awareness of audience (I wanted to be able to communicate my findings productively to other writing teachers) helped me immeasurably as I was constantly looking for research in our field that lent me conceptual frameworks or theoretical descriptions that aligned with patterns I was noticing in the interviews. During this phase of my process I continued building a thorough and coherent review of our literature (below) that took my
participants’ experiences into account, but contextualized them in the language and pedagogical concepts of our field.

The importance of group writing was immediately an interesting quality in ROTC instructor pedagogy, and the way that writing is considered a pedagogical activity that is instructive in group identity. I had seen the Community of Practice framework used with veterans in the work of Mark Blaauw-Hara, and I watched to see if this framework was helpful at all as I gathered interviews. It was, though it certainly has its limitations, as I note in Chapter Two. I also noticed that Army writers are concerned with concise, directive writing, and that while Army formats are short and constrained, the degree of precision that is desired in those forms makes them anything but simple communication formats. I realized early on that ROTC instructors base their pedagogy on their own writing experiences, on their own failures, and on their own leadership ideals. I noticed that instructors did not discuss their writing pedagogy without describing the functions and purpose of an Army officer—they did not have writing objectives that functioned discreetly, but saw writing as contextual. Connected to this theme was the importance of genres in the Army workplace, and the mastery of genres as a form of leadership, agency, and social action. Furthermore, their goals for their students as writers was always connected to empowering cadets as leaders: good writers were people who could get things done. Participants generally did not address their goals for their students without talking about their own history and feelings about writing, and how their writing had enabled them or disabled them in their leadership roles. All of this was incredibly intriguing, and these were the patterns that I came back to over and over again.

Throughout several versions of my notes, I would go back over transcribed material for passages of essential interest to those patterns that were emerging. I based my perceptions of
“essential interest” on how saliently or insightfully the transcribed material was responding to my research questions and speaking to patterns that were also emerging in other interviews and data. I marked passages that responded to my questions and pattern-matching. As the patterns became iterative, I went back over transcripts to identify further passages, and to see if further patterns emerged.

Transcription is time-consuming, but I found it to be necessary as part of digesting all of the information in the interviews and making informed connections. I agree with Seidman that transcribing only sections of interviews can be tricky if that is a researcher’s first move: it encourages a researcher to impose their own ideas about patterns and important themes a little bit too early in the process. At the same time, I found that I had too many hours of data to transcribe every word. I balanced these concerns by listening to every interview more than once and initially transcribing about 80% of the whole, only leaving out sections that I was confident were not the most helpful. Even for the sections I did not transcribe fully, I made notes in my transcript about the time stamp and what the topic/ideas were that I had skipped over. Because my research questions were fairly focused and my participants provided fairly iterative information, this process worked well. I did not get too bogged down in the work, but I am confident in the quality and consistency of the patterns that I identified.

This process was not entirely linear; at times I often went back to the transcripts and considered how certain responses were intended and if/whether or not they supported the connections that I was making. I also spent time considering whether or not my connections were beneficial to my participants or to other instructors.

The analytical work of identifying and sorting passages has the “seeds of interpretive work” in it, as Seidman describes it. Because it is an iterative and non-linear process, the analytic
work meshes somewhat with the interpretive, but that doesn’t mean we should assume that the sorting of passages is sufficient or qualifies as interpretation. It is tempting to think that interview data “speaks for itself,” but in order for data to speak meaningfully, it is necessary for researchers to offer interpretive explanation (Seidman 129).

1.7 Description and Presentation

Any presentation of data is also description. Researchers use both terms: Seidman tends to use the term “presenting the data,” while the education researcher Harry Wolcott prefers the term “description of the data.” I tend to prefer the term “description,” because it emphasizes the fact that the presentation of the data is from my own perspective, and is a reminder of Geertz’s argument that descriptions are always, to some degree, “a work of the imagination” even while the data is not imaginary (140).

I have described the interview data by developing five interview profiles, which are presented in Chapter Three with accompanying analysis and explanation. Profiles are selected and curated versions of the interview data. Full transcripts of multiple interviews are simply too long, and raw transcripts are difficult to make sense of. Even with my very structured interview questions, it was necessary to cull transcripts and select the more salient passages and the passages that spoke to each other across interviews. The profiles are the words of my participants, but I have in some places corrected tense change or subject-verb agreement when it was necessary in order for a reader to understand the sentence. There are ellipses when I have omitted sections, whether it is words or paragraphs, and I have inserted my own explanatory phrases in brackets to help readers understand the intended meaning of vague phrasing or phrases that referred to prior conversation.
I am fairly assertive in my belief that such editing actually protects participants, based on
my interview work with a literary magazine over the last two years. I have often done interviews
for my editors there, and a few times my interviewees have requested to see the raw transcript.
Every single person who reads the raw material is unhappy with how they sound. I have heard
more than once, “I sound stupid.” Spoken language is not the same as what we present on the
page. In its raw form, our spoken language often sounds uneducated and “stupid.” I have
maintained much of my participants’ word choice, and the intended meaning of their sentences,
but I also am not willing to leave them sounding incoherent and uneducated, when in fact, every
one of them was educated and interesting. They were also lively and full of stories. When people
tell stories, their sentences have constant tense changes, subject changes and random meta-
commentary that makes conversation enjoyable in person, and utterly unreadable in transcript
form.

Profiles are intended to eliminate such distraction. Participants sound like “themselves,”
but they are coherent on the written page, and readers can glean the most important elements of
an interview (or even a set of interviews) quickly and more enjoyably. The intention is for
researchers to be able to focus on the salient information for interpretation, and for readers to be
able to follow the interpretation without trouble. It allows researchers to sort information more
easily, to focus on the data that is best suited for the themes of the current writing task, whether it
is a dissertation or an article or a presentation. In addition, for someone who enjoys working with
concrete texts, like myself, the profiles provide concrete reference points from which to consider
and re-consider my own viewpoints and perceptions. In short, shaping interviews into profiles
eliminates a number of distractions and let me simply enjoy the journey that my analysis was
taking me on: to open my mind to new ideas about teaching, students, and how social forces shape our writing pedagogy.

### 1.8 Review of the Literature

Currently, there are no research publications in the field of writing studies that describe the pedagogy of military instructors as they prepare soldiers for military service, nor are there any research publications in the field of writing studies that attempt to connect these instructor groups (composition instructors and military instructors) to each other. My project is the first one to explore writing pedagogy amongst military instructors, and the first one that attempts to open a trans-disciplinary conversation about writing between civilian instructors and ROTC programs. The uniqueness of my research is underscored by the response of military instructors as I collected data for the project. Instructors often reacted very positively to the idea of a project that is practical and seeks their input for other writing instructors.

There is a matrix of research and theory that supports the need for work looking at the pedagogy of military instructors, while at the same time there is no work yet that directly addresses my research questions. In developing this project, the research that has grounded my questions and their relevance has been that of Veteran’s Studies, while research that has grown out of Writing Across the Curriculum and genre theory have been the best suited to help me describe the rhetorical reality of military classrooms.

#### 1.8.1 Veteran’s Studies

Veterans studies has become a vibrant conversation in our field in the last five years, as college campuses cope with a tidal wave of veterans entering school. Research in this area establishes the relevance of my project by clarifying the presence of a formative and influential military writing culture that student veterans bring into the first year composition classroom.
Research on veterans and writing is assessing and describing how students with a military background experience the transition to academic writing, which does not address either the pedagogy of the military classroom or the ways that the military writing culture is developed in classrooms prior to a student actually being commissioned or practicing writing in a military context. This field also has a very specific practical application for practitioners: researchers in this field are looking for ways that composition teachers can make their classrooms more sensitive to war veterans, taking into account narrative experience and the kind of leadership structure that such students might be used to responding to.

As part of the recent development of Veterans Studies, several of our journals have made an effort to publish veteran-related research, including special issues of Teaching English in the Two-Year College (2009), Kairos (2010), and Composition Forum (2017). These issues have developed the conversation about the needs of a unique student population and have gone a long way toward identifying research questions that need to be addressed in order for writing teachers to understand veterans better.

One of the more pedagogy-focused collections is the 2009 special issue of Teaching English in the Two-Year College, which features an important narrative piece by Galen Leonhardy, a veteran Marine. This is one of the first and few pieces where a composition instructor speaks from their own military experience; Leonhardy argues that “composition instructors must first recognize that we have much to learn from veterans, just as we have much more to do for them” (340). He argues that “good pedagogy in the composition classroom is good pedagogy for all students,” and offers a description of “good pedagogy” that is largely focused on developing classroom community through things like healthy banter, openness to difficult questions, and effective use of narrative-style assignments to discover research topics.
Leonhardy does make several salient observations of military culture in general and its influence on how student veterans understand things like constructive criticism. His comments seem to have marked an opening for Veterans Studies, as they are some of the more frequently quoted by other writers.

The 2010 “dot mil” issue of *Kairos* has interesting work exploring authorial attribution in the Army, and an interesting piece that offers engaging analysis of rhetorical strategies in deployment music videos, among other articles, but does not contain material that relates to writing pedagogy in military classrooms and looking at linkages between military classrooms and composition classrooms. In some ways, this is a theme with rhetoric scholars: there is a tendency to theorize about the military from the outside, but there have not been many attempts to engage ethnographically with the military, and no attempts to engage with ROTC instructors.

The Veteran’s Studies research that my project is most clearly connected to and indebted to is the qualitative work of Mark Blaauw-Hara and Corrine Hinton, both of whom originally published their work in the 2017 special Veteran’s Issue of *Composition Forum*.

Blaauw-Hara collected the perceptions of student veterans enrolled at North Michigan College in order to identify some pedagogical differences between military culture and the first year composition classroom. Blaauw-Hara uses Etienne Wegner’s concept of “communities of practice” to describe the military learning environment, where learning is contextualized and specialized, practitioners gain skill and knowledge from more experienced practitioners, and identity in the group corresponds to skill mastery. Group identity and cohesiveness are core values. On the other hand, “community of practice” theory does not actually describe the college writing class, where the kind of contextualized learning and personalized learning that takes place in the military is largely absent; as veterans try to become “college writers,” their role is far
less clear, goals less finely articulated and a shared community ethos is often absent. This reality about our writing classes— and Blaauw-Hara’s insightful use of Wegner to illustrate the differences between military and academic culture—became more important as I collected my interviews, and is a point I will come back to.

Blaauw-Hara points out that the ultimate goal of the military is to create problem solvers, and that those of us in composition know that writing is ideal for developing “individual thought and creative thinking, as well as for making sense of complex ideas. We also know that writing is a useful heuristic for problem-solving.” These shared values can help writing instructors to understand the needs of veterans and alter classroom practices to encourage veteran participation. Research like Blaauw-Hara’s attempts to identify ways that the learning values of the military and the goals of the composition classroom may come closer together, and is helpful for grounding my own rationale and research questions, but still does not address the same questions that my work addresses.

Corrine Hinton’s work identifies how expectations of teaching, learning, and writing in the academy fail to accommodate and include the expertise of veteran students. Hinton’s research is important for the way that it describes a specific model of dichotomy present in university composition courses (the novice/expert dichotomy) that excludes other learning environments, such as the military. Hinton’s work is an interview-based qualitative study of veteran Marines, and was one of the earlier studies to include veterans’ voices in a discussion about the first-year composition model. Her work not only helps to model interview-based research with military students and further explores the experiences of veteran students, but it is also a valuable contribution to the discussion about context-based writing instruction versus generalizable writing instruction. My familiarity with the context-based writing approach used in
several service academies underscores the value that such an approach can have for students in developing them into confident practitioners. But even in schools that have relied heavily on such an approach, administrations have found it helpful to develop writing centers and tutoring programs that can help with the more “general” writing skills, such as the establishment in 2016 of a writing center at West Point. Interestingly, that writing center was established under the leadership of a writing director that was civilian, with a background in Rhetoric and Composition.

Blaauw-Hara and Hinton are illustrative of the move toward incorporating veteran perceptions of the academy. This kind of work is important for several reasons but not least of all because it demonstrates that the military does have its own writing culture that veterans bring with them to the university. The drawback is that these studies are based on the perceptions and recollections of the veterans and do not necessarily document an intentionality or specific writing pedagogy in the military. There have been some attempts to bring work with veterans a little closer to documenting their specific writing tasks, such as the work of Erin Hadlock and Sue Doe, who have asked veterans about specific genres that they recall from military service.

Hadlock and Doe’s study appears in the seminal (and sole) volume that has been published on veterans and composition, Generation Vet: Composition, Student Veterans, and the Post-9/11 University. Much of the work represented in the volume is qualitative research (which makes the volume a contribution in the area of qualitative research methods in the field of writing studies) and much of it examines issues of pedagogy, all related to veterans.

Hadlock and Doe also base their work on interviews, asking military veterans to reflect on their writing practice and experiences writing in the military. Their work focuses on the interaction between genre and agency, and the ways that military identity is formed through
writing practice. Their conclusions underscore how important writing is in the military, where “organizationally accepted” genres like assessments of team members, or subordinates, or even of one’s self, allow practitioners to be “recognized for their individual competence and leadership authority” in some genres and also provide leaders with a “site of advocacy and action on behalf of others” (83). Furthermore, in military writing culture such recognition is not undercut by the strong team mentality of the military, but instead “the role of authorship in military discourse precisely demonstrates that the authority associated with authorship can prevail even in the absence of a particular, identifiable author” (76). Observations such as these—a more flexible notion of authority even with more structured genres than we see in other writing contexts—illustrates some of the ways that teaching writing to future soldiers necessitates some different pedagogical choices and impulses. Differences in military writing culture and academic expectations indicate that the pedagogical models of military instructors are worth exploration. Understanding how “authority” and “expertise” work for instructors and students when writing Operations Orders (battle plans) is not something that we can understand without the input of ROTC instructors, unless we are content with exercises in speculation.

1.8.2 Writing to Communicate and Genre Theory

After gathering the data for my project, my search through the literature shifted to a search for material that helps me describe the ways that military writing culture and pedagogy converges with and diverges from the ways that we usually talk about teaching and writing. While my project is focused on writing pedagogy, pedagogy is grounded in rhetorical theory. To borrow James A. Berlin’s argument, because rhetorical theory is an explanation of the ways that writer, reality, audience and language are defined and related to each other in a particular context, when the relationships between these are altered in any way, the resultant pedagogy is
altered (765-766). As Berlin describes it, changing rhetorical relationships makes for a “different world with different rules about what can be known, how it can be known, and how it can be communicated” (766). The composing process may be different in each “world.” Pedagogies therefore reveal the rhetorical grounding and epistemic realities of the system that teachers practice in. My search through the literature then, has focused on which conversations can help me to ably discuss military pedagogy in a way that helps to explain the rhetorical reality of military classrooms.

Because military branches are so large and diverse, with diverse instructors and training methods and degree programs, their pedagogical orientations are a true “melting pot” and in some respects, almost any pedagogical model or theory of composition could apply at least in part. It would be possible to survey every trend and pedagogical model/practice covered in our literature and apply it somewhere. But while military classrooms employ many pedagogical structures that are recognizable to civilian instructors, these structures are superimposed over a different axiology, or expectations about what makes the writing good or what function it will perform in the student’s future. The fact that instructors come from a military background (many are not trained in writing pedagogy per se) and universally expect their students to become military officers alters pedagogy dramatically, both in practice (instructors constantly teach with the constraints and requirements of the military in mind) and in theory (the methodology that has grown out of intimate knowledge of those same military constraints and requirements). As a result, instructor philosophy about what makes “good” writing and student expectations about what they will be taught is largely governed by what they anticipate will help them to lead as military officers.
Writing to Communicate is an axiological philosophy most clearly explicated by Chris Thaiss and Susan McLeod. It helps to provide a framework for discussing military pedagogy in a way that clarifies discussion about axiological differences between writing in the military and writing in academia. Thaiss and McLeod, tasked with identifying unique strands of pedagogical focus within the WAC/WID movements, identified two pedagogical orientations that embrace different axiologies and different resultant pedagogical practices: “Writing to Learn” and “Writing to Communicate” (to use Thaiss and McLeod’s tendency to capitalize). In “Writing to Learn” orientations, writing activities are student-centered, casual, and often ungraded, as the writing is seen as a way of synthesizing information for use in other (perhaps non-writing) contexts. Writing to Communicate, however, shifts the pedagogical focus: students need to internalize a specific discourse (this often includes internalizing genres) in order to communicate successfully in a specific work context. Instead of focusing on informal activities that help students learn, Writing to Communicate “focuses on writing to an audience outside the self, usually for a formal purpose, for example to persuade; writing is therefore crafted, revised, and polished. Writing as process is still central to this communicative emphasis, but there is also emphasis on the ‘product’ of this process that intended readers see. Writing to Communicate uses the styles and vocabulary of a particular discourse community or shifts language for a different purpose and audience” (Thaiss and McLeod 286).

Writing to Communicate assumes that knowledge is socially constructed, and that students must be invited into Kenneth Bruffee’s “conversation of mankind” via a pedagogically complex environment that trains them to be culturally intelligible to a discourse community. Such a model of pedagogy will be more inclined toward a focus on the analysis of the discourse of the discipline/context, especially a focus on audience and purpose, and pedagogy will
emphasize the modes of thinking in a particular field and the genres used to communicate clearly. While the use of the term “discourse community” and its theoretical implications have become more prevalent since the advent of Bruffee or WID-related theory, the notion of the “discourse community” (along with Jim Porter’s notion of a “discourse forum,” a less popular phrase but touched on by Richard J. Fulkerson and a nicer phrase in description of military communication) is important to understanding the shape of Writing to Communicate pedagogy amongst instructors who think of themselves as training students for military officership.

Military instructors are very clear that they are training their students for a community and forum where a particular set of vocabulary and communicative expectations will be placed on them. For some instructors, this has pushed them to focus on the audience: they speak of training soldiers to write as leaders. “What I always tell my students is, I am teaching you how to write for people who are tired, sleep-deprived, and scared. That’s what I’m teaching you how to do,” emphasized one instructor (Walsh). For some instructors, they speak of wanting to safeguard their students by ensuring that they have the communicative tools to succeed. “They get judged first by what they put on paper,” one instructor said to me. “I don’t want them to lose out with their superiors because they didn’t sound good on paper first” (Brolin).

In Writing to Communicate, the instructor is in a different pedagogical position, that most closely aligns (so far) with my participants’ perceptions of themselves as writing teachers. In a separate essay authored alone, Susan McLeod explains, “The teacher is still a guide, but is focusing now on helping students learn the discourse of the discipline; the relationship is that of seasoned professional to apprentice, or in anthropological terms, of tribal elder to initiate” (154). As this pedagogical model has become more widespread in WID-related literature, Thaiss and Terry Myers Zawacki have noted that the addition of theories of discourse communities have
emphasized the role of the instructor as “initiating” students: “We learned through these conversations that the person who knows better how to initiate the newcomer in a specialized discourse is not usually the composition teacher but the teacher who is already grounded in the content of the field and who is fluent in the disciplinary discourse” (286).

Thaiss and Zawacki make this comment in relation to WID concerns; they are talking about the “disciplinary discourse” of academic fields like history or biology. Military students are majoring in a subject like history or biology, but they not only learn the academic parlance of their field but then also how to use that discourse with and within the discourse of the military adds some depth and interest to this conversation, as well as highlighting some of the pedagogical challenges that face teachers training military officers; it also underscores why instructors who have a military background who be so invaluable in the teaching of writing, even if they do not have training in writing pedagogy per se. If the role of the instructor is to help the student learn writing so that students can communicate more effectively in a military context, then an instructor who has military experience is a must.

This aspect of writing pedagogy in the military connects to Etienne Wegner’s communities of practice touched on earlier through Mark Blaauw-Hara’s work with veterans, highlighting the ways that the military classroom is different from the civilian classroom, even if both classrooms are engaged in the teaching of a writing course. Wegner points out that while the military is a community of practice, the first year writing course as it is traditionally taught is not. However, in a military school all the classes are part of a community of practice. This theoretical point highlights the ways that the introduction of a shared outcome for students—military officership—alters the pedagogical landscape for an instructor both in theory and in practice.
Pedagogies that stem from a Writing to Communicate heuristic also embrace another pedagogical value that has become important through my data collection, and helps to foster discussion about the ways that military and civilian classrooms are alike and different, and that is the value of genres to the teaching of writing and thinking. The connection between “writing as communication” and “genre theory” is made clearly by earlier “pro-genre” sources such as *Genre Knowledge in Disciplinary Communication* by Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas Huckin. From the title alone, one can see that Berkenkotter and Huckin theorize genres to be critical components of communication within discourse communities. They argue that genres reflect a discipline’s methodology, that they “package information in ways that conform to a discipline’s norms, values, and ideology” (1). The military reliance on genres is thorough; ROTC programs and service academies both initiate the teaching of the five-paragraph Operation Order in the first year, and use it as a framework for learning to research the context of proposed operations. This means that this one genre is used in a variety of courses, not just in a writing classroom.

It is not possible to become acquainted with military writing and pedagogy without engaging military genres. Genres reveal military behaviors, structure, expectations, writing values, and epistemology. Genre theory helps to provide a more specific theoretical framework for understanding why military instructors teach the way they do: they conceive of themselves as teaching students to communicate through writing, and in military culture a fundamental part of written communication is genre-based. To go back to Berlin’s description of the “worlds” made possible by rhetoric, in the rhetorical world of the military the argument that composition is genre would probably be accepted without argument. Genre is integral to writing as a social behavior in the military context; meaningful written communication takes place in some kind of form.
Carolyn Miller’s discussion of genre as “social action” is helpful in deepening the discussion about the role of genre in military writing and how outsiders might understand it. Miller’s essay is often cited as one of the seminal pieces of genre theory, but genre theory begins with Kenneth Burke’s “motives” and Lloyd F. Bitzer’s “exigence;” Miller brings these elements together in a more practical discussion. Miller drew on and expanded the earlier work of Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson who argued that genre was social and historical: a genre exists when “a constellation of forms that recurs in each of its members. These forms, in isolation, appear in other discourses. What is distinctive about the acts in a genre is the recurrence of the forms together in constellation” (Campbell and Jamieson 20) and explicated the ways that genre helps us to understand the discourse of a community.

Miller points out that a discussion of genre “will be rhetorically sound if it contributes to an understanding of how discourse works—that is, if it reflects the rhetorical experience of the people who create and interpret the discourse” (152). There is a tendency sometimes to see genres as reductive, but in fact Miller’s approach helps us to understand that genres are “open” and “creative” in the sense that they are a rhetorical product of the ways that a specific subset of people comprehend action and exigence. Arguing that genre is best understood as related to “situated action,” Miller calls her approach “ethnomethodological,” an inductive way of approaching genre that allows for historical and social evolution, and one which best suits an understanding of genre as it relates to interpreting my own data (155).

The rhetorical flexibility of genres—or their value as social artifacts—is sometimes overlooked by practitioners, despite the constant use of genres of some form in most writing classrooms. Richard Fulkerson, in his assessment of composition pedagogy in the twenty-first century, claims that “genre-based composition is now likely to be found either in courses
devoted to argument genres or in technical writing, where the idea of learning quite specific, even discipline-specific, writing genres has been entrenched and is largely without controversy” (676). The claim that “genre-based” composition only takes place in certain, more “formal” or more rule-bound types of writing classes is both true and false. Fulkerson is talking about the use of genre as a pedagogical paradigm: that is, a pedagogical style in which instructors make sure students are aware of the formal elements of expected genres and evaluate students on their utilization of those specific formal features. In our field, Fulkerson’s claim is true: this method of pedagogy is not as widely embraced as it once was. However, this way of understanding the “teaching of genre” can threaten to limit our understanding of how genres work in the military and hence it can threaten to limit our understanding of the “genre-based” pedagogy practiced by many military instructors. It is more beneficial to keep in mind Miller’s ethnomethodology, and realize that genres, even as they exist as a “constellation of recurrent practices” are always unique rhetorical functions for the community that uses them.

Furthermore, to refer back to Hadlock and Doe’s research, discussed in the section on Veteran’s Studies: research demonstrates that military writers (and veteran writers) are very aware of notions of motive, substance, or exigence when using military genres, and have a number of ways of understanding agency through genre and forms. Veterans bring some interesting anecdotes to the writing classroom about an informal (but rather extensive) education in rhetorical principles learned while mastering military genres. Their perspective can best be incorporated and connected to my data by taking into account genre theory.

1.8.3 Military Publications

Military publications have recently started to call for the development of better writing instruction, especially for officers. In Military Review, a publication of the Army, Desirae
Gieseman argues for a redefined “Army Writing Standard.” The current Army writing style aims to “transmit a clear message in a single rapid reading that is free of errors in grammar, mechanics, and usage” (Armywritingstyle.com). Gieseman argues that this standard is taught using methods that are “overly focused on correcting discrete points of grammar, mechanics, and usage, and facilitating rapid reading of limited document types,” while the Army simultaneously has too many directives on too many genres, some of which are from the early 1990s (115). As personal computers have become ubiquitous, Army genres have changed, and increased the volume of writing that is performed, especially for officers (115). Citing current research on writing, reading, and learning, and using the NCTE’s Guiding Principles for Sound Postsecondary Writing Instruction, Gieseman argues for a “functional standard” that is rooted in Army leadership principles. Such a standard would see writing as a leadership skill and as a way of communicating focused messages for targeted readers. (115). This ideal is actually described in an Army leadership publication from 2006, which cites clear and targeted writing as an important communication ability for Army officers. Gieseman is arguing for a perspective that does exist in theory in the Army’s conversations about leadership, but she argues that the current educational structure and current Army publications are not supporting the attainment of such a “functional” writing standard. For example, Gieseman points out that while the Army has a rich culture of coaching and mentoring, coaching and mentoring for writing tasks is not readily available, even though it has been recommended in various Army directives since the mid-1980s.

Gieseman’s pedagogical recommendations to the Army are practical, but there are Army publications that offer a more theoretical argument for the inculcation of writing in the Army, and these arguments align well with known theory in composition pedagogy. Major Trent Lythgoe (U.S. Army) has theorized widely about the need for more writing among Army
officers, even drawing on writing studies used by composition theorists like John T. Gage, David Bartholomae and Donald M. Murray. In his article, “Flight Simulation for the Brain: Why Army Officers Must Write,” Lythgoe sounds like many writers from the composition field when he argues that the “deterioration of writing skills is causing a corresponding deterioration of thinking skills. Writing, although valuable as a communication medium, is most valuable as a powerful way of thinking” (49). In an argument that complements Gieseman well, Lythgoe argues that the Army needs to return to longer writing in day-to-day operations as a way of synthesizing information and “creating thought” (55).

Just like many first year composition courses, many military entrance programs try to connect writing and verbal communication in their curriculum, yet there is no literature addressing the connection of their pedagogy to the field of rhetoric. For example, West Point explicitly addresses the need for students to be clear communicators in their description of their first year academic program (United States Military Academy Curriculum and Course Descriptions, Class of 2020), and the Air Force publishes a writing handbook called Tongue and Quill to help its officers write better. Quality writing is prized in the military culture, as evidenced by collections such as Today’s Best Military Writing. The Army issues multiple orders each year that connect the values of communication (verbal and written) with leadership and the ability to think clearly (Gieseman, Lythgoe). But while the subject of educating officers to be clear communicators is addressed in military publications, and while writing and its value is part of military culture, there are no publications addressing the composition pedagogy of military entrance programs or the experiences of military instructors as teachers of writing.

A final interesting note on the value of some of the articles that I have reviewed here: Gieseman and Lythgoe’s work is unique amongst Army writing. Both were published in popular
and widely read military journals, and they draw on pedagogical theory and models that many instructors are not trained in and might not even recognize. At the same time, as I began interviewing instructors, I found that there are many instructors who are interested in writing pedagogy, and both of these pieces are well known to that subset of officers. With those of my participants who I can “talk writing research” with, I have sent them Mark Blauw-Hara’s article. It has been new to every one of them, and has met with overwhelming approval. The conversations that have resulted from that specific exchange of articles have been personable and interesting. It would seem that when one is attempting to study a group of people who is not usually studied, our literature is not only a way to ground research questions and insure that a “gap” has been adequately identified. It can also be a way of connecting interpersonally with participants that might be reluctant or suspicious of motives. Part of the way that I have reviewed the literature here reflects what I believe is yet another fortuitous and unique aspect of my project and research: while there is no research that addresses my questions, there is literature and research where the common goal of caring for students has been expressed in a compassionate and intelligent way, and that has worked to connect me with my participants in what might have otherwise been a very difficult project.

In summary, my research questions identify several research gaps. In the field of writing studies and composition pedagogy, interest in veterans is high and scholarship related to veterans is developing. Research focused on veterans helps composition instructors to understand the realities of transitioning from the military to the classroom, but it does not address the inverse: writing instruction for the future Army officer, or students expecting to serve in any branch of the military as officers. Veteran studies have done a good job of bringing instructors into discussion with their student veterans, and of focusing pedagogy on how it can better serve
student veterans. But this pedagogical discussion still does not give military instructors a voice or help to enrich composition instructors’ understanding of what military instructors hope for their students as writers.

Both veteran studies and military publications illustrate what a writing-rich environment the military is, and how important writing skills are for officers, while also indicating that officers approach writing with different ideas about authority and purpose, and a strong adherence to structured genre within a professional environment that prizes creative thinking. The ways that the military writing environment both connects with and diverges from the pedagogy of the academy would be important information for the field of writing studies, and help to round out the field’s interest in student veterans as well as fostering conversation between the military and the academy.

1.9 Progression of the Dissertation

I have organized the chapters of this dissertation to progress from the general to the particular. My first chapter has provided the background of the project, clarified my methods and my research questions, and offered some insight into my methodology. I have also identified relevant literature and the research gap addressed by my project.

Researchers should offer an interpretive explanation about what they have learned, what the connective threads are that connect participant experiences, what the value is that the researcher sees in the data, and what surprises they have encountered. We often talk in the humanities about having some “generalizable conclusions,” and this is necessary: there needs to be some practical insight that teachers can take from the project and use in their own pedagogy or their own thinking about writing and students. In Chapter Two, I offer a description of Army ROTC pedagogy that is generalizable and useful for writing instructors who want to have an
informed perspective about Army writing pedagogy and the approach that Army instructors have for writing. I use concepts from our field to map and clarify the kind of writing processes, pedagogy, axiology, and epistemology that generally governs Army ROTC writing pedagogy.

But Stake points out that the “general” never exists apart from the “particular,” and that emphasis on the general—especially in the world of qualitative work—can “undercut the valuable understanding that the phenomena are unique and situated” (197). Generalizations are best treated as “valuable hypothesis and working positions,” and have the most value when they are clearly anchored, and the situated context that gave rise to them is “visible” (197). This connects well to Geertz’s argument in *The Interpretation of Cultures* that culture is a social pattern that reflects individuals’ behavior; we shouldn’t assume that the general rule applies to the thinking and belief structures of every individual, and at the same time we shouldn’t undercut the pervasiveness of cultural patterns of meaning. Both are important to understand or “interpret” cultural texts well.

In the interest of complementing the general with the particular, I crafted five brief interview profiles, that provide a contextualized view of the participants for other readers, and also act as my anchor texts for my interpretation of my interview data. The profiles are the substance of Chapter Three, and that chapter includes my comments on the structure and stylistic choices made in refining the raw transcripts into profiles, as well as what else I think we can—and can’t—learn from the words of my participants.

In Chapter Four, I comment on Army Regulation 25-50, “Preparing and Managing Correspondence,” and the list of suggested writing assignments that are provided to Army ROTC instructors as part of the ROTC curriculum. Both of these items are important in the writing world of Army ROTC instructors, are materials that my participants use, and help to further
illustrate some of the themes that emerge from the interview data. Together, these items reveal a pedagogical challenge that Army instructors deal with: they are constantly trying to balance teaching the “science” of being a soldier with the “art” of being a soldier.

Finally, it is important for researchers to ask themselves what meaning they have made of the research project. What did the experience mean, how did they understand it? Given my project’s origination in my own concerns about my pedagogy and my students, it is appropriate to address how the work has impacted my own pedagogy and the way that I experience myself as a researcher, as well as considering the way this project may connect with other instructors and with our field. I address this interpretive step in Chapter Five.

2 CHAPTER TWO: INTERPRETATION OF PROJECT DATA

2.1 Overview

A recent Army commercial shows American soldiers entering a Middle East village, taking up positions while under fire and carefully covering each other as they maneuver from place to place. Another one shows tech-savvy soldiers setting up a base on a rocky outcrop somewhere and their busy counterparts in helicopters covering them. For most of us, when we think of soldiers, these are the images that come to mind: people who are wearing stuff, carrying stuff, running somewhere, jumping out of helicopters, shooting guns, and driving tanks.

In short, we think of soldiers as doing things. We rarely think of them as writing things, or consider that a number of soldiers sit at desks, reading and writing, in order to make all the commercial-worthy action happen. The idea that writing produces action can sometimes seem theoretical, but one of the interesting things about the Army context is the height of the action—it’s war—and the indispensable role that writing plays in it.
When I first conceived of my project, I wondered if ROTC instructors would have given much thought to writing in an Army environment, and what they would think about the “theoretical” connection between writing and action. For my participants, was writing really essential to the work of the Army? Or was it incidental, helpful, but not essential? Pedagogy reveals fundamental assumptions on the part of instructors about what their discipline’s values really are and what a practitioner needs in order to be successful in the field. What would this mean in an ROTC context, where the “discipline” is “the Army,” with instructors who have been in the Army and have a precise notion of the work place that their students will enter and what it means to be a “practitioner”? Heidi Estrem has written that approaching disciplinary writing as an “act of identity and affiliation” illuminates how writing is not only about abstract social conventions (the “culture” that can be understood from the text) but it is “also about learning how to be within a group with social conventions, norms, and expectations” (56, italics in the original). Considering “disciplinary writing” in the military conflates the notion of “cultural being” and “social action” with the real-world action of Army commercials. I wondered if that conflation was real to Army writers and teachers, and what kind of pedagogical principles emerge from a writing workplace where social action is the real-world action of war.

My background includes studying writing and working in multiple writing workplaces; from those experiences I know that writing is a fundamental social activity, and that even if workplaces do not identify themselves as “writing heavy” environments, the individuals who can write always enjoy an extra measure of success, thanks to its communicative value. No matter what kind of changes occur in technology or culture, human beings function by communicating with each other, and writing has always served to enhance communication between people and to improve the communication capability of the writer. Because of this, it didn’t surprise me to
discover that the Army is also a writing heavy workplace, and that writing is situated within a
complex matrix of communication practices.

Writing had a central place in the pedagogy and teaching of ROTC instructors, though
most of them said they wished they had more time for writing and they wished it wasn’t
marginalized by time constraints. The role of writing in personal development of their cadets and
its role in creating a functioning work place was central to their pedagogy, even when they
would not have identified an assignment as a “writing assignment.” To my participants, an
effective soldier was one who could communicate effectively, especially through writing: “In the
Army there is a practical application [to all communication] and the term we throw around is
war-fighting; we are war-fighters, right? So the more efficiently that I can communicate…the
better” (LTC Armstrong).

The goal of my project was to understand and describe ROTC instructors’ writing
pedagogy. Fundamentally, this project reminds us that context alters both the function and the
meaning of writing, and that pedagogy reflects those differences. As a discipline that touches
every other discipline yet encompasses none of them, writing is unique in its persistent presence
as an integral and vital communication skill, and its pedagogical fluidity. In this Chapter, I
consider what my interview data tells us about the rhetorical world of writing instruction for
Army ROTC instructors.

In the interest of narrowing down my list of insights into a description of Army writing
pedagogy that would map well onto our fields known frameworks for describing pedagogy, I
have followed Richard J. Fulkerson’s example of addressing process, pedagogy, axiology and
epistemology. My participants favored classroom processes that focused on learning Army
writing genres, and developing audience awareness in an Army context, both in terms of
subordinates and in terms of commanders. Their pedagogy favored group work, and a distinguishing feature of their practice was an emphasis on their own experience as Army writers. Their axiology emphasized clear and concise communication through Army genres, and strong analytical skills. Important epistemological assumptions in their pedagogy were that the realities of war were stable, but that Army values were dialectical, and that collaboration is important to knowledge-making. The interconnectedness of these elements reflects the unique community of the ROTC classroom. Instructors and students share an investment in the same professional context and in the same domain of knowledge: war-fighting. Other forms of knowledge—like writing and effective communication—are integrated in fluid and negotiable ways that support the primary domain.

2.2 If writing is an activity, then it’s better done together.

The idea that writing is action is not theoretical in the world of the Army. Army bureaucracy and hierarchy functions in large part as a result of written communication, which often takes place in specified formats. This does not mean that Army writing doesn’t have some fluidity or that writers are not perceived as having agency—Erin Hadlock and Sue Doe’s research of Army genres has demonstrated the opposite, and is complemented by Corrine Hinton’s ethnographic work with Marines and their writing experiences. But what it does mean is that my participants were hopeful of producing writers whose mastery of clarity and concision had reached an analytical level and a level of familiarity with Army genres that they could manipulate constrained writing opportunities in order to advance their leadership interests effectively. This is an advanced skill set for younger writers, and cannot realistically be learned without a significant degree of contextualized writing experience, something students can’t actually attain until they have graduated. Instructors filled this gap between students’ status as
Army novices and their need for sophisticated communication by relying significantly on their own writing histories as Army officers. Their personal stories, written artifacts, and input for revision was a constant feature of classroom writing instruction.

For this reason, instructors rarely described their processes or pedagogy without connecting it to their own Army experiences. Features of Army life and leadership were often given as grounds for the design of writing assignments. The team mindset of the Army was recalled to some degree in almost every assignment that was described to me. The assumption was that since the Army is a team, writing is a team activity:

As a soldier I’ve never had to do my own work, it was always, “How well am I bringing a team together, to get a team to do the work?” We wanted to focus on a little taste of what it’s like to write a paper with everyone else when everyone has their own agendas and timelines and writing styles, and then how do you bring it all together and merge everything so that the writing flows, so that it’s not apparent that this paragraph was written by one person and this paragraph is written by another person, etc. (LTC Rubin)

Composition instructors rarely brave the notion of true “team writing” as this instructor describes, for the very reason that individual students have their own “agendas, timelines, and writing styles.” We generally do not like to impose students’ differences on each other. This instructor’s pedagogy assumed that the problems inherent in group writing were the same problems inherent in other team challenges, and therefore students should and could find ways to negotiate their differences to work together. The process inherent in having to negotiate that group project was important grounding for the “real life” of the Army. That pedagogical decision
was made from recalling how he had been evaluated as a leader, and how he had experienced the
need for effective group work during his career.

The assumption inherent in connecting work place evaluation with writing assignment
design is that writing is an activity, and that it is subject to the same situational realities that other
activities are subject to. Those “situational realities” of writing as an activity included both
positive and negative aspects. Instructors recalled the team mentality of the Army both as a
directive for how pedagogy should be practiced (“I need to have them work in teams as
preparation for all the teamwork they will have to do”) but also as a perk of Army life and
writing. One of my participants connected the Army team mentality to his writing pedagogy this
way: “The Army is all about a team. We never do things alone. You’ve always got a buddy. So
I’m a big fan of group writing assignments” (LTC Armstrong).

Instructors didn’t fail to mention some of the same problems with having students write
together that composition instructors notice, but ROTC instructors solve these pedagogical
problems in different ways. Because the ROTC program is seen as “practice” or “transition”
from student life to the world of being a second lieutenant, assessment is far more holistic and
consequences—both positive and negative—are more complex. For example, one instructor said
that when a group had a student fail to do their part in a writing assignment, he warned the other
group members not to let the grade slip due to one person’s negligence. In effect, the students
that wanted the project to be a success would have to do more than their fair share. “There’s
always evaluation time,” the instructor said, laughingly. “It’s okay to be honest on evaluations.”
(Rubin). Instructors frequently pointed out that part of their job was to be a first “commander”
and “evaluator” for students, and that that evaluation included written work but was never
restricted to written work, a point I will come back to.
Part of the writing pedagogy of the group project introduces the real-world problems of teams: at times team members can shift their responsibilities and their roles, and at times they can’t. At times, working harder goes unacknowledged, and at times it doesn’t. Ultimately, instructors saw the way that group writing assignments played out to be both a learning opportunity for cadets about real-world leadership problems, and also an opportunity for them to get to know their cadets better and assess who could be given other leadership roles in the program. One instructor even pointed out that part of the value of group writing was that it taught students to deal pragmatically with the fact that, while Army life requires a lot of writing, not everyone is good at it. In group writing projects, students can contribute to the project in a way that leverages their particular skills. He argued that some students are more skilled at understanding structure, some are more skilled at condensing research, some are more skilled at putting the brief together (LTC Parks). The goal of group work is to bring out a group’s internal direction, character, and energy. The expectation that this can be done through collaborative writing work is an indication of how important an activity writing is considered to be, and how communication heavy the Army work environment is:

We really wanted to find a way to go toward more collaborative thinking [for the students]. One of the things I complain about is the teaching [styles that emphasize] to regurgitate what you know, and don’t cheat and don’t look at your partner…we wanted to better enable that collaborative group thinking that reflects how they’re going to work in civilian world or military world. (LTC Rubin)

The use of group writing as an important element of ROTC instructor writing pedagogy emphasizes the development of horizontal teamwork/community, not just vertical instruction. When LTC Rubin states that a team has to “do the work,” that he’s been tasked with overseeing,
his job is not to tell others exactly how to do something as much as it is to “bring a group together” that can figure out how to do a task. The Army is hierarchical, but like other complex organizations (corporations, governments) that hierarchy is reliant on horizontal teams in order to function. Unlike other complex organizations, writing is considered a task that teaches group cohesion and group writing practice is an important way that groups learn to problem-solve together.

While pedagogy that uses group writing is often described as “helping students learn to work together,” or helping students to see other perspectives in their writing, or even as helping students with weaker skills to have exposure to the work of students with stronger skills, Army writing pedagogy is more intentional when it comes to the development of a group identity. Kevin Roozen has pointed out that disciplinary writing is “not so much about using a particular set of skills as it is about becoming a particular kind of person,” and that this means both developing an identity “in relation to the interests, beliefs, and values” of the community but also “understanding the possibilities for selfhood available” within the community (50-51). Clifford Geertz has also described this same interrelation between the group and the self: there are “patterns of meaning” that are culturally significant and can feel like a “group mind,” (as V. William Balthrop calls it) but that “group mind” is a socialized pattern that allows individuals to function together in a meaningful way (The Interpretation of Cultures, 89). It is not “groupthink” as much as it is a social group's reservoir of interpretation. There are variations allowed for individual preferences or idiosyncrasies, but the overall pattern of behavior is still intact because the individuals impute the same general meaning to the activity.

It is apparent from my participants’ comments that the development of a group identity for Army individuals is important, and there is no activity that isn’t a pedagogical opportunity for
development of the group identity. It isn’t necessary that each member of a group do the same thing, but it is necessary for the group to achieve the end goal of writing the assignment together. This aspect of Army writing pedagogy assumes that writing is an activity that develops identity as much and in the same way as other activities, and also underscores the way that writing is understood as involving the identities of individuals. When LTC Rubin complains that writing assignments shouldn’t include “regurgitation” of what the instructor thinks, and that “looking at your partner” should not be considered cheating, he is arguing for a writing pedagogy that aims to integrate individuals into a pattern of group work that reflects the Army’s approach to all activities, not just writing.

2.3 Master practitioners, writing pedagogy, and a community of practice.

One of the more dramatic and pedagogy-altering differences between composition classrooms and ROTC classrooms is that ROTC instructors are teaching writing skills for a work environment that they have precise working knowledge of. The frame of reference for “writing education” then is entirely contextualized, and an instructor’s pedagogical legitimacy is different. All of my participants had been in the Army at least ten years, most of them for over fifteen years. The instructor comments cited so far all demonstrate the integrated way that instructors “teach to the work place.” One of my participants commented, “I don’t know how I would teach, if I didn’t know that all of my students will be second lieutenants in the Army,” a comment which emphasizes the way that instructors’ teacher identities are pragmatic and situated. They are Army instructors passing on Army knowledge. Most of my instructors described writing as integral to their teaching and integral to passing on Army knowledge, but they are referring to Army writing, writing that is intelligible in Army culture and subject to Army exigencies. Their
writing pedagogy is always brought in line with the Army work context, and in order to do that effectively, an instructor has to be an Army writer.

Etienne Wenger’s anthropological description of the “community of practice” has often been applied to corporations and the military to help offer empirical description of the relationships between those who are “masters” of knowledge in a community and those who are “apprenticed” to learn knowledge. A community of practice (CoP) is a group of people with a shared interest or practice, who meet together to share knowledge. Description is a conceptual tool to understand and discover, and the concept of the “community of practice” describes the social transmission of knowledge between practitioners, and the ways that practice impacts knowledge acquisition, in ways that make it well suited to interpret the writing pedagogy of ROTC instructors. Communities of practice differ from other communities in several ways, but an important one is social identity as “masters” and “apprentices”: there is a hierarchy within communities of practice that distinguishes between those who have mastered knowledge and skills, and those who want to master knowledge and skills. The community comes together to transfer and build knowledge for a specific reason. The shared endeavor to learn or master a “domain of knowledge” requires some investment on the part of community members. Masters are invested in teaching or passing on knowledge. Apprentices are invested in becoming knowledgeable practitioners (Cultivating Communities of Practice).

There are limitations to the application of the CoP model to ROTC programs. Authentic CoPs emerge organically, between groups that are attracted toward each other because of shared passions or concerns. Students sign up for ROTC programs for a variety of reasons, and they will all certainly exhibit differing levels of commitment to the Army’s ideals. In addition, Wenger himself points out that most schooling experiences cannot by nature support...
the CoP orientation, as school learning is often abstract and academic structures don’t allow for the kinetic relationships that characterize authentic CoPs.

However, the model is helpful for understanding the writing pedagogy of ROTC instructors, who are invested in Army education. Composition classrooms are not communities of practice, with clear domains of knowledge, instructors who are master practitioners or students that are seeking to enter a new context that the instructor can initiate them into. But these qualities can be used to describe ROTC programs and instructors, and help us to see how pedagogy might re-formulate itself against a shared domain of knowledge. In a community of practice, students are seeking to internalize new knowledge and develop a practitioner identity that includes communication practices in context. This internalization and identity development—what Wenger describes as a “social becoming”—is a situated reality that emerges between individuals who are at different stages of mastery (“Career of a Concept,” 3). It is a situated reality that informs all levels of ROTC instructor pedagogy.

The contextualized writing pedagogy of my participants meant that instructors saw writing as one element of a vast matrix of soldier competencies. Writing functioned as its own skill, but as a skill that had meaning when combined with other skills. The ROTC curriculum is interdisciplinary: it includes physical training, leadership camps in the summer, and professional mentoring, along with the usual educational prescriptives of reading, writing, and classroom time. My participants never described writing assignments in a way that divided the writing from the other skills in the curriculum:

All that to say yes, it is an interdisciplinary [way of combining tactical training and writing] and those writing assignments are like communication assignments. I want them to be able to write as easily as they would speak, and to be able to convey what is
important to the audience that they are trying to communicate with. So all the writing assignments and the learning objectives I’m trying to attain don’t just get after putting pen to paper. They get after communication in a more holistic sense. (LTC Armstrong)

This instructor wasn’t the only one to see writing as more than “putting pen to paper.”

Writing assignments themselves are connected to other communication tasks. For example, most instructors assign a “battle analysis,” where students select a battle from history (or they are assigned one, especially if a historic site of interest is near the ROTC program). Students research the battle, write a short paper on their research, develop an oral presentation based on the research, and in some cases they orchestrate and lead other students through a tour of a historical site related to the battle. This assignment illustrates the way that writing is integrated into Army-specific tactical knowledge, Army-specific oral and written formats, and leadership practice. In all of my data collection, I did not encounter a single instructor who assigned true “research papers” that stood by themselves as assignments.

It was common in my interviews for me to ask a question about a writing assignment, and receive an answer that addressed my question but only by putting the writing assignment in context with other communication modes or assignments. For example, when one instructor was explaining the way he presents writing to third year students, he said:

I think writing is very relevant at this level. I tell them that they will be judged more as an officer by how you write and by how you present, by how you communicate written and orally, than by any other facet of your leadership. (Colton)

The combined “how you write and how you present,” is very telling when it comes to instructor approaches to assigning writing. Universally, “briefing” went with writing. If students wrote something, they needed to brief it, or present it to the entire class. Students often had to
present content information in several communication formats—for example, they needed to write about something, and then present an oral brief. This is part of the reason why many instructors don’t have separate assignment descriptions for writing assignments.

Initially I was surprised when instructors didn’t provide any writing assignment descriptions, but I soon realized this was simply indicative of the way that instructors conceive of their assignments and their entire course. It would be analogous to asking me for a separate assignment description for the pre-writing phase of a research paper. I teach pre-writing strategies, but I don’t conceive of them as separate writing assignments; they are part of doing the work to produce a “research paper,” or any other paper. I would be almost puzzled by a request for evidence of my structure for teaching pre-writing, because it is a small part of a whole process that should produce something much more significant than a brainstormed list or an outline. My participants had a similar approach to writing assignments: they are part of larger processes and don’t, in theory, stand alone.

To delve into those “larger processes,” cadets learn writing practices that help them to understand other elements of Army leadership—how to write in ways that make them intelligible and effective leaders for other soldiers, and how to communicate effectively with superiors who rely on them to work with peers, present options for problem solving, and to evaluate the performance of subordinates. This kind of codified knowledge is a “social becoming” that takes place in the context of community as practitioners engage with the community and internalize the knowledge to become better practitioners. Wenger emphasizes that this is not a displacement of the person, but it is a description of the person as an engaged social participant. Knowledge acquisition gives the student a place in a fully situated landscape that includes student, instructor, educational context, and professional context. While I never asked my participants about their
exposure to Wenger, all of them describe their approach to writing and teaching in language that reflects the framework of the community of practice very well:

As I’ve progressed in the Army, I’ve been exposed to other leaders and commanders, and I understand what [the writing] requirements are and what I would want to see, that has informed the writing requirements I give to my [future] lieutenants. I want to prepare them to be a 2nd lieutenant. Which I did not have as a 2nd lieutenant. I was given something to do…I was given an investigation to do, which had to do with some missing equipment. I was also given an operations order, and I didn’t do too well in my first go-around and I think that’s because I didn’t have a foundation. I didn’t know what to expect—I was a[n English major], I dealt in the sublime. And that’s not the way the Army communicates. So I wasn’t ready for that. So I want to hammer home to some of these cadets, that these assignments are not just for my reading pleasure. They have a real purpose. (Armstrong)

This participant expresses the sense of responsibility that most instructors imbued their writing pedagogy with—drawing on their own experiences and the learning that had helped them to align effectively and successfully as a professional soldier, they hoped to make the road smoother for their cadets by clarifying the Army’s needs, and the kind of writing practices that would make their cadets effective leaders. Furthermore, when LTC Armstrong emphasizes that assignments are not “for pleasure,” but that they have a “real purpose,” he is alluding to the directive function of writing in the Army—writing leads to action on the part of subordinates, and it elicits support or lack of support from higher-ups. The ability to write effectively is the ability to get things done. Like many instructors, LTC Armstrong differentiates between writing that gets things done and “the sublime,” associating the sublime with the kind of writing
practices by and done in a typical English program or academic writing class. This might seem unfair, considering that so many writing instructors do try very hard to teach in a rhetorical style, to teach audience awareness and other critical tools that certainly come in handy in a military writing environment. Whether it’s unfair or not (and that probably varies from campus to campus), it is a perception that was widely held by the instructors I interviewed.

The comment that military writing has “real purpose,” is also important in that the specific items students are taught to write are considered actionable tools. Written documents that cadets are taught to produce—forms, letters, PowerPoint slides—are meaningful tools that reflect their investment in the Army context and their shared experience. The production of writing that effectively and powerfully reifies their own internalization, participation and re-negotiation of Army concepts is what identifies them as leaders in their professional context. “They get judged first by what they put on paper,” argued one of my participants (Brolin). “I don’t want them to lose out with their superiors because they didn’t sound good on paper first,” he continued, coming back to his own role as a successful practitioner and his responsibility to insure that his students had the writing tools to be successful in the Army.

While we sometimes resist the notion of writing teachers as “master practitioners” and students as “apprentices,” these same concepts seem to emerge often in discussions about pedagogy and curricular design. Tony Scott points out that the linguist James Paul Gee stated that when someone wants to design a program in writing they must ask the question, “What sort of social group do I intend to apprentice the learner into?” This is a “loaded question,” as Scott points out, “because it starts from the premise that there is no general literacy” (48). Other theorists like Doug Downs and Elizabeth Wardle, have argued that a more “general literacy” is possible, rooted in concepts of “writing studies.” In the pedagogical landscape of Army writing,
the “general literacy” available would be restricted to elements of grammar and vocabulary. What we think of as “rhetorical awareness”—being aware of audience, mastery of arguments that are persuasive in the discourse community in which the student functions—all of these elements of literacy are Army-specific, and are not teachable by Army outsiders nor can they be adequately understood without being practiced in an Army context.

2.4 Axiological values: Writing to communicate and communicating right.

My participants always expressed that they were training their students for a discourse forum and community where a contextualized set of vocabulary and communicative expectations will be placed on them. Instructors felt a strong sense of responsibility to inculcate writing habits that would strengthen their cadets’ leadership capabilities as second lieutenants. In most of my interviews, this responsibility emerged as an emphasis on audience awareness.

For second lieutenants, there were two important audiences that instructors emphasized the need to communicate with: subordinates and superiors. Interestingly, with both audiences, instructors emphasized the ways that being concise was both effective communication and respectful of the audience. When it came to subordinates, instructors often encouraged their students to empathize with their soldiers. Thinking about subordinates’ personal experience and how to motivate them were common: “What I always tell my students is, I am teaching you how to write for people who are tired, sleep-deprived, and scared. That’s what I’m teaching you how to do,” emphasized one instructor (Walsh). Because soldiers were tired and scared, it was important to “write concisely and with minimal fluff…Your soldiers are not going to be impressed by your vocabulary. They are going to be impressed by your ability to clearly and quickly get to the point.” Being direct and explaining the logic of one’s decisions without “fluff” or vague language was effective communication both because the audience wouldn’t be
confused, but also because an audience that is tired and scared wants clarity, and clarity inspires
certainty in the group’s purpose.

When it came to superiors, students were encouraged to refine their communication until
it was concise, to the point, and made their needs clear to commanders. “A lot of the time you find
you need a decision very quickly from a superior. I’ve [seen] situations at the Pentagon where
you go to someone, and it’s a General walking to his next meeting, and all you get to do is say,
‘Here you go, Sir,’[and hand him something] and he reads that one page and says ‘yes’ or ‘no’”
(LTC Kaplan). Instructors often expressed that sharp analysis itself was persuasive and that the
ability to be concise and clear in writing was a way to assure that superiors would consider their
perspective and meet their needs, especially amidst the other demands of their positions.

These comments reflect my participants’ pedagogical reliance on their own writing
experience as a teaching tool and grounding for assignment design, but it also reflects the fact
that that same experience has taught them to value writing as communication within the Army.
“Writing to Communicate” is considered an axiological philosophy, distinct from Writing to
Learn. The distinction was made by Susan McLeod and Chris Thaiss in an effort to help
distinguish the axiology of WAC and WID writing programs. While Writing to Learn considers
writing to be a “learning activity,” Writing to Communicate is a pedagogical orientation that
emphasizes the role writing plays in disciplinary discourse, and assumes that the instructor’s role
is to familiarize students with discipline-specific writing practices. Susan McLeod explains, “The
teacher is still a guide, but is focusing now on helping students learn the discourse of the
discipline; the relationship is that of seasoned professional to apprentice, or in anthropological
terms, of tribal elder to initiate” (154).
As this pedagogical model has become more widespread in WID-related literature, Thaiss and McLeod have noted that the addition of theories of discourse communities have emphasized the role of the instructor as “initiating” students: “We learned through these conversations that the person who knows better how to initiate the newcomer in a specialized discourse is not usually the composition teacher but the teacher who is already grounded in the content of the field and who is fluent in the disciplinary discourse” (286). This is an argument used to support WAC or WID theories, and programs that encourage content-specific writing courses or at least disciplinary-specific writing courses.

For ROTC instructors, the “specialized discourse” of the Army meant that students needed to develop sensitivity to Army audiences. This happens in part through the actual practices of the ROTC program: students spend time as members of both audiences. They are subject to their instructors and other student leaders, so they learn what it means to be a subordinate. At times they practice being a leader, in charge of younger cadets. It remains true though, that true “fluency” in the discourse of Army leadership won’t come for them without experience.

My participants described the Army as a highly rhetorical environment where writing is an important way of engaging with reality and knowledge. ROTC instructors’ writing pedagogy assumes that Army discourse is complex, and that students must be invited into the “conversation” (to use Kenneth Bruffee’s concept) via a pedagogical environment that educates them in Army discourse norms. Disciplines “have particular ways of asking and investigating questions enacted through and demonstrated in writing,” and writers validate their professional interaction within the discipline by engaging with the “conversation” in a way that demonstrates understanding of the important questions and the disciplinary knowledge base (Estrem 56;
Bruffee). Army axiology emphasized this ability for writers to demonstrate “coherence” in the Army conversation, rather than writing as a method of intellectual exploration.

While instructor writing pedagogy and a Writing to Communicate orientation assumes that knowledge is socially constructed, it does not assume that that construction is infinite. Rather, there is an assumption that knowledge is real, that it is an asset, and that the ability to communicate knowledge is empowering economically, politically, personally and materially. These are the same assumptions made by the CoP framework, however Writing to Communicate takes the community of knowledge one step further by asserting that the ability to effectively communicate knowledge can be managed and taught. Effective communicators and stewards of knowledge can be produced.

Therefore, instructors who are oriented toward writing as communication are inclined toward a focus on the analysis of the discourse of the discipline/context, especially a focus on audience and purpose, and pedagogy that emphasizes effective ways to think about writing in the discipline, and the genres used to communicate clearly. When instructors constantly call to mind the audiences of either subordinates or superiors, they are emphasizing the role that writing plays in communicating knowledge within the Army, the importance of close attention to ethos and logos as the writer considers whether that knowledge is being communicated up or down the Army hierarchy, and the role of pathos in the writer’s understanding of that audience’s needs. Are they homesick, tired, and scared? Or are they busy and on their way to a meeting? These are traditional rhetorical values, re-cast in an environment that is focused on using writing primarily as communication.

An important thing to note in the discussion of instructor writing pedagogy and the roles of “master writers” and “apprentice writers” in a communication-heavy environment, is that for
many of my participants, their conception of these roles were not restricted to the undergraduate experience. In fact, their conception of “learning to write for the Army” was that most of it would happen in the Army. Corrine Hinton’s work with Marine Corps veterans in composition courses has revealed that veterans describe all of their practical writing instruction as having taken place on the job. Her work is complemented by the work of Angie Mallory, a Navy veteran, who wrote about her experiences in a composition class with Doug Downs. In “Uniform meets Rhetoric,” Mallory and Downs describe the ways that Mallory’s conception of what it meant to be taught “how to write” was affected by her writing experiences in the Navy, which comprised an extensive rhetorical education, albeit a Navy-specific one. My participants often recalled their on-the-job writing experiences when they were 2nd lieutenants as a partial explanation for why they taught writing the way that they did:

When you’re a second lieutenant in the Army, there’s a whirlwind of things being thrown at you. There’s no one there to help with writing, to remind you about active voice or the best way to do things. And if you’re not fortunate enough to be working for someone who was either an English major or just knows how to write, you might think you’re doing good writing and you’re not. My second supervisor was an English major. And my writing was murdered all the time. I took on all her writing traits and now I act like her when people work for me. It’s about how to convey your message, in a single thought. Rather than writing something, and everybody is trying to figure out what you were trying to say. (LTC Parks)

This participant’s recollection of working for someone who was a more skilled writer than himself is what he identified as his “writing apprenticeship,” during his early years working in the Army. He doesn’t claim that he simply learned formats or how to fill out forms from her,
but that he “took on all her writing traits,” and he identifies those traits with how he now operates as a boss. The writing is a communication heuristic, not just a pragmatic skill. The idea of “doing good writing” versus writing that might get “muredered” has to do with conveying messages clearly and easily in an Army environment. There should not be any confusion or equivocation about what a writer meant; no one should be “trying to figure out what you were trying to say.” Now, as an ROTC instructor, that is the heuristic and axiology that he relies on when assigning writing to cadets.

2.5 Axiological values: Genres and the magical language of action.

Pedagogies that stem from a Writing to Communicate heuristic also embrace another pedagogical value that characterizes ROTC instructor pedagogy, and that is the value of genres to the teaching of writing and thinking. Genre theory connects Kenneth Burke’s “motives” and Lloyd F. Bitzer’s description of “exigence” into a practical discussion about the ways that recurring “constellations of forms” in discourse can work to “package information in ways that conform to a discipline’s norms, values, and ideology,” and can function as critical components of communication within discourse communities (Campbell and Jamieson 20; Berkenkotter and Huckin 1). Carolyn Miller’s discussion of genre as “social action” is helpful in deepening the discussion about the role of genre in military writing and how outsiders might understand it.

It is not possible to become acquainted with military writing and pedagogy without engaging military genres. Genres reveal military behaviors, structure, expectations, writing values, and epistemology. Genre theory helps to provide a more specific theoretical framework for understanding why military instructors teach the way they do: they conceive of themselves as teaching students to communicate through writing, and in military culture a fundamental part of written communication is genre-based. To use Berlin’s description of the “worlds” made
possible by rhetoric, in the rhetorical world of the military the argument that composition is genre would probably be accepted without argument. Genre is integral to writing as a social behavior in the military context; meaningful written communication takes place in some kind of form.

Important Army correspondence is written according to very specific instruction given in Army Regulation 25-50 (Appendix B). All of my participants mentioned this regulation when discussing writing, and several of them sent me a copy as representative of their classroom assignments. Much of the structured writing that was done in their classes were items that came from AR 25-50, and all of my participants emphasized how important it was for newly graduated officers to be familiar with AR 25-50 and to understand what it meant to follow the directions in it for their correspondence. Understanding AR 25-50 as a handbook for communication was seen as imperative for a young officer to be successful:

I assign them four writing assignments and they are all things they will use in their first year. They can keep working on these items until they are perfect, and then keep them and use them [as examples] in their first year. They need to assimilate into Army culture with their assignments. These are templates that help them transition to Army culture.

(Colton)

This instructor was describing four assignments he would be giving to his Military Science 401 class, and they were all genres found in 25-50: a letter of recommendation, a recommendation for an award, a counseling form (an evaluation of another officer), and a negative counseling form (documentation of a negative event). Each of these genres needs to be done in a specific format, but they also represent events in the professional life of an officer. Learning to write in these formats entails learning more about Army culture and its rhetorical
peculiarities. These are “templates” for behavior, culture, and problem solving—forms of cultural “action” just as much as they are written genres for communicating a piece of information. For example, this instructor pointed out that some of the first counseling forms that second lieutenants will fill out are for non-commissioned officers who have been in the Army for much longer than the second lieutenant. My participant pointed out that learning how to write an initial evaluation required students to consider what their relationships will be like with their colleagues: “How do you manage this relationship without coming across as pompous and not appreciative of this person’s experience, but also without being dismissive of your own authority and responsibility to provide guidance?” To do this assignment well, students have to attempt to understand and internalize Army culture. The written form is a vehicle for an instructor to help them develop their identities as officers and discover meaningful ways to participate in Army culture.

Knowledge of genres helps students to assimilate to Army culture, and many instructors identified the cultural thinking processes that enable officers to write those forms with an understanding of intention and audience, as LTC Colton did. My participants often made the additional point that sharp and effective analysis guides the “argumentation” of these forms. The writing skills that they wanted students to demonstrate included “making an argument,” but this wasn’t argumentation as we sometimes understand it in a rhetoric class, where we think of argument forms (our discipline’s cultural genres) or argument theory or even formal logic. Generally speaking, instructors wanted students to be able to offer very concise analytical statements. The form for a recommendation for an award was described by LTC Armstrong as well:
Five years ago I was the executive officer of [a training program for Captains], and there was a requirement for some of my Captains—my battery commanders—to provide some award recommendations for some of the soldiers. The Army has a form for these awards. It’s very simple, it’s four blocks that require you to put in some statements about why this individual deserves this award. And the reward recommendations that I received—and this is systemic through the Army—you see descriptions that include the word flawless, perfection, superb, outstanding…those are all well and good but those are all subjective. They don’t provide quantitative numbers. I told them to re-do it. I don’t need Shakespeare. I need a scientist who relies on numbers and communicates that way. Tell me what it is, what he/she did, and what the result was. I don’t need you to convince me, I just need you to tell me the facts…My feeling is that a lot of young officers rely on, “This is what I want, this is what I want you to do, I feel strongly about this, this is why it’s important to me… how I feel and why I feel.” That’s all well and good, but tell me how does it follow [the argument/data], what are the effects, and how can you tell me about that without burying me in details? (LTC Armstrong)

While LTC Armstrong describes the form itself as “simple,” because it’s directive (“blocks” with specific kinds of statements that are supposed to be submitted) the kind of writing and thinking that the form calls for is not necessarily simple, if a writer is going to do a good job. The kind of writing that LTC Armstrong is asking for—and all of my participants described the same thing—is for distilled, concise analytical statements. The desire for writing that doesn’t concern itself with “subjective” arguments means that the data presented on the forms should be concrete and measurable, avoid adjectives and concentrate on the proscribed requirements that soldiers were supposed to meet.
There is a tendency sometimes to see genres as reductive, but in fact Miller’s approach helps us to understand that genres are “open” and “creative” in the sense that they are a rhetorical product of the ways that a specific subset of people comprehend action and exigence. Arguing that genre is best understood as related to “situated action,” Miller calls her approach “ethnomethodological,” an inductive way of approaching genre that allows for historical and social evolution (155). As a “writing ethnographer,” or any researcher trying to understand the function of writing in a discourse community, ideas about how discourse works in that community can be gleaned from looking at discreet, genre-driven writing experiences inside of that community. LTC Colton described rhetorical realities visible in written evaluations that affect relationships. LTC Armstrong described writing values and axiology, and the kind of argument that is valued in the Army. These are rhetorical values that make a discussion of Army and genre productive because it “contributes to an understanding of how discourse works—that is, if it reflects the rhetorical experience of the people who create and interpret the discourse” (Miller 152).

My participants also noted that Army genres can be manipulated in ways that only “discourse insiders” can understand. Awareness of these rhetorical strategies was understood to be highly empowering for younger officers, and required Army writers to see the forms as a “style all their own,” as one participant described:

In the Army [there is something that] I would call “magic language.” In our evaluation system we have a tremendous amount of inflation, not unlike grade inflation. So all of the language used sounds really flowery and good. I could give you several samples and you would think they all sound very positive. However, there are these magic statements, this magic language that is also flowery but it means more than other language, it’s this code
that we use [laugh]. It’s a secret code that says, “Here’s two flowery evaluation reports, but this one is the one that is clearly better.” It is not obvious to the uninitiated which one that is. It’s very nuanced. The magic phrases are somewhat universally understood. They will learn them from me…[but] it’s not static, so the magic phrases can change over time. The magic phrase that was used when I was a lieutenant has morphed, because of senior officials and what they focus on…those phrases change over time. But I can let them know what the magic phrases are right now. (LTC Colton)

The term “magic language” implies instantaneous action, an association I found both telling and comical when it comes to constrained forms of discourse like an Army evaluation form.

We are familiar with Burke’s notions of “god terms” and “devil terms,” but the “magic language” of Army forms is different; it’s how to indicate a textural difference between similar “god terms.” I think that many of my participants agreed with Desirae Gieseman that, overall, Army writing life is overly regulated. But when it came to their writing pedagogy and the writing processes that they favored for their classroom, they had identified ways to encourage their students to understand genres as opportunities for cultural engagement, and as a “style” where culturally intelligible arguments could be made through analysis and attention to language and audience.

2.6 Epistemological assumptions: “Put your own spin on it.”

Any discussion about pedagogy and classroom writing process necessarily entails some discussion about instructor views of knowledge and truth claims. When considering my interpretation of instructor epistemology and how knowledge is conceived of in relation to writing in ROTC programs, I am giving my view on what my participants’ epistemic
assumptions seem to be when it comes to their writing pedagogy. This might seem a little presumptive, given my lack of Army experience, but descriptions of pedagogy center around beliefs about knowledge.

My participants’ comments that spoke to these issues often centered around assessment or assignment design. I found epistemic assumptions to be especially intriguing when it came to ROTC instructors and writing, because the program content of a “military science” class is interdisciplinary in a way that other disciplines rarely are, and therefore underlying assumptions about knowledge unfold in their assignment designs and relationships in ways that are unique.

My participants describe a dialectical epistemology that assumes social groups can determine values and negotiate decisions together, but that certain material constraints are always real. It is not a radical epistemology where all truth is constructed, but neither is it particularly traditional, embracing the idea that knowledge is stable and can always be passed down in pre-packaged processes. My participants consistently described their writing assignments as trying to mesh the material reality of “war-fighting” with the constructed understanding of how to fight a war and why to fight a war. One of the most interesting things about my participants’ descriptions of themselves and their pedagogy was the way that they constantly combined the realization that cadets are being taught to go fight wars where there are material consequences and risks, with their understanding that the experience of that material war effort will be, in many ways, created by the individuals fighting it. Effective leadership will ameliorate difficulties, and the ability to problem solve effectively will promote safety. The fact of war and the need for leadership will not change, but the perception that both of those can be drastically impacted by effective groups and soldiers that are “knowledge-makers,” (I never heard an ROTC instructor use this phrase) was an implicit assumption.
The design of assignments often reflected the assumption that students needed to collaboratively decide the meaning of information, even information provided by the Army (Army publications or Army recommended readings). Group work was a constant feature of assignments, and even when writing assignments were done individually, the writing was often part of a much larger, complex project that was essentially collaborative and group-driven in nature. This reliance on groups does reflect the after-graduation Army work place reality, where soldiers work in teams, but in the classroom it also served to demonstrate the belief that students should work together to create their own understanding of Army realities. One of my participants described his design of project where students are supposed to work in groups to learn about how the Army works in other regions of the world:

They have very little guidance for how to execute [the group projects]. A lot of it is, “Do this as a class.” We have a requirement to provide some instruction on how the Army works globally, across different regions, our presence in the Middle East and the Pacific. [They will ask], “What are those things we hear about?” A lot of the [research and learning] is on the students: I pose what they need to research and [explain that] they need to brief and construct a map for me, and tell me how the regions are interacting. I tell them to go ahead and put their own spin on it, what do they think? So those are not just writing assignments, those also require them to speak and organize and collect their thoughts and put them together in a way that can be digested together and understood. Which goes back to communication. I feel like I’m saying “communication” too much. But that’s how important that is, to what we do. (Armstrong)

This assignment is interesting because not only do students work in smaller groups on specific regions, but the groups also work together as a class to “construct a map” and explain
how the regions affect each other. Furthermore, the instructor points out that students start with almost no prior knowledge or understanding of the topic, and yet the research is self-guided, or guided by the groups. The instructor isn’t absent, as he will pose questions and make suggestions about readings, but groups are encouraged to “put their own spin” on the information, meaning to interpret the reading and information for themselves and decide as a group how they understand the role of the Army in other regions of the world. The assignment has a written component, and has to be presented to the instructor. There is direction for the form of the final products, both the written material and the oral presentation—the students aren’t inventing form or genre—but the resultant knowledge is meant to be their “own,” constructed throughout the process of selecting research materials and organizing the information that they found pertinent into a cohesive and presentable form.

A notable classroom feature of ROTC writing assignments that emerges from this view of knowledge was the lack of separate writing assignment instructions, and the lack of formal rubrics for writing. The Army ROTC curriculum (Appendix C) contains recommendations for writing assignments and a rubric that can be used for research papers, but I did not encounter any Army teachers who actually used separate rubrics for writing assessment, and while they often assigned projects that involved writing, the writing itself didn’t have separate instructions. The project was often a matrix of reading, research, class discussion, and oral presentation. Writing assignments often didn’t occur without being situated within these larger assignment processes, and both the instructions and assessment reflected that the writing rarely stood “on its own,” as it would in a composition course.

At first the lack of writing-specific curricular materials surprised me, but then I realized it was indicative of the way that instructors conceived of their assignments and their entire course.
It would be analogous to asking me for a separate assignment description for the pre-writing phase of a research paper. I teach pre-writing strategies, but I don’t conceive of them as separate writing assignments; they are part of doing the work to produce a “research paper,” or any other paper. I would be almost puzzled by a request for evidence of my structure for teaching pre-writing, because it is a small part of a whole process that should produce something much more significant than a brainstormed list or an outline, and the notion that it should be graded separately would be irritating to me: it would seem to me that a person who thinks pre-writing should be graded separately, has missed the whole point of the assignment in the first place. They would also have missed the way that my philosophy about knowledge making encourages me to teach students pre-writing strategies.

Because ROTC instructors assume Army content to be stable but the meaning of the content to be negotiable, they are inclined to assess writing as part of a larger educational process. This speaks to the way that instructors understand the knowing that is achieved through writing. Writing is perceived as an activity that promotes communication and learning, but participants conceived of communication holistically, as a matrix of thinking, speaking and writing practices that required written competency for its highest efficacy. While instructors certainly believed that writing itself promoted the creation of knowledge and the apprehension of important concepts on the part of cadets, that learning was never discreet or isolated to writing processes or assignments, even while it almost always required some kind of writing.

Army publications about knowledge and writing seem to agree with publications in our field that writing is a problem-solving practice and a way of creating knowledge. There are very few Army publications that describe Army writing in ways that get at the underlying epistemological assumptions driving writing practices, but those that do exist underscore the idea...
that Army realities need to be negotiated intrapersonally for officers and that writing helps this intrapersonal dialectic, and that the writing of the Army is itself a way of constructing the knowledge of what the Army does. Major Trent Lythgoe, writing in Military Review, argued that writing “leads to better thinking, decision making, and problem solving because it organizes our ideas” in part by revealing our “personal set of assumptions about how the world works” and forcing us to “put our disorganized ideas into coherent structures of actors and relationships that are useful as mental models” (51). Lythgoe conceives of writing as “flight simulation for the brain,” because in order to develop coherent writing about ideas requires the writer “to achieve an intimate understanding of that idea through mental simulation” (53). Lythgoe’s description of “mental simulation” that breaks down faulty understandings of conceptual relationships and reveals personal assumptions in a way that allows the writer to re-consider and “re-write” their own knowledge on that topic speaks well to ROTC instructor epistemology and their descriptions of the writing processes in their classrooms. To follow Lythgoe’s analogy of flight simulation, writing helps officers “learn to fly,” and while plenty of officers might not fly, the ones that can will do it by apprehending knowledge in a dialectical way that embraces Army realities and processes them through creative thinking processes that examine knowledge assumptions. All of this, according to Lythgoe, should lead to better decision making on the part of officers.

This concept of writing as an embedded learning practice where leaders negotiate meaning for themselves and groups is reiterated in my participants’ descriptions of their assignment design. To recall the assignment described earlier, LTC Armstrong has his students make their own determination about what Army presence means in an assigned region, and what
they think the interactions between different regions means. When it comes to assessment of writing assignments, LTC Armstrong describes assessment this way:

A lot of [the writing assignments] and the things I want them to do are the kind of assignments where the effect of their communication and effectiveness of their communication won’t be apparent until four or five or six weeks down the road. A lot of it is how they implement things throughout the course and how other cadets internalize that information...the only way that I can truly evaluate how effective they are, is if they are able to get their message and intent across to the people they are trying to lead. If I can give them guidance and advice on how to get there, I’ll do that. But a grade is not [solely] based on the content, but how they conveyed that content. Whether they were confident, wrote concisely, effectively, succinctly. (Armstrong)

Assessment of writing doesn’t take place discreetly for LTC Armstrong, or many of my other participants. There is no rubric because the writing isn’t conceived of as a separate practice. That doesn’t mean that participants don’t give feedback on writing or ask for revision of written work—they all did. But instructors are looking for the overall practice of epistemological values and of processes that support the internalization of a practice of knowledge making.

While Lythgoe emphasizes some of the intrapersonal dialectical knowledge-making of writing, Desirae Gieseman emphasizes the writer-reader relationships and the ways that writing between officers constructs Army knowledge and Army identity. When it comes to writing purposes, she explains “linguists try to understand language through…theories that emphasize context, relationships, and communication functions.” (109) Reading and writing provide meaningful learning experiences; readers expect to learn something when they read, and writers “aim to provide content that causes their intended readers to learn” (109). In the context of the
ROTC classroom, this need for writers that can “cause readers to learn,” is obviously contextualized to intra-Army learning. Students need to be able to learn and then communicate that learning to other Army members. The implicit assumption is that officers learn from each other, and the more they do it, the better for the Army. Gieseman goes on to argue that ideas about the function of writing are fundamentally connected to theories of learning. Her argument essentially points out that writing purpose stems from epistemology, and that a dialectical epistemology is most productive for the Army. While I’m not certain that Gieseman’s understanding of writing is systemic throughout the Army (there are not any other articles like hers in Army publications, and she is critiquing the Army writing standards that are currently practiced, like the over-proscribed regulations in AR 25-50) it does reflect the epistemological assumptions of my participants and their assignment design generally revealed that these assumptions were apparent in classroom writing practices and pedagogy.

While I have offered here an interpretation of participant epistemology derived from my interview data, it should be mentioned that ROTC instructors are teaching from the Army ROTC writing curriculum (Appendix C; discussed in Ch. 4) that supports these epistemological values, but doesn’t balance those values in the same way that actual instructor assignments and classroom process often did. The writing assignments in the curriculum often veer toward the more reflective (journaling about one’s own leadership qualities) or the more informative (write a paper analyzing a specific person’s leadership style). All of these assignments would function well as stand-alone writing assignments. It makes sense that a proffered list of suggested writing assignments would work that way. Such recommendations though, lean toward the assumption that a classroom’s learning values are strictly mimetic, that writing is a discreet educational activity. In practice, my participants did not assign writing this way, probably because their own
epistemological values lean more toward dialecticism and social knowledge-making. The assignments that they did adapt from the curriculum—and even their assignments derived from AR 25-50—were always modified to take place in a social context, and assessment of the writing always included social processes and usually oral assignments as well. While all of my participants saw themselves as tasked with teaching certain writing skills, their approach to writing was to mimic the social realities of the Army workplace, not to adapt an Army curriculum that is designed to be delivered in separate writing assignments. One of my participants responded to questions about writing assessments in a way that mirrored LTC Armstrong’s comments:

   My peers will be their senior raters, their boss’s bosses when they are in the Army. So, I try to think if I were their battalion commander, how would I be judging them as an officer? It’s less of an academic lens. It’s [more focused on] if I were your senior rater, here is the [overall] impression I would have of your work. (Colton)

   I found it interesting that this was described as “less of an academic lens.” It’s only less academic if it is less focused on critical thinking, but my participant was pointing out that communication practices in the academic world are overly separated for Army purposes. An “academic lens” focuses on writing as a separate activity, but my participant’s “less academic lens” is to consider the whole learning process and the degree to which all of the student’s communication practices—including writing—reflected learning and creative knowledge making.

2.7 Transition

   When I began this project, I wondered if Army instructors see writing as social action, and whether or not they considered it integral to the “practice” of being a soldier. I found that
their pedagogy assumes war-fighting to be a stable reality, and writing is important as an act of engagement with that reality: it underscores group cohesion, reifies group values, establishes leadership and helps to both codify and create knowledge in a community of practice. I had wondered if, in the ROTC classroom, the Army action in commercials was connected with the world of instructors and writing, and how that made writing pedagogy similar or different from what I do in my classroom. I found that the Army action of war is definitely connected to writing in the world of the ROTC classroom, and that it gives rise to an axiology that focuses on communication more than deliberation. Furthermore, I found that writing is considered essential to problem solving, but Army writers must find agency in constrained genres, by developing an acute sense of their audience and a sensitivity to the language of Army culture.

These are strokes that are drawn with a large brush. They are usually supported by the words of my participants, and sometimes elements of my generalized conclusions are problematized by the situated perspectives of my participants. To consider these patterns and themes deeper, we need to consider my participants’ words in context and at greater length.

3 CHAPTER THREE: DESCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW DATA

3.1 There should be a word for this feeling.

It seems funny to me now, but when I started this project I imagined that all of the words of all of my participants would be included in the final presentation of this project. All of them. I was enjoying the project, enjoying my methods, and enjoying my participants. Everything I learned was valuable, so of course it would all be in the final write-up.

However, I can recall a specific moment when I realized that the amount of interview data and the number of pages of transcribed material prohibited me from citing everybody’s
perspective on everything, or every participant’s answer to every question. Sitting at my desk, looking at the files of transcribed interviews, I realized that I had the same number of pages in raw transcripts and notes that I expected to write for my dissertation. It sank in that I wasn’t going to be able to cite even half of the transcribed material, if the write-up was going to have any focus or coherence.

If there isn’t a term somewhere for the moment when a new researcher’s idealism about data-inclusion comes crashing down, there probably should be. The romance of the project was over, and now I had to deal with questions of what was feasible, logical, and appropriate for the final phase of my research. I had wanted to include the whole story. But I cannot tell what exceeds page limits, readers’ patience, or the completion of my thesis hours. There will always be more story than anyone knows.

3.2 What is a “profile”?

In the months-long intellectual process of figuring out how to synthesize my data and how to describe it in a presentable format, I often considered Stake’s claim that what we consider to be the “right content” to report from qualitative work should not emerge from what we wanted to find or what we expected to find, but from an “iterative convergence” that effectively makes the research question seem more complex than the researcher originally thought, “more situated and seemingly dependent on its context” (183, 185). This kind of powerful convergence is dialectical, “an intellectual resolve of competing forces” wherein a researcher can feel confident that a pattern “revealed itself” (185).

Oftentimes I felt that I was “sensing” a pattern in the data but it was when I found adequate words or an adequate theoretical construct to “explain” what I was seeing, that I would suddenly sense that the research question had in fact become more complex, that my participants
seemed “more situated,” and then I would conclude that I was on to something powerful and continue working with that same pattern.

Once I had narrowed down to the themes and patterns that I planned to write about in the dissertation, I had to consider how I wanted to present and describe the data. As I discussed in Chapter One, I concluded that I wanted to write a “generalizable” description of Army ROTC writing pedagogy, an essay that was useful to other instructors. The essay that resulted is Chapter Two. But I also wanted my readers to understand and experience the situated quality of my generalizations, and to feel that they could “hear” my participants’ voices. Stake argues that the general and the particular/situated need each other: they are both present in our perceptions, understandings, and apprehension of knowledge, and therefore, if we are really going to help people understand something, we must describe both the general and the situated context that gave rise to it (197). To complement my generalization in Chapter Two then, I needed a way to let readers experience the interviews themselves, without reading 100 pages of raw transcripts.

I was drawn to Irving Seidman’s use of interview “profiles” in his work. Profiles, as Seidman uses them, are shortened sections of interviews that retain much of the participant’s speech, but the researcher omits sections that are less relevant. The projects that Seidman uses in his book include one that attempts to capture the memories of refugees, and another that tries to document the experiences of publicly paid childcare workers. The resultant profiles, while they are shortened transcripts, are still several pages long and are not broken up by themes or by interview question, because the intent is to document the way the participant tells a much more complex story of their history, including their childhoods and present relationships. While I was intrigued with the way that Seidman had developed a method and methodology for condensing very long transcripts, as I tried it for myself I found that the transcripts were still too bulky for
my project, which has a very clearly defined intent and specific questions that needed to be addressed. The excess transcribing was distracting and was making it easy to get off-track and think about excess data, rather than focusing on my iterative patterns and writing my project.

Stake uses the term “vignette” to refer to very short passages that he develops for his research write-ups. These short passages often include description from the researcher along with dialogue from the participant. His intention is to capture a moment in the research, to give the reader a “vicarious” sense of being present with real people, and to communicate both dialogue and context to the reader in a compelling and narrative way (213). Stake’s shortened format appealed to me, but my project doesn’t include material context for my participants. My IRB approval was for phone interviews, and while several friends gave me tours of Army classrooms and training facilities to help me “get a feel” for Army education, I never met with my participants in their actual classrooms or watched them teach.

At the same time, Stake’s vignettes were too short. I did want my readers to “hear” my participants for more than a snippet of dialogue. ROTC instructors do not get interviewed by writing instructors very often, and I wanted to enable them to “speak” to my readers at greater length than a few sentences. I also wanted longer passages of their speech to be visible to readers so that my readers might “see” patterns for themselves, or enjoy seeing the way that my identified patterns were present across several interviews.

I decided to combine these two strategies. Like Seidman’s profiles, mine are shortened and condensed versions of the raw data. I have eliminated distraction by omitting material that doesn’t address the iterative patterns, or that I didn’t find helpful in building the iterative convergence that problematized the research question and increased the significance of my participants’ context in relation to my research questions, but each participant still gets at least
three pages of room to express their responses in their own words and establish their own perspective on writing and pedagogy. Like Stake’s vignettes, I have shortened the transcripts more than Seidman’s profiles, and I have organized the passages according to topic, even providing headings to let the reader know what the participant was responding to in each passage. Furthermore, like Stake, I have made some of my own commentary and qualitative impressions part of the finished product, in the introductions. Developing and using the profiles created an ideal situation for me: I had a great deal of my data at hand, but it was focused and distractions were at a minimum.

3.3 Selecting interviews.

In order to effectively select interviews to develop into profiles, I focused on the patterns and insights that I had chosen to write about for Chapter Two. I chose interviews with participants who had more articulately spoken to these themes. I transcribed a rough “trial” version of the profiles before I wrote a more finalized/focused version of Chapter Two. The two processes affected each other: Narrowing down my interview data to the “most salient” interviews helped me to write a more focused version of the material in Chapter Two, because I had a more focused and selective set of interview “texts” to work with. Conversely, as I wrote Chapter Two, I became aware of how much extraneous information I still had in certain sections of the profiles, and so I was able to slowly shorten them a little bit more and make them more readable and focused.

In addition, I realized that I had several interviews that I wanted to use a quote or two from in my writing, but there were other interviews that had lengthy passages of greater interest for my research questions, or where more of the interview worked together to address issues that other interviews addressed in less detail. While I did end up citing half of my participants in
Chapter Two, I leaned heavily on five interviews, and those are the five that I developed into profiles for this Chapter.

3.4 Intermediation and profiles.

To integrate “context” in the spirit of Stake’s vignettes, I introduce each of my profiles with my own impressions of my participant. As I noted in Chapter One, the profiles are the words of my participants, but I have in some places corrected tense change or subject-verb agreement when it was necessary in order for a reader to understand the sentence. There are ellipses when I have omitted sections, whether it is words or paragraphs, and I have inserted my own explanatory phrases in brackets to help readers understand the intended meaning of vague phrasing or phrases that referred to prior conversation. The profiles function as an “intermediary” document, to use Geertz’s term for ethnographic writing that is not author-saturated (these are my participants’ words) nor is it author-evacuated: I have crafted these with readability in mind (Works and Lives, 141-142).

These profiles support the themes that I wrote about in Chapter Two, but, true to Stake’s and Geertz’s arguments that the particular still exists within the general, they also introduce some of my participants’ divergent perspectives. I point some of these perspectives out, in the hopes that they provoke further thinking about the complexities of teaching writing, both for my participants and for us. In a sense, my participants’ words are the “intermediary” content between my generalized, outsider’s conclusions about Army pedagogy and their lived pedagogical experiences in a context that is particular to them.

3.4.1 Profile 1: LTC Andy Rubin

I interviewed Lieutenant Colonel Andy Rubin on May 22, 2018. LTC Rubin is in the unique position of overseeing two fairly large Army ROTC programs in the Southeast, one of
them at a suburban university that holds some of the largest Army ROTC classes I came across. I found him to be a very approachable and enthusiastic educator. He responded to my recruitment email the same day he received it, and the first line of his reply was, “Yes. That sounds great.” While he loved Army life, he eschewed all of the excessive formalities that many career Army people used with me. He always addressed me casually, and he was very forthcoming about his own writing experiences in the Army. He expressed interest in discussing writing, in part because his background is not in the liberal arts, and so he was interested in getting some ideas for the classroom. A few times he asked me about assignments that I had taught and even made some notes. He pointed out that he was responsible for helping younger, newer teachers on his staff and that he was always looking for new ideas and suggestions to help them settle in and find their own teaching style. He invited me for a tour of the ROTC training facility, which I took him up on.

My interview with LTC Rubin identifies an interesting axiological conflict in Army writing, that other interviews did not address in any detail. Army writing genres are very standardized, with all correspondence following very specific directions provided to soldiers in Army Regulation 25-50 (discussed in Chapter Four). But LTC Rubin points out that despite standardization of formats, he does not think that ideas about what makes “good” writing are uniform in the Army at all. Cadets will end up having to adjust their notions of clarity to suit their commanders.

In addition, LTC Rubin’s descriptions of his experiences trying to teach writing (and running into the same pitfalls that most instructors have when teaching writing) and his thoughts about what he hopes students learn in composition courses highlight the disjunction between writing classrooms and ROTC classrooms. He is as unaware of the goals of writing courses, as
writing instructors are unaware of the fact that in many ways he is a “writing teacher,” to hear his
description of assignments like the battle analysis. In addition, the way that he highlights
teamwork in the Army—including team communication through writing—is an important and
unique approach to writing that connects the Army well to Wenger’s “communities of practice,”
a significant point with serious implications for pedagogy, as discussed in Chapter Two.

On how he joined the Army and became a Professor of Military Science:

“I joined the Army during the spring semester of my sophomore year. I intended to be a
math professor one day, but I went active duty…I realized that I could make a career in the
Army but also put my name out there to be a professor. And one day I got a phone call asking if I
would like to go to [name of host university]. Now that I’ve been here awhile it has rekindled in
me the idea that I do enjoy teaching like I thought I did 20 years ago. It gives me the opportunity
to be around a college campus and higher level education and see what the opportunities are and
to realize that I do enjoy it. I try to get out and meet people outside of my program…some
professors don’t like [an ROTC presence], but the ones that know a lot about what we’re doing
are very supportive. [The ones that aren’t as supportive] are just naïve…they don’t realize that
my instructors all have a bachelor’s degree and some have master’s degrees. We are educated
individuals, and not just a bunch of conservative gun totting individuals.”

On writing objectives in Army ROTC courses:

“There’s not a lot of objectives for writing, there’s a few papers here and there. But there
is an emphasis on writing, as [a form of] communication.”
“I [give them examples from my experience to show them] that they are going to have to write a lot and predominantly they are going to have to learn to write in their boss’s writing style. They’re going to be writing reports and summaries for someone else, so they really have to work on structure and terminology and thinking about how they want to say what they need to say. You see a lot of writing that is half of a thought and it’s not a complete argument. I want them to be able to write argumentatively and I want them to be able to see and understand one person’s writing style, and be able to write in another person’s writing style.”

“Through my 22 years of writing in the military, [I’ve seen that] you can have multiple master’s degrees and you can write what you think is a [well-written report] and you give it to somebody else, and it’s just not the way they write…they’ll pull you into their office and say ‘What is this? I have to rewrite the whole thing.’ And you’re like ‘No, you don’t…’ But really it’s, ‘Let me see how you wrote it and then I’ll incorporate that into my own writing techniques.’”

“So I focus on structure and flow and how to learn how to tweak the writing depending on who you’re writing for.”

**On whether or not he sees himself as a “writing teacher”:**

“I’m not confident that “good writing” is uniform [between the university and the Army]. I’m not. Being in the military for that long and watching new officers rise through the ranks and reading some of their writing…again, they will make a point but it’s not a full point…if you’re asking me for resources for example, you have to explain: here’s why I need these resources
more than this other person. One person says, here’s what we need, here’s our [clearly written] proposal…then I’ll get an email from a younger officer who says you don’t support us and you’re no help. But I never knew what they needed. No one teaches how to write an email, but it’s basic…bottom line up front, that sort of thing. Like journalism, where you put the meat up front. As you get to the third or fourth page of the email, people are just scrolling. […] Now that I’m saying that out loud I want to have them all write memorandums and draft emails.”

**On particular writing assignments he likes to use:**

“A lot of what I want them to write is analytical…for instance, they have to do a battle analysis. What I want them to do is write about something in the Army that is interesting to them. They pick a battle from the list, and they can write about a theme related to it. I tell them to look at what occurred in that battle…what is the theme or topic you want to highlight? As opposed to just kind of regurgitating a summary of what happened in the battle. I often give them that assignment early in the semester, and I want them to produce a thesis a few weeks into the semester, talk about what they want to write about and show the structure. “

“But we don’t get that knocking on the door with, ‘Here’s what I want to write about…what do you think?’ When we ask them, ‘Hey what’s your topic, what do you want to write about,’ many of them haven’t gotten started. Even when we push them in that direction they express that they have a lot of other projects and they save that one for doing later in the term. That’s been the theme for that [assignment]. When we allow them to write about leadership, any topic they want, and they need to come talk to us about their topic and we will
help them relate course material to their topic, that’s a problem too. They don’t know how to think about questions [analytically] and they can’t plan how to write that kind of paper.”

**On using group writing assignments:**

“We really wanted to find a way to go toward more collaborative thinking [for the students]…One of the things I complain about is the teaching [styles that emphasize] to regurgitate what you know, and don’t cheat and don’t look at your partner…we wanted to better enable that collaborative group thinking that reflects how they’re going to work in civilian world or military world.”

“As a soldier I’ve never had to do my own work, it was always, ‘How well am I bringing a team together, to get a team to do the work?’ We wanted to focus on a little taste of what it’s like to write a paper with everyone else when everyone has their own agendas and timelines and writing styles, and then how do you bring it all together and merge everything so that the writing flows, so that it’s not apparent that this paragraph was written by one person and this paragraph is written by another person, et cetera.”

“Of course, we found that some students didn’t carry their fair share of the work load…I had one group turn their paper in and they left that person’s part completely blank in the paper [laugh]. You can’t do that…I explained to them, ‘Don’t let your grade suffer because of that person.’ I think that gave them a level of learning they wouldn’t have gotten on their own. It forces them to sit down with a group and collaborate together and decide together how they’re going to structure it and how they’re going to go forward with their own section of the writing.”
On what he wishes composition teachers knew about writing in the military classroom:

“I think that, going back to my [examples], we need writing a paper [to be] a process, not a sprint. I don’t know if that works or not, but making it a mutual discussion between a student and a professor about how you could or should write [in response to the assignment], not to go off and write it in a closed room with no feedback, but teaching them to outline thoughts, bounce their ideas off another person, to get reeled in a good direction. I don’t know if that’s feasible, but if it was a group effort of some sort where you could sit down and other students could respond to structure or flow and whether or not a writer has proven their point, and letting them go from there as they put the paper together. Do you guys do that? Or does that make any sense at all?”

“From the writer’s perspective, it makes them use a structured time line [to plan out/think through their response], and then from the reader’s perspective letting them critique someone else’s writing a little bit and asking, ‘Are you meeting these goals?’ It forces the reader, when they are the writer, to build on what they learned. They can reflect more as they develop the structure to then move on to style later.”

3.4.2 Profile 2: LTC Jesse Armstrong

I interviewed Lieutenant Colonel Jesse Armstrong on June 20, 2018. At the time that we spoke, LTC Armstrong was the new officer in charge of a large ROTC program hosted at a large public university. I found LTC Armstrong to be exceptionally articulate about his thoughts on teaching and writing. It turned out that he had been an English major as an undergraduate, which provided some common ground for our discussions about writing.
Our interview highlighted the holistic view of communication held by the Army, a view that is not always endorsed by the way that academic departments divide up the teaching of communication practices into classes that focus on writing, or speaking, or logic. Like all of my interviews, LTC Armstrong’s perspective and examples highlight the need for communicators that can analyze and distill information in shortened formats, just as other professions require.

Unlike other interviews, this one illustrates more clearly how principles of rhetoric can be particularly meaningful in a military environment. Partly because of his background in Rhetoric, LTC Armstrong was very aware that, even in constrained Army formats, there are several persuasive opportunities in the quality and presentation of information. He felt that this awareness had impacted his career and his leadership in positive ways, and hoped to pass that on to his students.

On how he joined the Army and became a Professor of Military Science:

“The way I was introduced to the Army was through my father…he was in Vietnam. He would tell me about ROTC and I refused to listen to him. My sophomore year at [large Western public university], I was not the most conscientious student, and all my friends had plans for the summer that included internships and things, and they were getting ready for life. And I was not in that state of mind. So I panicked. I went to the ROTC office and asked ‘Whaddya got?’ I signed up and the thing is I loved it. I fell in love with it, it changed who I was. I don’t think I became a better student, but I graduated and I did manage to meet some new standards for myself.”
“My first 10 years in the Army was very traditional, similar to what you see in movies and things. But then I diverted to the educational infrastructure of the Army, working in educating our officers one on one, but also as an administrator, making sure that the environment was conducive to their learning. The Army allows you to compete for these types of positions [being a PMS], and I competed to be here and I got it—the Army gave it to me. There’s a couple of aspects that I enjoy already. The course map I sent you is a direct pull from what my higher command establishes, and I modify that and add the kind of homework [I want to assign]. I think the academic and the application [of knowledge] is our center of gravity [in ROTC].”

**On my observation that soldiers write more than I anticipated:**

“I think you’re right. I was looking at your bio and your syllabi. You mentioned rhetoric in your description of [your] course. […] You’re right though, it is a communication-heavy profession. I hate to use the term millennial, but the younger generation is used to communicating in 140 characters or less without punctuation or correct subject-verb agreement. It’s imperative that we teach them to communicate effectively and without the superlatives that they’ve gotten used to. Adding descriptors at the end of the sentence isn’t effective, no one can really respond well to the way you write in tweets… That’s [the need for clear communicators] definitely not changing in the Army. I don’t think it’s changing in academia. The biggest benefit that professors can provide to ROTC instruction is if professors don’t allow their classes to become influenced by the prevailing winds of the culture and how we communicate. Making sure the standard of clarity is there.”
On writing objectives in Army ROTC courses:

“My objective is to meet objectives that my higher command sends me, and then the other [assignments and readings] are from my experience, that’s what I want to do.”

“I try to anchor the course in readings from the Civil War since we’re in the South and to give them some subject matter expertise. We do a staff ride focused on the Civil War, so I try to anchor the course that way. I’ve used Last Full Measure. Also used Chain of Thunder, another historical fiction, Game of Rivals…I’ve assigned that reading. I bounce these off of a recommended reading list from leadership in the Army. I’m trying it, to see how it goes. I’m thankful [the Army] allows me to do that…I’m going to see how it goes, and if I fall flat on my face, I won’t tell anybody. But if it goes well I’m going to advertise it all over the place [laugh].”

On the writing assignments that are in the Army ROTC curriculum:

“With each of those lessons there’s a recommended [writing assignment]…maybe not a writing assignment that is a traditional classroom assignment in which they have to turn something in with a page count. The Army is a little bit different, in that the more succinct your writing style and communication style, the better. So usually my writing assignments that I require are no longer than a paragraph, in a memorandum format and definitely no longer than a page. Tell me what I need to know.”

“If it’s more than a page you still need to be as succinct as possible. In the Army there is a practical application [to all communication] and the term we throw around is war-fighting; we are war-fighters, right? So the more efficiently that I can communicate to a subordinate the
better. If I can use one page and not ten, the one page is probably going to stick more effectively.
Five words as opposed to ten words, if done correctly, is going to be more impactful.”

“All that to say yes, it is an interdisciplinary [way of combining tactical training and writing] and those writing assignments are like communication assignments. I want them to be able to write as easily as they would speak, and to be able to convey what is important to the audience that they are trying to communicate with. So all the writing assignments and the learning objectives I’m trying to attain don’t just get after putting pen to paper. They get after communication in a more holistic sense.”

**On the kind of writing cadets need to be exposed to:**

“As I’ve progressed in the Army, I’ve been exposed to other leaders and commanders, and I understand what [the writing] requirements are and what I would want to see, that has informed the writing requirements I give to my lieutenants. I want to prepare them to be a second lieutenant. Which I did not have as a second lieutenant. I was given something to do… I was given an investigation to do, which had to do with some missing equipment. I was also given an operations order, and I didn’t do too well in my first go-around and I think that’s because I didn’t have a foundation. I didn’t know what to expect—I was an English major, I dealt in the sublime. And that’s not the way the Army communicates. So I wasn’t ready for that. So I want to hammer home to some of these cadets, that these assignments are not just for my reading pleasure. They have a real purpose.”
“One of the things I’m going to assign is an investigation, like the investigation I told you about, that happens all the time, and it’s a second lieutenant task to take care of these things. They need to be able to write an introductory memorandum that tells their commander, ‘Hey, here’s the summary of what’s going on.’ I want them to know how to do that.”

“They’ll be given a brief. They have to do a professional development session to other officers. I want them to be able to research and present their findings in a professional way to other officers who have about an hour to spare. If that hour is waste of [the officers’] time they won’t be happy and that will go into [the second lieutenant’s] evaluation.”

“A lot of [the writing assignments] and the things I want them to do are the kind of assignments where the effect of their communication and effectiveness of their communication won’t be apparent until four or five or six weeks down the road. A lot of it is how they implement things throughout the course and how other cadets internalize that information…the only way that I can truly evaluate how effective they are, is if they are able to get their message and intent across to the people they are trying to lead. If I can give them guidance and advice on how to get there, I’ll do that. But a grade is not [solely] based on the content, but how they conveyed that content. Whether they were confident, wrote concisely, effectively, succinctly.”

“Army writing is not hard…we have a manual for everything. There is nothing that is a secret. Even our tactics…we are a fill-in-the-blank Army, we have been doing this a long time. It’s meant to be simple. But they need to be able to do it.”
On evaluating writing:

“A lot of the grading is subjective because it’s based on how I receive it as a commander. To be consistent with what lieutenants are going in to [after they graduate]…you have to adapt to how your boss internalizes information. In a way it’s, ‘I don’t know what I want yet, but I’ll know it when I see it.’ Hopefully I can be pretty consistent.”

On group writing:

“The Army is all about a team. We never do things alone. You’ve always got a buddy. So I’m a big fan of group writing assignments.”

“They have very little guidance for how to execute [the group projects]. A lot of it is, ‘Do this as a class.’ We have a requirement to provide some instruction on how the Army works globally, across different regions, our presence in the Middle East and the Pacific. [They will ask], ‘What are those things we hear about?’ A lot of the [research and learning] is on the students: I pose what they need to research and [explain that] they need to brief and construct a map for me, and tell me how the regions are interacting. I tell them to go ahead and put their own spin on it, what do they think? So those are not just writing assignments, those also require them to speak and organize and collect their thoughts and put them together in a way that can be digested together and understood. Which goes back to communication. I feel like I’m saying ‘communication’ too much. But that’s how important that is, to what we do.”
“We are very straightforward. The Army writing style is not an academic writing style. That doesn’t mean it’s less detailed, but it’s meant to be absorbed on the first read, and a rapid reading.”

“Five years ago I was the executive officer of [a training program for Captains], and there was a requirement for some of my Captains—my battery commanders—to provide some award recommendations for some of the soldiers. The Army has a form for these awards. It’s very simple, it’s four blocks that require you to put in some statements about why this individual deserves this award. And the reward recommendations that I received—and this is systemic through the Army—you see descriptions that include the word flawless, perfection, superb, outstanding…those are all well and good but those are all subjective. They don’t provide quantitative numbers. I told them to re-do it. I don’t need Shakespeare. I need a scientist who relies on numbers and communicates that way. Tell me what it is, what he/she did, and what the result was. I don’t need you to convince me, I just need you to tell me the facts. Which I think is different from what a college writing teacher is looking for…[they might be] looking for someone to make an argument with elements of passion and some ethical standing, but in my experience I don’t need that from a second lieutenant. I need the logic. Which oftentimes is not presented as forcefully as it should be.”

“My feeling is that a lot of young officers rely on, ‘This is what I want, this is what I want you to do, I feel strongly about this, this is why it’s important to me… how I feel and why I feel.’ That’s all well and good, but tell me how does it follow [the argument/data], what are the effects, and how can you tell me about that without burying me in details?”
“The Army is a very hierarchal organization, and oftentimes there is a decision maker and the second lieutenant is often not that decision maker, they present options. So it’s very different. I can understand the cross-roads that a composition teacher might encounter with communication in the Army versus communication in the civilian world. That doesn’t mean that there shouldn’t be elements of both in instruction.”

“Like, how do you write to convince me, to make an argument [that isn’t emotional]. That’s a professional type of writing that doesn’t just exist in the Army but it also exists in the corporate world as well. So preparing students for that professional type of writing that is required and professional communication is maybe something we’re lacking. That is completely anecdotal and my opinion, I have nothing to support that [laugh]!”

“When you’re presenting a decision brief to a General, a lot of people get bogged down—and this is notorious in the Army—they get bogged down in the first slide or the first paragraph. Because the General hasn’t understood what you’re trying to tell him, or because you’re telling him too much. You might know the subject matter so well that it’s second nature [to keep explaining details] and you understand all the nuances involved in that decision. But if you can build your presentation or argument in such a way as to be digestible and concise and direct enough to achieve the outcome that you want without being too overbearing or too slanted in one direction or another, the more effective a communicator you’re going to be. That has helped me tremendously.”
On having a background in rhetoric as a soldier:

“I do appreciate the concept of the message, at all times. We don’t communicate just once when we say something. Just because we write something doesn’t mean that we’re only sending one message. We might be setting the conditions [for a situation], or reinforcing something else we have tried or some other initiative there is in the Army, or [we might reinforce] some changes or some initiatives that we would like to see, something we would like to see action on. In that way I do value my major. I’m very comfortable in the gray. Which the Army is not always, all the time. But I like it. Not everything is black or white sometimes. And I kind of like walking that line and understanding that the gray is tremendously valuable. If we dealt in a black and white world, there would be a lot of black and white decisions that might not serve the cause so well.”

3.4.3 Profile 3: LTC Gordon Parks

I interviewed Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Parks on August 24, 2018. LTC Parks was in his fourth year overseeing an Army ROTC program at a small public university.

I found LTC Parks to be unique among instructors in his sensitivity to students’ feelings of academic inadequacy, and his belief in reading as an important part of intellectual growth and personal development. He is personable and humble, and he spoke affectionately of his cadre (other instructors) and his cadets. He told me he likes to respond to civilian inquiries and started our phone conversation with, “Whatever I can do to help you, I’m yours.”

My interview with LTC Parks is telling for a few reasons: he is one of the few instructors who openly identified himself as a “writing teacher.” This seems to be largely because he takes on the role of academic advisor to his less-college-ready cadets, and he is willing to coach
students through the development of even the most basic study skills and writing skills. While most of my participants did teach writing a lot, most of them described analytical thinking skills and higher-order communication as central objectives, whereas LTC Parks seemed to have more awareness of sentence-level instruction for his students. This was partly a reflection of his student population, partly a reflection of his own writing experiences, and partly a reflection of his coursework in education.

In addition, LTC Parks is unusual for his perspective on the value of fiction for his cadets, and his emphasis on reading fiction in general as part of leadership development and academic growth. Perhaps as an extension of both of these unique pedagogical qualities of his (coaching students and liking fiction) he does tend to have students write more narrative and personal papers during their first two years in the program, than most other instructors. I discuss the objectives and purpose of these kinds of writing assignments for younger cadets in Chapter Four.

On his Army background and how he became a Professor of Military Science:

“I’ve been in the Army for 19 years. I accessed into the Army as an ordinance officer, which deals with ammunition and maintenance. I graduated with an undergraduate degree in Business, and I received my first Master’s degree in [Business].”

“In order to be a Professor of Military Science, you have to go before a Board…[...] At the time that I was trying to get the position, I was working for Army Cadet Command. They were trying to transition to make ROTC instructors more equivalent to West Point instructors. At West Point, you have to have your Master’s before you’re selected as an instructor. So you have to be credentialed before you get on one of their platforms or try to teach.”
“Cadet Command also started the Cadre Development Faculty Course, where they partner with the University of Louisville. I spent 90 days there, going to school and [starting] to earn a Master’s in higher education. I also [now] have an MA in higher education, and that was important. The classes there really helped—learning about how things work in higher education, the budgeting, diversity, doing lesson plans, ways to teach and instruct.”

“In the Army, we just train in everything. In the Army, we think, ‘Well if I can train in the Army, I can teach people to do things.’ But we aren’t necessarily educating. [Teaching in the Army] is an art and a science, where we are trying to teach leadership and train in tactics.”

**On the kind of writing that cadets need to be exposed to:**

“For the [seniors], basically writing evaluations. As an officer, you’re going to determine whether or not someone gets promoted… The writing I have my seniors do is focused on Army requirements, everything we do is in [Regulation 25-50]….it teaches you how to write memos and letters. I try to get them familiar with that [Regulation] and have them practice various kinds of memos. Because some of them haven’t been exposed to that kind of writing, I try to scaffold it quite a bit. I ask them for a simpler one first, then more complicated and so on. The final ones are the graded ones. We work on formatting with one [draft], active voice with another [draft], and so on.”

“The biggest thing is active voice. That, I have to teach [laugh].”
On whether or not he sees himself as a “writing teacher”:

“I think that for what we do [in the Army], we write a lot. Our curriculum is very flexible. Cadet Command provides the curriculum, and you can bring stuff forward or pull stuff back or move stuff out. Sometimes [the amount of writing is influenced by] the class…some of them might need more writing. That first class I had back in 2015…they had not done any writing. I had them try to write as much as possible, and try not to concern themselves with a grade as much as getting familiar with what they needed to know.”

“I think I’m an effective writing teacher. The formatting is big for me, that’s provided to them. Is it consistent, did you follow the format? The Army is very prescriptive on how to write. It’s very clear. If you used a “1,” you use a “2.” If you used an “A” then you use a “B.” Is the spacing correct? Then I’ll go over the document. How’s the active voice? Does it sound like a fourth grade level? With seniors, really it’s the formats and active voice they need to be reminded of.”

“With the freshman, we are near the [historic site] and I have them do a museum visit and write about their experience being there. For that kind of stuff, I might correct some stuff here and there, but what I’m really interested in is what they got out of the visit. I would say that I assess the seniors more than I assess the freshman.”

“The objectives for assessment are always connected to what they need to write as an officer. As we say in the Army, ‘If you can read, run, write and brief, you’ll be fine.’” [laugh]
On writing assignments he likes to use:

“Last year I taught the freshman, this year I have the seniors. When I have the freshman write, I try to have them do more reflective writing and write more about themselves. Partly to avoid plagiarism... I try to get them to write about what they’re going through. Depending on what I’m reading and what I’ve been exposed to, that will kind of shape what I want people to write. Normally I assign a book. Last year I assigned the freshman class the book over the holidays [so they could read it slower], they were assigned *The Alchemist*. [I like to have] them read and then write about what they read and how it impacted them.”

“I read a lot and I pull from a lot of military reading lists, Oprah’s reading list, Facebook, whatever is going on. Sometimes I think the book should choose the cadet. Depending on the number of people in the class, sometimes I’ll make a list of books, some military and some just related, and I have everyone pull a number out of my hat. And whichever book you got, that’s the one you read for the class.”

On what he hopes cadets get from reading *The Alchemist*:

“The biggest thing is to realize that they want to know what is on the other side, without going through the journey. [Santiago, the main character,] would never have gained everything he gained if he hadn’t gone on the journey. So stop asking me what is on the other side of the wall, and make the journey to the other side of the wall. You’re going to need all of [your own experiences] to get to where you’re supposed to be. If I tell you what is on the other side of the wall, and you don’t like it, you might not go. But if you go for yourself, you might [like it].”
“You try to stay fresh, and you try to stay current. When you see the dynamic that is going on, where a lot of these kids are just not ready to come to college…I try to take some pressure off. I say come to class, come early, I will give you instructions about when you should be taking notes, when you should be listening. Come and do your best. The classes in general will stress some of them, but my classes are smaller and I have more leeway to work with them than other professors do, given their subjects.”

“The Alchemist, that was fresh. They liked it, and I had them brief it. Some liked it less, some more. But the idea was to make it mean something for them.”

**On why some writing assignments need to incorporate reflection and self-development:**

“Especially the first year. Typically a lot of kids will drop out after the first year, even after the first semester. ROTC is a little different [from other academic programs]. We don’t keep office hours because we have so much contact time with them, through the physical training sessions. So I want them to write to me so I can get to know them a little better. Why do you want to be an officer? Why are you here? What did you think about this? The more I get to know them, the more I tailor my approach and what we’re learning.”

**On whether or not he has a favorite writing assignment:**

“No, and it’s funny because when I was scouring my syllabus to send one to you, I came across [a writing assignment] that I used to do, a letter to the family members of a future soldier they would be leading. I don’t have a favorite, but depending on what I’m reading and what I’ve
been exposed to recently, it will determine some assignments. I just gave that assignment again, and I’ve assigned it before, but I found it when I was looking back through my older stuff. I don’t have a favorite, but I look for things that are impactful.”

On what kind of writing he would teach more of:

“Whew. There’s never enough time. For example, the freshman classroom time is 50 min. The senior class is a few hours, but most seniors got some kind of class conflict, so you have to split your hours up some. But I think for the upperclassmen they could use a little more memo writing and evaluation writing. When you’re a second lieutenant in the Army, there’s a whirlwind of things being thrown at you. There’s no one there to help with writing, to remind you about active voice or the best way to do things. And if you’re not fortunate enough to be working for someone who was either an English major or just knows how to write, you might think you’re doing good writing and you’re not. My second supervisor was an English major. And my writing was murdered all the time. I took on all her writing traits and now I act like her when people work for me. It’s about how to convey your message, in a single thought. Rather than writing something, and everybody is trying to figure out what you were trying to say.”

“Military writing is really about getting from point A to point Z. It’s not about adjectives or anything. A lot of adjectives don’t really tell me anything. Writing for the Army is about being clear and concise and to the point. And so writing and sometimes rewriting helps. In the amount of classroom time we have, it can be hard to have them write it, rewrite it, write it again. There’s only so many weeks in the semester. Before you know it, the semester is over.”
On whether he uses group writing:

“No, but I always have them have others review their papers before they turn them in. I try to tell freshman to take advantage of the resources. They pay student fees and don’t take advantage of the writing center. I try to let them know that if they have a writing assignment for me I would like to see a stamp from the writing center. So that I know they had someone else look at it.”

On what composition instructors should know about military writing:

“The thing that is tough is that the writing required in English [is different from the Army]. We are more bottom line up front. If it takes more than two pages, something is wrong. You should be able to convey thoughts in less space than that. Unless it’s an information paper where they need to write more details. Like instructions about implementation of a new system or something. But to write for soldiers, is to write to the point.”

3.4.4 Profile 4: LTC Jeff Kaplan

I interviewed Lieutenant Colonel Jeff Kaplan on September 5, 2018. LTC Jeff Kaplan oversees two Army ROTC programs: one at a smaller public suburban university and its hosting program at a large urban public university. He oversees a larger staff than many of my participants, and this is reflected to some degree in his answers, which point out hierarchy and administrative responsibilities with more frequency. To put it another way, he has more to do than the average PMS (Professor of Military Science), and it was very generous of him to schedule an interview with me, which took place over the phone, while he was traveling.

LTC Kaplan’s interview typifies many interviews I had: he responds to my questions very literally, and briefly. Like many instructors I spoke with, he wants his cadets to develop
LTC Kaplan’s emphasis on Army communication was a little bit different than my other participants. He does teach Army writing genres, and the genres he favors in his classroom (the Operations Order and battle analysis) deal with analysis of texts. But whereas most of my participants spent a majority of their classroom “communication” instruction on writing or a writing/speaking combination, LTC Kaplan actually spent more time on verbal presentation. I think this was partly his own preferred communication style—he did not seem to like writing, although he was very convinced of its importance and to his students’ understanding of it—and partly a reflection of his student population, who are better prepared for college and writing.

LTC Kaplan typifies many instructors who have been teaching for more than a year in his abandonment of journaling or more narrative writing assignments. While journaling is encouraged by the Army ROTC curriculum and is recognized by instructors as a healthy tool for personal growth, most of my interviewees found it to be a distraction, and claimed that it became “repetitive” or “busywork,” as LTC Kaplan describes it. While this seems like the loss of an opportunity for cadets’ personal development, it is also simply a reality of the constraints of classroom time and the number of academic objectives that instructors have.

Additionally, LTC Kaplan shares some reservations about the differences between “military writing” and “academic writing.” This is a perspective that was shared by many instructors, but he articulates it most clearly.

On how he became a Professor of Military Science:
“The selection process for Professor of Military Science [requires that] you have a master’s degree, and you have to have a good record to get selected. There are about 270 programs across the country, and every year there is a board held to select people to take these positions. [This host university] was high on my list and I was [selected for it]. I did teach the [an Army education course] course at [an Army base] where I was an instructor and mentor for our young captains that are in an academic setting…I think the fact that I was a teacher and instructor before helped me get it.”

“[Here in our program] I teach our seniors. I’m the senior person in the department, so it’s my job and opportunity to mold them for their next step, which is to be Army officers.”

“Their last year is really an opportunity to groom them and get them ready [to be officers]. A lot of our [lesson objectives] are dictated by Cadet Command, but we focus on [how] we want to teach them. Yesterday I taught about staff operations, the way we plan an operation.”

“I also teach the philosophy [of decision making]. We like to have our officers practice the way that they make decisions. We call that ‘mission command,’ decentralizing decision making, that sort of thing. We move into some ethics and leadership. The way the Department of Defense is structured, their relationships with their soldiers, their NCOs, primarily leadership based stuff.”

On the writing assignments he uses:

“It’s really up to me [how to teach writing], I have the lessons from [Cadet Command]. The conflict that we have with writing in the Army is that there is the academic way of writing, and then there is the military way of writing. And you’ve got to find that balance between the two. So what I have them do is, in the fall they do an academic paper. It’s basically a book report
on a book that I assign them, or they can get approval of one. They write a paper about their takeaways from that specific book.”

“I’m a big fan of General Powell, his leadership book is pretty phenomenal. There’s another book called The Generals [that I’ve used]. I’m more open to allowing them to choose their own [books] now. We will get everything from technology based books about warfare to some of the classic military literature. It diversifies the class a little bit when we discuss it and I find that more interesting.”

“In the spring semester I have them do a battle analysis, which is essentially a breakdown of a battle in history. It’s a 30-minute brief and they write a paper in the active voice, in the military way. Up front, break down what happened, and then explore some main points. The lion’s share of [the assignment] is the brief itself, but in the written portion I want a brief takeaway…like we say in the Army, we write bottom line up front, these are my takeaways, and the details are part of the brief itself.”

**On the kinds of writing that cadets need to be exposed to:**

“That’s a great question. One thing we do in the Army, all the way up to the general officer level and down to the platoon leader level, is we write a lot of Opords, operations orders, and there’s a specific format for that and how they are written. From day one when they get to campus, we teach them how to write a five paragraph Op order. It’s something you can issue to a subordinate that tells them the five Ws and how to execute, and that’s something that we use all
the way up at the strategic level—those [opords at higher levels] might be more complex
documents, but the format is essentially the same.”

“That’s the most important [written format] for them to be exposed to before being in the
military. Other than that, the active voice, how to write military. How to summarize a situation
very quickly on one piece of paper, get to the point, no setting the stage, here’s the issue.”

“A lot of the time you find you need a decision very quickly from a superior. I’ve [seen]
situations at the Pentagon where you go to someone, and it’s a General walking to his next
meeting, and all you get to do is say, ‘Here you go, Sir,’ [and hand him something] and he reads
that one page and says ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ We have trouble breaking [cadets] out of that mind set of
academic [writing styles] sometimes, they want to include fluff, and we reinforce what we call
‘bottom line up front,’ because we need a decision. We do try to mold them for that [approach to
writing] and it takes a long time. I was well into my field years before [I was good at it]…I
struggled with that throughout my career because I have a tendency to go back to the academic
side of the house.”

On writing assignments that did not work well with his cadets:

“I had my first class [that I taught] do a journal and it became repetitive and not effective,
so I dropped that.”

On the kind of assignments he would like to spend more time on:
“Class discussion [about their written work] and briefing. They’ve got to get better at standing in front of people and briefing a scenario. That is by far the most valuable thing. As an Army officer you will probably do that more frequently than writing an executive summary, or writing a white paper. As a company grade officer you need to build the plan and brief it and plan the operation order.”

“Here at [the host university] the school has a great reputation, but there’s a lot of World of Warcraft kids at this school [laugh], and standing up and talking in front of people really takes them out of their comfort zone. But the more we do that the better prepared they will be.”

On what he wishes composition instructors knew about military writing:

“I would say the notion of getting to the point. I’m getting another master’s degree right now and I feel like I’m filling sheets of paper to fill them up. I know there’s an argument to be made, but there’s so much wasted space because of academic guidelines, and to me it doesn’t seem effective. I wish they would reinforce getting to the point, and using active voice. If there’s one thing, I would reinforce that.”

3.4.5 Profile 5: LTC Jon Colton

I interviewed Lieutenant Colonel Jon Colton on October 12, 2018. LTC Colton was in his second year overseeing an Army ROTC program at a small public university. His ROTC classes are smaller than average, but this allowed him extra contact time—and extra time to work on writing—with his cadets. Of all my participants, he probably laughed the most—he saw the
humor in every day situations. He used the most casual language of all my participants, and
spoke more frequently about his family than others.

He was also one of the most organized and scaffolded when it came to writing
assignments. His writing text is AR 25-50, and examples from his own military career. He had a
plan for exactly which genres to cover each semester, and a system of familiarizing students with
the format, showing them examples, and having them practice their own and read each other’s.

LTC Colton’s comments highlight the Army perspective that writing is integral to
effective leadership: his examples and stories never separate writing from other officer duties.
While he emphasizes mechanics in some of his comments, for the most part his work as a writing
teacher focuses on the ways that writing helps to develop cadets holistically to be effective
leaders. When asked about what kind of writing he would like students to do more of, he
emphasizes analytical writing that encourages leadership skills.

One of my favorite “interview moments” from this project is LTC Colton’s description of
the “magic language” of Army forms. His comments highlight the way that even formatted PDF
forms function as rhetorical tools in a busy and hierarchal environment. Furthermore, the way
that he identifies the concept with an apt and comical phrase (“magic language”) illustrates the
way that he has searched for his own phrases and methods of teaching rhetorical concepts
specific to the Army context. It is a personable and enjoyable moment in our conversation that
illustrates the way that many instructors, both in ROTC and other disciplines, practice a
pedagogy of contextualized rhetoric.

On how he joined the Army and became a Professor of Military Science:
“I took an ROTC scholarship to [a large public university], and then I commissioned as a logistics officer. That’s my Army specialty…logistics. When I had been in the Army about ten years, I applied to go teach at West Point. They sent me to get a master’s degree and then I taught business for six semesters. Then I went back to the operational Army for two years before I applied to be a Professor of Military Science. I chose [his host school] because I have family and siblings in the area. This is like home to me.”

On writing assignments for his fourth year cadets:

“The fourth year is really about transitioning from cadet to officer. So when I’m thinking about what kind of assignments to give them, my bar that I’m looking at is: What are they going to use in their first year as an Army officer? They are going to learn so rapidly during that first year, and a lot of [that first year learning] will prepare them for what comes after that…so I have taken the liberty to take the prescribed curriculum and focus on what I think they need during that first year.”

“For the seniors, it’s about that transition [from cadet to officer] but they also become instructors for the underclassmen. They develop lessons for the underclassmen during their lab periods. I do a lot of coaching and validating of their lessons. So I have two focuses: they are leading and training underclassmen cadets and I mentor that process. And then I am also trying to give them tools that they need for that transition.”
“I think writing is very relevant at this level. I tell them that they will be judged more as an officer by how you write and by how you present, by how you communicate written and orally, than by any other facet of your leadership.”

“I assign them four writing assignments and they are all things they will use in their first year. They can keep working on these items until they are perfect, and then keep them and use them [as examples] in their first year. They need to assimilate into Army culture with their assignments. These are templates that help them transition to Army culture.”

“The first [writing assignment] is a letter of recommendation. They will have opportunities to write a lot of letters of recommendation and we do this in a specific format. Everything should be written simply in the active voice. I grade on quality of content and format, but also if they are using the correct style, the Army writing style. The second thing they write is an award recommendation. These are written on a form, it’s a PDF will fillable blocks. Next is a counseling form; as a brand new lieutenant in the Army, their first job is as a platoon leader and they will have to utilize these forms frequently… The last one is a negative counseling statement; this is a negative experience and they need to document this event professionally.”

“These are the things that I think they need. I am working on what to do next semester. I’ll definitely do a letter of introduction [to their first commander]… Every officer will do these [forms and letters]. And on top of that, the Army memorandum [format] that we use for the letter of recommendation and the counseling and the awards and counseling form…not only are they going to use these in their first year, but they will use these for their entire career, constantly.”
On the language of forms:

“These are forms…as someone who has studied literature and prose you would probably cringe at the way these are written [laugh]. They are written in bulleted points that describe achievements. But they are a style all their own.”

“In the Army [there is something that] I would call ‘magic language.’ In our evaluation system we have a tremendous amount of inflation, not unlike grade inflation. So all of the language used sounds really flowery and good. I could give you several samples and you would think they all sound very positive.”

“However, there are these magic statements, this magic language that is also flowery but it means more than other language, it’s this code that we use [laugh]. It’s a secret code that says, ‘Here’s two flowery evaluation reports, but this one is the one that is clearly better.’ It is not obvious to the uninitiated which one that is. It’s very nuanced.”

“The magic phrases are somewhat universally understood. They will learn them from me…[but] it’s not static, so the magic phrases can change over time. The magic phrase that was used when I was a LT has morphed, because of senior officials and what they focus on…those phrases change over time. But I can let them know what the magic phrases are right now.”

On other kinds of writing that he would like to teach:
“Leadership case studies where they evaluate a leader’s actions through a certain event. I think that would be really useful.”

**On evaluating writing assignments:**

“You know, a lot of the assignments that are formatted, short items…I feel comfortable looking at the items and just assigning an overall grade, taking into account the content, the writing style, and the formatting as three equal categories.”

“My peers will be their senior raters, their boss’s bosses when they are in the Army. So, I try to think if I were their battalion commander, how would I be judging them as an officer. It’s less of an academic lens. It’s [more focused on] if I were your senior rater, here is the [overall] impression I would have of your work.”

**On what he wishes composition teachers knew:**

“I want [cadets] to know the basics. I want them to be able to write sound sentences. Stylizing assignments is so much easier if the fundamentals are all there. I think a lot of them don’t understand passive versus active voice. I spend a lot of time showing them examples of that. In general, I think we should all be writing more. They all have different majors and everything…my sense is that they have been given far fewer writing assignments [in all their majors] that I think they should have had at that point.”
3.5 Is the Army full of people who are just like me?

There is always more story where people and language are involved. Several of the themes and patterns that I discuss in other parts of the dissertation are evident in the profiles, and readers can see the quotes that I have used elsewhere in my writing in the context of the passage they were pulled from. My hope is that reading more of my participants’ language together encourages a sense that the themes are even deeper than I might have portrayed. As I pointed out in the beginning of this Chapter, there is more story than I can tell. Reading the words of others is privilege and I hope it gives readers the sense that there is more story.

Reading the profiles should also reveal that there are themes I did not end up exploring in the dissertation, that do turn up over and over again in interviews. The theme of officer education and the perception that Army outsiders have (or don’t have) of the educational level of ROTC instructors crops up several times. The perception of degrees and education is an interesting cultural difference between the world of military education and the world of the university. The perception that Army instructors have of English departments is a related theme, that doesn’t emerge as often but is still there.

There are several interesting qualities to note about my participants. They are very diverse people, with different backgrounds, education, and regional affiliations. All of them are men. I know for certain that my recruitment email went to several women, but only one responded briefly and didn’t follow up for an interview. All of my participants were voracious readers, and a few of them were writers. They were almost all the same rank, which is a reflection of their position as the director of their departments, and possibly their preference that I not interview newer instructors who were in their charge. They were all very articulate on email. It is possible that less articulate writers were less inclined to write a writing instructor
Several of them wanted to go into education after their Army retirement—they are career “teachers” too, as well as being career soldiers. They all cared about their students on a personal, individual level.

It would be tempting after doing this project for me to feel like, “The Army is full of people who are just like me!” Many writers, including Joseph Maxwell, John Cresswell, and Robert K. Yin, have written about the ways that researchers tend to attract participants like themselves. I cannot really discount that likelihood in this project, although I can qualify it.

I used email to recruit participants, and so my language and my presentation of my goals was critical to eliciting a response. My email would likely draw people who are enthusiastic about contact with other disciplines and desirous of discussing teaching and writing. Once I was on the phone with a participant, the degree of rapport that we had would certainly vary. Better rapport generally produced a more verbose, enjoyable, and usable transcript. The five interviews that I chose to use here in this Chapter, were interviews where I had better rapport with my participant.

This self-selective aspect of my participant pool is explained in large part by the fact that I was recruiting from a pool of Army officers who had already been through a selection process in order to get their position as an ROTC instructor. The position of PMS is not an easy one to secure in the Army. Many of my participants describe this very selective process in the profiles. Their records as effective instructors in other capacities are evaluated, as well as their formal education and the educational opportunities they have taken advantage of in the Army.

An officer at the Army’s Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis explained to me that ROTC instructors are selected in part because they are personable and like to work with outsiders. They will have to work on a college campus with outsiders all the time, so naturally
the Army is looking to place people in those positions who are more relational and interested in others, as well as being good teachers with a demonstrated history of effective communication skills. My participants’ descriptions of themselves supported this description of what the Army is looking for in an instructor: “I try to get out and meet people outside of my program,” commented LTC Rubin, and several of my participants told me they had always had an affinity for teaching and felt drawn to the profession.

In summary, the pool of Army ROTC instructors has a disproportionate number of people quite like myself. However, the Army is not full of ROTC instructors.

3.6 Transition

Ideally, these profiles enable a reader to contextualize my arguments from Chapter Two, and to see the ways that my description of Army writing pedagogy was rooted in a number of deeply situated perspectives. This contextualization hopefully aids in the development of an empathetic view as well, leading to an understanding of pedagogy as involving real people and real students, in real writing situations. This will have been achieved if a reading of my participants’ words contributes to a sense that the research question was meaningful, and that my exploratory foray into the world of Army ROTC did bring readers closer to other teachers. The patterns that I identified in Chapter Two should seem more complex when viewed in the contextualized language of the instructors, and hopefully the work that my participants do seems richer and their relationship with writing seems more compelling.

To further contextualize my participants’ comments about writing assignments and the kind of writing that is valued in the Army, it is helpful to consider two items that were mentioned repeatedly by my participants: Army Regulation 25-50, and the list of recommended writing assignments that is part of the Army ROTC curriculum.
4 CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION OF CLASSROOM MATERIALS

4.1 Curricular context and caveats.

This chapter offers a brief discussion and analysis of Appendixes B and C. Appendix B is pages 1-6 of Army Regulation 25-50, the Army’s handbook on how to write correspondence, and Appendix C is a course-by-course list of recommended writing assignments that Cadet Command provides to ROTC instructors. These items help to provide context and grounding for my interview data and for my description of Army ROTC writing pedagogy. They enabled me as a researcher to understand how my participants thought of “Army writing” and what they meant when they talked about the writing their students would do in an Army work environment.

There are a few caveats and some context required for these items. I have selected material that is helpful for providing context to my interview profiles and that illustrates or problematizes patterns and themes I discuss in Chapters Two and Three. In my view, these materials open a door to those of us on the “outside” and provide a view of what fellow instructors in a completely different context and content area are doing. However, there is a danger that they may provide a false sense that we understand what is going on in an ROTC classroom. While my project is ethnographic in nature and seeks to understand ROTC instructors and the writing practices and needs of the ROTC classroom, it is limited to writing, which does not represent “what ROTC instructors do” overall or “what ROTC programs want for students” overall. At the same time, all of my participants wanted their students to have as much writing exposure as possible. “Opening the door” by trying to gain some understanding and perspective of the writing that ROTC does is a first step for outsiders, but the view is only a partial view of the overall educational aims of ROTC.
As a teacher-scholar, I value an informed understanding of what kind of writing other programs do, especially if we are sharing students. ROTC students take the writing classes at their universities, and therefore we share students. I pay attention to what engineers do because I have students that want to be engineers, and I pay attention to what nurses do because I have students that want to be nurses. The scholarship of teaching starts with asking questions about what other teachers do (Boyer). As a writing teacher, I have the privilege of teaching a subject that touches all content areas, to borrow Charles Bazerman’s phrase. Necessarily then, teaching scholarship for writing teachers involves cracking doors to worlds that we will never be part of. We have the privilege of opening the door, but we are never really in the room with other instructors.

Besides the limits of what we can know about another content area from a few of their materials, there are additional limits on what we can presume to know about the Army from the outside. The Army is a lifestyle and set of experiences that I can never know or relate to. When I have interviewed people or spoken with Cadet Command regarding their curricular structure, I am dealing with an Army command structure that is complex, hierarchical and bureaucratic in nature. Things change frequently, people change positions, and different staffs interact with each other in ways that an outside observer can’t necessarily gather or appreciate. For an outside researcher, there will always be so much more that I don’t know, than things that I do know. I would never say that I “understand” or “get” the Army.

However, writing instruction can be a “touch-point” between myself and the world of the Army. I started this project because I am convinced—and still am—that getting to know other instructor groups and their writing needs, writing habits, and pedagogical impulses is healthy, valuable and informative for writing teachers. It can only benefit students, and it helps teachers
like myself continue to grow and look outside of our selves. The influential education theorist William Perry argued that students were a “common purpose” that could and should connect instructor groups. To my way of thinking, writing is the ideal field in which to practice much of this interdisciplinary connection and enjoy the benefits of a common purpose.

For some background on where this material is coming from, Army ROTC is overseen by the U.S. Army Cadet Command. Cadet Command’s main headquarters are at Fort Knox in Kentucky, although they do have regional offices in other parts of the country. Georgia has a sizable ROTC presence, as discussed in Chapter One.

There is a centralized Army ROTC curriculum, developed by Cadet Command. The Military Science curriculum for undergraduates covers eight courses, two per college year. Over eight courses, there are over 250 lesson plans offered, with lesson objectives and suggestions for instructor delivery (Smith). Out of this corpus of curricular suggestions, there is a set of writing assignments suggested for each course. Appendix C is a copy of the suggested writing assignments, exactly as Army Cadet Command provided them to me. The entire Army ROTC curriculum is available to instructors via Army’s Blackboard, which is often referred to in course syllabi. The Blackboard material is not available to outsiders. It was very gracious of Cadet Command to provide a list of the recommended writing assignments to me. I do not think it is the norm for any part of the curriculum to be seen by outsiders, but I was fortunate to encounter people who believed in Perry’s common purpose, and they were willing to help me engage with “our” students more effectively by providing this information.

4.2 AR 25-50: “We have a manual for everything.”

The importance of Army Regulation 25-50 (AR 25-50) cannot be overstated. In many ROTC courses, this functions as the writing textbook. This is especially true in fourth year courses,
where students are about to graduate and start their service, and instructors want to acquaint
student with forms that they will be filling out at work, within the next few months.

I did not have a single interview with anyone connected to the Army and education who did
not mention this regulation. It is fundamental to curricular choices made in the area of writing.
At least four times when I asked an instructor about their “course materials related to writing,”
they sent me a copy of this regulation: when they work on writing in their course, this is what
they use.

The title of AR 25-50 is “Preparing and Managing Correspondence,” and it is published by
the Department of the Army in Washington, D.C. AR 25-50 became effective in 2013, and was
updated in 2015. There are 99 pages, divided into eight chapters, titled:

1. Preparing Correspondence
2. Preparing Memorandums
3. Preparing Letters
4. Listing Enclosures, Placing Tabs, and Assembling Correspondence
5. Processing Correspondence and Official Mail
6. Preparing Authority Lines, Signatures, and Signature Blocks
7. Using Prescribed Forms and Labels
8. Marking Classified Correspondence

There are over 100 appendixes, tables, and figures to illustrate the chapters for the soldiers
who use the regulation.

On page one of AR 25-50 is a statement of purpose and objectives. The stated purpose is
that it “prescribes Department of the Army (DA) policies, procedures, and standard formats for
preparing and processing Army correspondence.” The three objectives for the regulation are to
“provide clear instructions for preparing correspondence,” to “reduce the cost of preparing correspondence,” and to “standardize the preparation and dissemination of correspondence.”

The emphasis on correspondence underscores the degree to which written communication is essential for Army operations. The regulation is primarily concerned with structure and with clarity gained through consistent use of proper formatting, grammar and genre-specific formatting such as font size, labelling text, bulleting/numbering properly, etc. Writing that is good quality is defined in AR 25-50 as “clear, concise, and effective” so that it enables the reader “to understand the writer’s ideas in a single reading” (2).

An important note about this regulation is that it is intended to be “as complete as possible to avoid issuing additional instructions”; however, “command publications issued to augment this regulation will be restricted to instructions that are unique to the issuing command” (1). This is an important restriction that seems to come into play for Army writers more often than not: while AR 25-50 is used in their ROTC classes and is offered as the primary set of guidelines for how to write correspondence, ultimately the determination of how they should write has to be flexible, since they may be given a command where variations on correspondence are required. In addition, what makes something “well written” might change. After graduation, cadets will be sent to any number of commands and overseen by officers who have their own opinions about what makes correspondence effective, and soldiers will have to adjust to their commanding officers’ preferences. This kind of axiological paradox exists in every work context I have ever encountered, and I found it intriguing that it persists even in an Army that “has a manual for everything,” as LTC Armstrong asserts, and where every effort has been made to simplify writing.
Another important observation about the regulation is that instructors often choose to rely on AR 25-50 instead of, or more than, the recommended writing assignments in the Cadet Command-provided curriculum. This is partly because their personal experience has taught them that managing correspondence well in the Army is the primary writing skill their cadets need in order to be immediately successful, and partly because they are not necessarily trained in methods for teaching writing. Using AR 25-50 and teaching how to fill out important forms is not only practical, but is easier than creating and grading an essay assignment, a task that even some trained writing teachers find challenging. To the mind of many instructors, given limited class time and their desire to help their students succeed, the longer writing assignments mentioned in the ROTC curriculum get short shrift. It’s AR 25-50 that they rely on and use.

“Army writing” as understood by AR 25-50 is boring. As one instructor promised me when he gave me his copy of AR 25-50 (even though I already had several), “this stuff will bore you out of your skull.” While there is an implicit recognition of certain rhetorical principles, such as paying attention to audience, being concise and clear, articulating a main point somewhere in the written document (preferably at the beginning), and considering the logic of any information that is introduced, there is not consideration given to process, and the sheer mass of written communication that occurs in the Army insures that cadets aren’t anticipating that their letters should or need to be crafted documents. Recommendations for other soldiers to receive awards or promotions are not necessarily discussed as highly personalized items that a writer needs to give careful thought to, the way that we think of recommendation letters in the academic world. When a student asks me for a letter of recommendation, I often return to their written work they have done in my classroom and cite important moments in their writing as a way of grounding my description of their personal qualities and their unique gifts. To look at AR 25-50 though is to
see that the Army does not approach most tasks that way. Even though such a perspective on writing would naturally produce some better-written forms, the fact that most correspondence is done via forms encourages younger writers to think of their professional writing as “only” filling out forms, and probably makes it a challenge for them to see rhetorical possibilities in the formats.

Furthermore, the Army’s reliance on AR 25-50 is so total that ROTC instructors assure me that after a few years of being in the Army and using the regulation to do all of their writing, soldiers generally have trouble doing any other kind of writing. “Eventually, we only know how to write in static bullet points,” said one instructor.

Theoretically, the Army’s reliance on a manual like AR 25-50 should strip creativity and even critical thinking out of writing instruction. Seemingly, it should have a negative (or what I would consider negative) impact on pedagogy: Instructors who know that this is the primary kind of writing their students will do in the Army have no impetus to assign longer or more complex pieces of writing to their students. It creates extra work for them and doesn’t benefit their cadets, who are already trying to balance classes and Army preparation. One of the inspiring qualities of many of my participants was their personal commitment to insure that their cadets would succeed in the Army. Class time is spent on writing that will help their students stand out to commanding officers as effective soldiers, because instructors want to prepare their students for success in the Army.

In reality, the degree to which the instructor’s use of AR 25-50 stripped their writing pedagogy of anything other than boring students “out of their skull” was related to how the instructor understood the “social action” of Army genres. LTC Colton’s description of “magic language” in evaluations is an illustration of the way that Army writers can exercise agency and
action within forms, as is LTC Armstrong’s description of the way that crafted presentation can elicit agreement from superior officers: “…if you can build your presentation or argument in such a way as to be digestible and concise and direct enough to achieve the outcome that you want without being too overbearing or too slanted in one direction or another, the more effective a communicator you’re going to be.” The “effective communicator” in this context, is one that communicates their viewpoint in such a clear and concise way that the audience understands it to be “correct.”

To look at AR 25-50 is to look at Army writing without the context that makes it rhetorically interesting. Whether or not soldiers see the rhetorical possibilities in their context when they practice writing, is a different issue. My instructors hoped to give students a view “ahead” to their work context where the boring instructions of AR 25-50 might have some value, might have some personal significance, and might even have professional power. Giving students this view is difficult, as anyone who has ever taught any “work place” genre to students knows. My participants often tried to do this through their stories, by contextualizing Army writing exigencies within the relationships that were meaningfully connected to that writing experience.

Participants who described the genres of 25-50 with stories, also described their moments as writing teachers in ways that were rhetorically complex, sometimes even intense. LTC Colton described the writing of evaluations as a moment for students to consider the “leadership challenges” that will surface in their Army relationships. To give me an example, he described a situation that he said most 2nd lieutenants will face, where they will be asked to evaluate an enlisted officer who is their subordinate, but has a great deal more experience than they have. “How do you manage this relationship without coming across as pompous and not appreciative
of this person’s experience, but also not being dismissive of your own authority and responsibility to provide guidance?” he asked, and described the way he walks cadets through the potential impact that different words may have on that relationship. By drawing on experience, instructors are able to help students understand that genres have some power for situated “action” that is not readily apparent to either inexperienced students or to Army outsiders, like myself.

Interestingly, LTC Colton told me that story as an illustration of what made an Army genre more complex than it appeared. It was an effective illustration. But to me, the real impact of that story is the way that his real experience transformed his pedagogy. A writing lesson about how to fill out an evaluation form became an exercise in critical thinking, intrapersonal values and personal relationships.

4.3 Writing assignments recommended for each Army ROTC course.

The list of recommended writing assignments is an eight-page document with tables that list ideas and recommendations for writing assignments to be integrated into eight Military Science courses, two courses for each year of undergraduate study: 101, 102, 201, 202, 301, 302, 401, 402. All of the assignments are suggestions: Instructors are not obligated to use them, and have a great deal of latitude for which assignments they utilize and just how they use them.

Given the number of suggested assignments on the Cadet Command curriculum, it should be assumed that the curriculum tries to provide more suggestions than a course would realistically implement, thus giving their instructors options for the types of writing they use and for which lessons they incorporate writing into.

Roughly speaking, there are two categories of writing assigned across the four-year curriculum: tactical writing, and reflective writing. Tactical writing is more technical in nature,
and includes Operations Orders, Army forms and structured Army genres, including evaluations, memos and directives for those under an officer’s command. Reflective writing tends to be focused on personal development, growth and learning, and includes journal responses, essays based on material from the journals, and most assignments related to leadership. The first two years are dominated by reflective writing, and the second two years are dominated by tactical, technical writing.

It is interesting to note that the ROTC curriculum assumes very reasonable to high competence in writing on the part of the students. There is an assumption that the writing courses required by university programs are adequately preparing students for a variety of writing tasks. In the Army writing curriculum, there is no instruction in writing skills per se, but the amount of writing and the diversity of writing assignment types, assumes that cadets have learned to write in an organized and rhetorically acceptable fashion somewhere else. ROTC instructors are fine-tuning their students for Army writing, particularly Army genres, but are not teaching composition techniques or concepts. The level of rhetorical finesse that instructors hope for their students to develop over their four years of college assumes that students’ writing skills, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills continue to develop fairly rapidly throughout college.

While the instructors I interviewed often commented that there wasn’t much writing in the first year course, there is actually quite a bit of reflective writing. Instructors are encouraged to have students write about what they have learned in a journal, requiring one paragraph of 3-5 sentences after each lesson, that comment on the class content and/or respond to a prompt. Instructors at several of the programs I encountered told me that the instructors of the first year courses were using the journal with their first-year cadets. After the first year, journaling is suggested in the curriculum but the instructors I met didn’t typically assign it.
The use of the reflective journal in the first year instead of research papers or longer essays is a curricular move that connects well with the stage that students are at when they take the first year courses. Students are able to take the first year of Military Science (and usually the second year as well) without having made a commitment to the Army. They are younger, and they are usually first year college students, as well. Journaling is a lower-stakes way of inviting students to interact with ideas via text, a practice that has long been understood to aid learning by encouraging memory and application. This is the one year in the Army ROTC curriculum where writing assignments are positioned mainly as a “mode of learning,” when students are gathering their initial impressions about what it would mean to be a soldier (Emig). That does not mean that the learning value of writing in other years is undercut; it just means that this is the only year where a significant amount of the suggested writing is writer-centered.

The fact that instructors often commented that “there isn’t much writing” in first year ROTC courses highlights again differing ideas about what constitutes writing. Journaling is not considered “writing” by many instructors (military and non-military) in certain senses: it’s personal and reflective, it’s not necessarily revised or organized to make a point, it doesn’t have to offer critical analysis (although hopefully it would) and fundamentally it doesn’t have to have any academic merit or follow academic genre conventions. It is understandable to me that instructors would say that this isn’t “writing” in the academic sense; it reflects their conception of writing as communication, as I discussed in Chapter Two. It seemed that what constituted a true “writing assignment” to military instructors was writing that analyzed something (a battle analysis or analysis of a leadership style) or an assignment that integrated analysis into an Army-specific format (an Operations Order, an evaluation, etc.). But it is an important insight for outside writers to note that, while instructors and cadets might say they “aren’t writing” in a
course, in reality they may actually be writing a fair amount, but it’s simply journaling and not polished essays or researched material.

Only one of my participants used journaling continuously with students, and that was LTC Parks. His reason for using it was interpersonal: Regarding his first year cadets, he said, “So I want them to write to me so I can get to know them a little better. Why do you want to be an officer? Why are you here? What did you think about this? The more I get to know them, the more I tailor my approach and what we’re learning.” By relying on writing assignments that were writer-centered, LTC Parks felt he was able to tailor the rest of his pedagogy to his students’ needs, including whether they needed more or less writing instruction. Even though he emphasized that all students need to write more, when it came to the different ROTC classes he had seen come through his program, LTC Parks said, “…some of them might need more writing. That first class I had back in 2015…they had not done any writing. I had them try to write as much as possible, and try not to concern themselves with a grade as much as getting familiar with what they needed to know.” This was one of the few times that I heard an instructor refer to writing as primarily useful for familiarizing students with new knowledge.

At the same time, the use of a journal and LTC Parks’ emphasis on getting to know his cadets and encouraging them to think critically about “what it means” to be an officer emphasizes the significance of roles in the Army, and recalls the concept of the “community of practice.” In a CoP, roles are important to the stewardship of knowledge and to an invested apprentice’s growth and development of knowledge. Part of LTC Park’s attraction to journaling may be that it is a helpful tool for identity formation; it allows students to think critically about their roles and about transition to a new one. Clarification of roles (“master practitioner,” or “apprentice”) is an important feature of a thriving community of practice, even if the terms
“practitioner” or “apprentice” are never used. The concept means that expertise in a defined area is understood as valuable and desirable, and community members are invested in developing that knowledge, stewarding it, and passing it on. While the more tactical writing assignments might insure that a certain amount of procedural and propositional knowledge is held by the apprentice, LTC Parks seems to be very interested in writing that encourages apprentices to evaluate their investment in the community. That does not mean that other instructors were not interested in this kind of writing or writing that served that purpose; but LTC Parks was an outlier in his articulation of those values. He seemed to emphasize the underlying intellectual and emotional commitments that students must make in order to learn effectively, and the design of the first-year writing assignments were a good fit for this emphasis.

The second year for cadets sees a dramatic increase in suggested writing, with an emphasis on leadership development. The reflective journal is still encouraged, but there is a short paper suggested for each lesson. With nine lessons listed, in a traditional 16-week semester, that would be a short paper submitted every 1.5-2 weeks. None of the papers are very long: they are anywhere from a few paragraphs, to the longest one, which is a single 4-page paper. There are specific prompts for each paper to encourage the student to apply the lesson material in a way that is both personal and practical, ideals that make sense for leadership lessons. The students are introduced to writing Operations Orders, and students write these items collaboratively, a theme that I discussed in Chapter Two. The second half of the second year (202), the writing assignments drop back off. The reflective journal is still recommended, and a reading paper and semester journal essay are recommended.

The emphasis on leadership development coincides with students’ development in other areas. Students still have not necessarily committed to the Army. The leadership content is
highly applicable to other fields, even when the leaders being studied are military leaders; the content emphasizes different leadership styles, and while paper prompts emphasize Army contexts, fundamentally the student is being asked to assess different styles and consider what kind of leader they want to be. The prompts are a mixture of textual analysis and personal evaluation.

The writing assignments recommended for the third year have a different tone to them: there is an emphasis on demonstration of procedural knowledge, and a movement away from reflective writing toward research and using writing to demonstrate that cadets understand Army concepts. This probably reflects the fact that by this time in the program, the cadets in the course have committed to the Army. Writing focuses on analysis of concepts utilized in Army operations, analysis of past military conflict and what the student thinks the Army can learn from historical moments, and how to use forms for peer leadership evaluation. There is still an emphasis on leadership, with a book review recommended and a short paper on the concept of motivation for soldiers.

An interesting assignment in the third year shows up in 301: it is the first time that the writing curriculum describes a writing assignment in a way that overtly connects the students’ performance as a writer to leadership potential. Students are supposed to write a leadership self-assessment that identifies their strengths and weaknesses based on course content, and the assignment “will identify the Cadets writing skills and how well they articulate thoughts into the written evaluations,” in preparation for completing future evaluations. This is the first time that it is evident from the wording of the writing curriculum that the ability to translate thought into an evaluative statement is an important leadership skill. In all likelihood, it’s not the first time that
cadets have encountered the notion that their writing is important to their leadership. But it is the first time an outsider can see it for themselves, in looking at the curriculum.

The **fourth year** has the most writing suggested for assignments. In the 401 curriculum, there are 11 separate lessons listed, and every one of them has a short paper, with an average length of two pages. In a 16-week semester, that would almost be one paper per week. I did not find any programs that require that kind of writing of their fourth year cadets. The second half of the fourth year (402) has half as much writing: five short papers are suggested, and there are additional guidelines for a final paper, if the instructor wants.

For the fourth year, there is an interesting conflict between the content emphasized in the suggested writing assignments and the writing assignments that my participants described themselves actually assigning to their students. The papers in the writing curriculum ask students to demonstrate that they understand a variety of Army concepts, from the military decision making process, to civil/military relations, to further leadership assessment. The content for the fourth year seems to be extremely varied and to emphasize knowledge that students will need right away as new officers.

My participants tended to emphasize writing genres that they felt students would need right away as officers, and for fourth year students it tended to be genres from AR 25-50. Several of them mentioned topics they had taught that week, and they did mention content like military decision making. But when it came to the writing assignments they were working on with their students, most of them took LTC Kaplan’s view, that, “Their last year is really an opportunity to groom them and get them ready” to be officers, and so they focused on writing that would help them be officers. LTC Colton was equally pragmatic about his goals with his fourth year students, and clearly articulated the way that it impacted his writing pedagogy: “I assign them
four writing assignments and they are all things they will use in their first year” as new officers, he explained. Their assignments are meant to be models that they can take with them to their first command: “They can keep working on these items until they are perfect, and then keep them and use them [as examples] in their first year. They need to assimilate into Army culture with their assignments. These are templates that help them transition to Army culture.”

The papers that were least implemented by my participants are the assignments that gravitate heavily toward “academic” genres, and not Army genres. Written genres reify values, and by the time that instructors see themselves as actively preparing their students to be officers, traditional academic writing is no longer pedagogically valuable. Army genres that act to help students “transition to Army culture” are much more helpful, and so my participants tended to abandon the writing part of the curriculum for AR 25-50.

4.4 The science of being a soldier, the art of being a soldier.

The writing curriculum reveals a pedagogical challenge that Army ROTC appears to deal with. The instructors—and ROTC’s program design, to judge from the Appendixes discussed here—are constantly trying to navigate between teaching the “science” of soldiering and the “art” of soldiering. Thinking about this distinction has been important for my own understanding of the pedagogical complexity of Army writing education.

One of my participants, LTC Parks, made the interesting comment that teaching in the Army “is an art and a science, where we are trying to teach leadership and train in tactics.” One of the many challenges of this, he identified, is that in the Army, “we just train in everything…but we aren’t necessarily educating.” This comment identifies the way that Army ROTC instructors are trying to simultaneously teach tactical and technical information while helping their students develop as leaders, which means intrapersonal growth and the
development of interpersonal skills. Instructors are supposed to teach the science of being a soldier (train them in tactical knowledge), and the art of being a soldier (grow them as effective leaders). That is a unique pedagogical challenge.

The writing curriculum seems to illustrate this art/science conflict. AR 25-50 is highly technical and prescriptive, while the writing curriculum tries to incorporate a variety of assignment types. I pointed out that the writing assignments often seem to fall into two categories: tactical, and reflective. Much of the content is tactical, and technical Army genres show up in the curriculum, but overall, the writing curriculum favors writing assignments that have been developed with an objective of developing logic, written expression, rhetorical awareness. These are all skills broadly associated with the critical thinking inculcated by the humanities and the “liberal arts,” a concept that grows out of the medieval trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Even technical fields try to incorporate assignments and writing assignments from the non-technical fields of study (the “liberal arts”) that have traditionally been valued as avenues to the development of critical thinking, and the ability to make both distinctions and connections between “sciences” and “arts.”

This “liberal arts” leaning of the Army ROTC curriculum conforms to the observations that military historian Michael S. Neiberg has made about the educational aims of ROTC programs. Originally the curricula were comprised of military drills and memorization, the technical knowledge necessary to be a soldier. Neiberg traces the historical re-development of ROTC programs as they tried to integrate “the arts” into their curricula, in an effort to be considered worthy of “academic merit.” The re-structuring of their curriculum was meant to result in the development of programs that were “appropriate” for universities and colleges that
valued the liberal arts and the production of well-rounded military officers, particularly in the late 1970s (185-188).

The writing curriculum that is currently in place certainly reflects that history. Overall the conceptual framework of the writing has a qualitative emphasis, punctuated by formulaic Army genres like the Operations Order. Even the formulaic genres though, are underpinned by qualitative values: for example, an effectively written Operations Order includes a statement or description of enemy and civilian relationships. Written work usually focuses on concepts, not on regurgitation of duties or demonstration of rote memorization.

The present model of Army ROTC writing assignments tries to strike a balance between the science of being a soldier and the art of being a soldier. Instructors try their hardest to bring the art of their stories to the science of filling out forms. But the constraints of classroom time and demands on individuals’ schedules, along with the instant escalation of a 2nd lieutenant’s professional responsibilities when s/he graduates, makes it very difficult to fit everything in. Instructors can find themselves forced to make difficult choices, and to sacrifice either some part of the tactical science of soldiering, or the art of leadership and intrapersonal reflection.

4.5 Transition

AR 25-50 and the Army ROTC list of writing assignments contextualizes my interview data. They enable outsiders to “see” the ways that Army writing genres are prescribed and even mechanized, and to understand why instructors describe familiarizing students with the manual and Army genres as one of their classroom objectives and as a way to assimilate to Army culture. They also illustrate complementary and sometimes competing aims of an Army ROTC classroom, where both tactical training and leadership development are high priorities. They help to deepen our understanding of Army instructor writing pedagogy as situated in a complex
matrix of pedagogical concerns, most of which are connected to writing and communication. Army instructors teach writing in ways that recognize the rhetorical action of Army genres and their pedagogy attempts to empower their students with an understanding of how to use genres effectively.

Taken together, this discussion of AR 25-50 and the Army ROTC writing curriculum, along with my interview data and my description of Army ROTC writing pedagogy, can be presented as an “interpretive window” (to use Geertz’s term) into the “rhetorical world” (to use Berlin’s term) of Army ROTC writing pedagogy. My data presents a compelling and intriguing peek at ROTC instructor writing pedagogy, that is consequential in many ways for our field. My discussion in Chapter Five highlights the ways that my research underscores the value of what composition instructors do, and the importance of qualitative work that keeps our field (and our own pedagogy) “externally oriented” (Hauser).

5 CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Giving value to this chapter…and to the whole project.

In order to reflect effectively on a project and its meaning, a researcher has to give some thought to the personal values that guide the study and guide their research in general. It is those values that we use to determine what the “strengths” of a study were, or what its “limitations” were and what the overall value of the project is.

Joseph Maxwell describes qualitative research as an “interactive” model, whose strengths “derive primarily from its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers” (14, 22). The strengths of qualitative research (or anything, for that matter) can also function as weaknesses. Inductive conclusions are not
deductive, they are not “scientistic” in the sense that they are not necessarily replicable, especially when they are drawn from specific situations involving people, who can change their mind with their mood. Furthermore, the emphasis on words means that much of what counts as evidence is flexible, in how the participant intended something to be understood, in how the researcher understands it, how the researcher chooses to describe it.

I have suffered all of the same self-doubt and doubt about qualitative research that anyone else might have. I question the value of the things that I do, their relevance, their capacity to be meaningful or to change others, their intellectual contribution. I go through periods of doubt, but I always come back to three central, articulable values that motivate me back toward teaching, students, and my research questions.

-I value people’s stories, because they reveal that people are singular and important, unique and situated. I value people, and I value their words

-I value being connected to other people who value words, stories, and relationships. I like teaching because I found that it placed me in a community with a preponderance of other word-valuing people.

-I value questions: I think it is important to ask questions about meaning, about others, about experiences. I do not like to feel that I am content with my own answers, and I like to be challenged by people who make meaning very differently from myself.

I am drawn to qualitative work and interviewing in particular because it supports and even encourages these personal values. Like other researchers I admire, from Seidman to Geertz to Hunt, I feel privileged when I listen to other people, and I find that the stories of others provide endless challenges to our notions of meaning. Like education researchers I admire, from William Perry to Sheridan Blau, I think that good teaching means thinking reflectively and
questioning ourselves and what we do. Keeping these values central gives my work direction and purpose, and provides the reasoning that directs my curiosity and quest to understand others. It also places me in a community of people I admire, from other teachers and writers to my participants.

When I look back at my story of conceptualizing the study in Chapter One, I see that these are the values that motivated my process of coming to my research questions and formulating the idea for the study in the first place. Throughout the study and the writing of this project, they are the values that I relied on when making choices about what to present and how to present it. They are also the values that ground the way I personally evaluate the degree to which the study was a success. I wanted to learn the stories of an instructor group that was different from myself, and connect their stories to the larger fields of writing studies and composition theory. I wanted to feel connected into a larger community of teachers, and I wanted to connect them to my community of composition instructors. I wanted to ask worthwhile questions about what writing means to instructors and students in a context different from my own. I wanted the questions and answers to challenge my own sense of what writing was and what the teaching of writing meant.

In many ways, this project was a personal journey for me. I grew in my confidence that qualitative, interdisciplinary work matters to the field of writing, that outside perspectives are important to developing our field’s relevance and ability to make an impact for students, and in my personal confidence that I can make a unique contribution to our field, as a researcher, a writer, and a writing teacher.

When I asked LTC Parks what he hoped his cadets got out of reading *The Alchemist*, he responded:
The biggest thing is to realize that they want to know what is on the other side, without going through the journey. [Santiago, the main character,] would never have gained everything he gained if he hadn't gone on the journey. So stop asking me what is on the other side of the wall, and make the journey to the other side of the wall. You’re going to need all of [your own experiences] to get to where you’re supposed to be. If I tell you what is on the other side of the wall, and you don’t like it, you might not go. But if you go for yourself, you might [like it].

Throughout my graduate work (and even before), I have admired the work of researchers who wanted to “know what is on the other side,” and were willing to take the journey and see for themselves. I wondered several times if I could do it, too. An important insight in LTC Parks’ comment above is that Santiago needed his own perspectives and history with him on the journey, in order to determine what it would mean. Another person cannot tell you what a journey will mean for you, because they are traveling with a different set of experiences. LTC Parks was relating Santiago’s journey to the journey of military service, but the same principles are at work in a variety of experiential “journeys” that we take in life. Throughout the journey of doing my research (and really, throughout the journey of my entire graduate education) the values that have guided me and helped me over the walls were the qualitative ones, the values that simply argue for the intrinsic value of human beings: stories are important, words create meaning, being connected to others is how you make both knowledge and community, and asking questions is the way to grow a disciplinary field and to serve our students and communities. Concentrating on these has always encouraged me to feel that what I was doing was meaningful and that, like Santiago, I was traveling to where I was “supposed to be.”
5.2 Strengths are limitations, too.

My project was exploratory in nature, and so it only scratched the surface of potential research questions that could be asked in regards to military education and writing. One of the strengths of my project is that it is the first one to try to connect with Army ROTC instructors, but that also gives rise to one of its limitations: as a first, exploratory study, I was not able to dive as deep as I might have liked into some of the discoveries that I made.

A distinct limitation of my methods was that there were not follow-up opportunities. I don’t think that my participants generally would have had time for follow ups, and it wasn’t necessary in order to meet my research goals. But with each conversation I had, as I played it over in my mind or transcribed parts of it, follow up questions would occur to me.

Several times I have been asked what I think about trying to work with the Army, as an outsider. The fact that I am an Army outsider was both a strength and a limitation of my study. Trying to understand an instructor group whose professional background and entry to teaching was completely different from my own, was personally rewarding. I felt constantly challenged, I constantly got to meet people different from myself, and I had the opportunity with every interview to think about writing pedagogy in a new way. In addition, the content that my participants taught was completely foreign to me, and I had to learn everything from what an Operations Order was, to how to spell “lieutenant colonel” correctly. I read books and journals that were entirely new to me, learned a little bit about war theory, and even read papers that friends of mine had written while working on graduate degrees in military programs. I never felt bored with this project, from the time that I first described it to Dr. Holmes, to writing this last chapter.
At the same time, my outsider status certainly limited my access to people, and made it difficult for Army instructors to understand why I would be curious about them. Some of them were suspicious of my motives, although I was usually able to overcome that initial suspicion once they realized that I wasn’t trying to exploit their students. One officer working in Cadet Command told me that a researcher had contacted him and asked to do a study with the cadets at summer camp in Knoxville. When the officer asked why the researcher wanted to use cadets as opposed to some other student group, the researcher said, “Because they have to do what they’re told.” Stories like this make it easy to see why Army instructors might be wary of outsiders. Any decent educator would be concerned about people who want to exploit unequal power dynamics between themselves and students. Once instructors realized that I wasn’t trying to talk to or about students, things were usually much more open. Furthermore, once it was clear that I wanted to hear what they thought about writing and what writing assignments they enjoyed teaching, it became clear that these are questions that they had not been asked before, certainly not by a writing instructor. Several of my participants were excited to be asked questions by a writing teacher.

5.3 Summary of discoveries.

The goal of my research was to discover what kind of writing assignments Army ROTC instructors use, and what kind of writing pedagogy they practice. I hoped to clarify for other writing instructors what ROTC instructors’ writing objectives are, what the role of writing is in their classroom, identify unique ways that ROTC instructors utilize concepts from composition theory, and give ROTC instructors an opportunity to share their experiences as writing teachers.

I found that my participants value the teaching of writing and consider the Army to be a writing-heavy environment where writing skills are important for professional success. They also
consider writing to be part of a constellation of important communication skills, and they often require that information presented in writing also be presented orally.

Their writing pedagogy teaches writing in highly situated, rhetorical ways that recalls their own experiences as soldiers. Their assignments are drawn from AR 25-50 and from the writing curriculum designed by Cadet Command. When instructors have to make choices between writing assignments, they will rely most on AR 25-50 and their own experience with Army genres. They favor prescribed Army genres like evaluation forms and Operations Orders. They value the ability to analyze texts and to present conclusions in as concise a manner as possible. Their curriculum does allow for instructors to use reflective writing or less “academic” writing such as journaling, but instructors do not tend to favor those genres. They wish their students could write more, and they express the opinion that there’s not enough time for the writing they would like their students to do. They favor group assignments and tend to allow groups flexibility in how they approach and complete assignments, as long as they are completed.

Army ROTC writing pedagogy is highly rhetorical, emphasizing audience awareness and the ability to communicate propositional knowledge in genres that are understood in the Army. Writers have a great deal of agency even within constrained Army formats but it requires a highly developed sense of rhetorical awareness and an understanding of genres as communicative action; this is a level of rhetorical sophistication that instructors try to develop in their students by teaching writing in the context of their own stories. Their pedagogy emphasizes the way that genres can and will impact leadership, relationships, and larger Army goals.

My project has produced a formative, generalizable description of writing pedagogy in Army ROTC, pointing out important insights in ROTC instructor process, pedagogy, axiology
and epistemology. This description creates some connections and a new sense of credibility between two disparate instructor groups: composition instructors and Army ROTC instructors. My hope is that composition instructors will see ROTC instructors as colleagues in the teaching of writing. While composition classrooms and military classrooms are not aligned in their content or favored genres, it is possible to be better aligned in an understanding of each other’s rhetorical goals and in our shared commitment to our students, who are moving into complex professional environments where they will need to solve difficult problems.

My project is also an example of how qualitative work can open doors between instructor groups, and provide new opportunities to think about writing, pedagogy, and the ways that context alters our understanding of both.

5.4 Looking ahead, for myself and the field.

My project answered the research questions effectively and stepped into a gap in our research. My personal journey of asking research questions related to writing workplaces will certainly continue, and I expect to continue with projects related to interdisciplinary instructor groups and writing pedagogy in situated teaching environments, including the military. But this project also has the potential to have a broader impact on our field in the following ways:

• By encouraging instructor interest in researching the writing culture and genres of our students’ future workplaces, and using that interest to guide research questions and shape our own pedagogy in ways that respond to the situated realities of our students. Knowledge and interpretation of writing in non-academic contexts can only strengthen our understanding of writing as fundamental to problem solving and social development.

• By encouraging other composition instructors to utilize interviewing as a research method, and to try using profiles as a method of data description.
Stake points out that we can inadvertently become advocates for our methods (15-16). I don’t think this is a bad thing, as long as a researcher is clear about why they are doing it and the context in which they mean to “advocate.” It is my perception that many instructors and graduate students are intimidated by the idea of interviewing. IRB processes are not simple, approaching strangers is not easy, and having faith that there will be enough participants to make the project viable can seem like a foolish way to spend one’s energy. But interviewing keeps us engaged with others, engaged with their words and their stories. It keeps our pedagogy and our classrooms engaged with culture. Seidman argues that researchers’ interviewing styles are reflective of the way they are as people, and that learning some “people-skills” helps one to be a good interviewer (93). Trying to develop the discipline and humility necessary to interview well can also influence us to become better people and teachers.

Along with interviewing, the practice of using profiles is profitable for composition instructors. It allows us to experience the interviews as texts, and for those of us inclined toward literary analysis, it translates the work of interviewing into something more familiar and closer to our comfort zone. I have always found interviewing itself to be easy, but was intimidated by the use of transcripts, both by the amount of work they entailed and by the ethical concerns that I felt were inherent in trying to corporealize what another person had said.

My project effectively addresses several of the usual (and reasonable) causes for researchers’ reluctance to plan a qualitative project using interviews. I model a manageable way of approaching, describing, and presenting data: my methodology relies heavily on Geertz and the conviction that the researcher interprets the meaning attributed to texts by others. My process of describing data through the use of brief profiles makes data manageable, presentable, readable, and usable. It is time consuming but hopefully it also appears less imposing and less
terrifying than the usual lengthy profiles that students see, as well as more participant-focused and compelling than a write up that only integrates vignettes or snippets of conversation.

• By illustrating the uniquely interdisciplinary status of writing teachers when it comes to the scholarship of teaching and learning. Gerard Hauser argues that what makes the teaching tradition of “rhetoric” unique is that it encourages students to be “externally-oriented,” because “speaking and writing reaches out into the world” (42). As writing teachers, our curriculum is able to engage meaningfully in “externally-oriented” ways with any other discipline: Charles Bazerman has argued for an expansive understanding of “writing studies” as touching every other field. He describes the study of writing as the study of how we take on, integrate, and keep perspectives and knowledge that ground our social institutions (“The Case for Writing Studies” 35). Very few fields and very few instructors get to be part of a discipline, that is part of every other discipline. We should enjoy the way that our field touches other fields by being externally-oriented and learning about the writing culture, pedagogy, and heuristics of others. The story of my project’s origination, as well as its journey to completion, models this externally oriented philosophy and approach to the writing classroom and writing research.

• By encouraging further contact between military instructors and civilian instructors, including interest in each other’s curricular specializations and use of writing. Our field has demonstrated a newly emerging interest in how veterans transition to academic writing, which has encouraged instructors to think about the military background of their students and the writing culture of the military in general. My project invites instructors to think about students at the other end of their military writing career: the beginning. Students who are entering the military are part of our classrooms, as well as veterans. And Military Science instructors often
describe themselves as “writing” teachers, which gives composition instructors a natural and productive connection point with these instructors and their departments.

One of my participants described the kind of writing pedagogy he would like his students to experience this way:

I think that, going back to my [examples], we need writing a paper [to be] a process, not a sprint. I don’t know if that works or not, but making it a mutual discussion between a student and a professor about how you could or should write [in response to the assignment], not to go off and write it in a closed room with no feedback, but teaching them to outline thoughts, bounce their ideas off another person, to get reeled in a good direction. I don’t know if that’s feasible, but if it was a group effort of some sort where you could sit down and other students could respond to structure or flow and whether or not a writer has proven their point, and letting them go from there as they put the paper together. Do you guys do that? Or does that make any sense at all? (LTC Rubin)

LTC Rubin’s ideal writing pedagogy is one of collaboration and discussion, where instructors and students determine possibilities for analysis and consider a variety of ways to craft the writer’s message. He has in mind a complex rhetorical writing environment for his students, where audience matters, where the logic and analysis of the message will be translated and delivered in externally oriented ways, both written and oral. In his world, ethos is a real-world value that is discussed in terms of leadership and communicated through an awareness of the audience’s needs. These are rhetorical values that, unbeknownst to him, many writing instructors share. I can recall lessons I have taught on these exact issues several times over the last few years. There are more opportunities for connection—and for discussion—between our classrooms than I would have expected when I began this project.
5.5 Conclusion

Each of these potential effects for our field also reflect my personal values of people’s stories, connection with others, and the importance of questions. When instructors research the writing culture and genres of workplaces, we learn more about how writing is working in our contemporary historical and pedagogical moment, and we respond more effectively to the exigencies of our—and our students’—time. By valuing qualitative research that takes us into new writing fields and environments, we test our ideas, models, and prior research in ways that keeps us relevant and transformative, and connects us with the stories of other instructors. By sharing stories, we encourage dialectical meaning-making between ourselves and others. By relying on the unique pedagogical value that writing has, we are able to discover and enjoy a connection point between our own classrooms and other disciplines. And by being cognizant of the writing pedagogy of other disciplines, including Military Science instructors, we validate the role of writing in learning for all students and its pedagogical importance to other fields.

I have always enjoyed my work as a teacher, because the teaching profession values stories, people, and questions. I have always enjoyed being a writing instructor because teaching writing allows me to enjoy such a variety of stories and people, and the questions that our field asks connect us to so many instructor groups and student groups. My work with Army ROTC instructors over the last year has only validated my perspective about the teaching of writing, and has even deepened my commitment to my profession and my pedagogical values. I am fortunate to be an instructor, to teach writing, and to be part of a field that can advance knowledge for instructors and students in a variety of disciplines.
WORKS CITED


Brolin, Brandon, MAJ (Army). Personal Interview. 6 March 2018.


Estrem, Heidi. “Disciplinary and Professional Identities are Constructed Through Writing.”


Kaplan, Jeff, LTC (Army). Personal Interview. 5 Sept. 2018.


Rubin, Andy, LTC (Army). Personal Interview. 22 May 2018.


Scott, Tony. “Writing Enacts and Creates Identities and Ideologies.” *Naming What We Know*:


Walsh, Michael, LTC (Army). Personal Interview. 8 February 2018.


APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

2 November 2017

Study Title: Writing Instruction in Military Entrance Programs: A Comparative, Cross-Institutional Study of Writing Integrated in Military Courses

Principal Investigators: Ryan K. Strader, Georgia State University

1. Tell me briefly about your teaching background (how you came to teach at your present institution/in your present program).

2. What kind of writing do you think students really need to be exposed to, in order to be successful officers in the military? How does that inform the way you assign or evaluate their writing?

3. Do you see yourself as a “writing teacher”? Why or why not?

4. Are there any formal objectives that influence the integration of writing into your course? (Departmental objectives/program objectives)

5. Has your use of writing in your course changed over the semesters that you have taught it?

6. Do you have a particular kind of writing assignment that you like to use with your students?

7. What kind of writing would you like to integrate into the course more? Why?

Comment [WUS]: If you intend to include an appendix, all of the items must fit within the one inch margin requirements and all of the items must be present for the initial format review. If you add anything to this section, then the reviewer will have to review your document again.
8. How do you evaluate each writing assignment? Are you content with your evaluation process, or not?

9. Do you ever use any group writing activities or peer review?

10. Is there anything you wish that composition instructors knew about teaching writing in a military classroom?
Appendix B: Army Regulation 25-50, Cover And Pages 1-6

Comment [WU6]: If you intend to include an appendix, all of the items must fit within the one inch margin requirements and all of the items must be present for the initial format review. If you add anything to this section, then the reviewer will have to review your document again.

Army Regulation 25-50

Information Management: Records Management

Preparing and Managing Correspondence

Headquarters
Department of the Army
Washington, DC
17 May 2013

UNCLASSIFIED
Chapter 1
Preparing Correspondence

Section I
General

1–1. Purpose
This regulation prescribes Department of the Army (DA) policies, procedures, and standard formats for preparing and processing Army correspondence.

1–2. References
Required and related publications and prescribed and referenced forms are listed in appendix A.

1–3. Explanation of abbreviations and terms
Abbreviations and terms used in this regulation are explained in the glossary.

1–4. Responsibilities
a. Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army. The AASA will—
   (1) Establish policies and procedures for preparing correspondence on behalf of the Secretary of the Army (SA).
   (2) Develop policy and direction for correspondence management for DA.
b. Deputy Chief of Staff, G–3/5/7. The DCS, G–3/5/7 will incorporate effective Army writing into training courses and fund any special requirements.
c. Headquarters, Department of the Army principal officials and commanders or heads of Army commands, Army service component commands, direct reporting units, installations, activities, and units. HQDA principal officials and commanders or heads of ACOMs, ASCCs, DRUs, installations, activities, and units will supervise and manage correspondence within their agencies or commands and will actively support effective Army writing by enforcing prescribed standards for all Army personnel.

1–5. Restrictions to this regulation
This regulation has been made as complete as possible to avoid issuing additional instructions. The formats for correspondence outlined in this regulation take precedence over format instructions outlined in other regulations or directives. Therefore, command publications issued to augment this regulation will be restricted to instructions that are unique to the issuing command.

Note. When preparing correspondence for signature by the Secretary of Defense, SA, Chief of Staff of the Army, Under Secretary of the Army, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, Assistant Secretaries of the Army, AASA, and other HQDA principal officials, follow the guidance in DA Memos 25–52 and Department of Defense (DOD) 5110.04–M.

1–6. Objectives
The objectives of this regulation are to—
   a. Provide clear instructions for preparing correspondence.
   b. Reduce the cost of preparing correspondence.
   c. Standardize the preparation and dissemination of correspondence.

Section II
General Correspondence Guidance

1–7. Methods of communication
a. Personal or telephone contact. Conduct official business by personal contact, telephone, or Defense Switched Network (DSN) whenever possible and appropriate. Use a memorandum for record (MFR) to document any decisions or agreements reached during voice communications (see para 2–7 for the proper use of an MFR).
b. Memorandum. Use the memorandum for correspondence within a department or agency, as well as for routine correspondence to Federal Government agencies outside DOD. Do not use the memorandum format when corresponding with the Families of military personnel or private businesses (see para 2–2 for the proper use of the memorandum).
c. Letter. Use the letter for correspondence addressed to the President or Vice President of the United States, members of the White House staff, Members of Congress, Justices of the Supreme Court, heads of departments and agencies, State Governors, mayors, foreign government officials, and the public. You may also use letters to address individuals outside the department or agency when a personal tone is appropriate, such as in letters of commendation or condolence (see para 3–2 for the proper use of a letter).
d. Electronic mail. Use email to transfer organizational and individual information.
   e. Army Knowledge Online and Defense Knowledge Online. Use instant messaging as an alternate method to transfer
organizational and individual information, facilitating communications with offices in multiple or distant locations. Use an MFR to document any decisions or agreements reached during instant messaging communications.

1–8. Direct communications
Send correspondence as directly as possible to the action office concerned (see para 2–4(e)(5)). Include the action officer’s name and office symbol when addressing correspondence.

1–9. Routing through channels
a. Routing action correspondence. Route correspondence through commands, agencies, or offices expected to exercise control or take action.
   b. Bypassing intermediate headquarters. Do not route correspondence through a headquarters that has no interest or concern in the matter or action. However, send a copy of the communication and referral action to the command, agency, or office that was bypassed. Routine correspondence may bypass intermediate headquarters when—
      (1) It is apparent the intermediate headquarters is not concerned.
      (2) No action is required.
      (3) No controls need to be exercised.
   c. Using technical channels. Use technical channels to route correspondence that deals with technical matters. This includes technical reports, instructions, or requests for information that do not involve command matters. Before using technical channels, make sure the action should not be sent through command channels. Do not use “FOR THE COMMANDER” on the authority line of technical channel correspondence.

1–10. Writing quality
In accordance with Public Law (PL) 111–274 (Plain Writing Act of 2010), DA writing will be clear, concise, and effective. Army correspondence must aid effective communication and decisionmaking. The reader must be able to understand the writer’s ideas in a single reading, and the correspondence must be free of errors in substance, organization, style, and correctness (see para 1–37). Use electronic spell check when available but always proofread; spell check is only a tool and is not infallible.

1–11. Exclusive For correspondence
   a. Using. Use Exclusive For correspondence for matters of a sensitive or privileged nature directed to a specific party or parties. Minimize its use to avoid delay of action if the named addressee is absent or unavailable to receive and act on the correspondence. Prepare Exclusive For correspondence in either letter or memorandum format.
   b. Addressing. Address Exclusive For correspondence to the name and title of the addressee.
   c. Handling. When preparing Exclusive For correspondence, place it in a sealed envelope. Type and underline the words Exclusive For on the envelope. Distribution center and official mailroom workers will give this type of mail to addressees unopened unless security conditions dictate that they open the mail as part of the official mail screening process.

Section III
Specific Correspondence Guidance

1–12. Dissemination of command instructions
Use the acronym ALARACT (all Army activities) only in electronically transmitted messages. This acronym assigns responsibility for distribution instructions. Do not use it when addressing Army correspondence.

1–13. Unique capitalization
The following is a selection of style and usage preferences for internal Army correspondence:
   a. Capitalize the word “Soldier” when it refers to a U.S. Army Soldier.
   b. Capitalize the word “Family” when it refers to U.S. Army Family or Family members.
   c. Capitalize the word “Civilian” when it refers to DA civilians and is used in conjunction with Soldier and/or Family.

1–14. Abbreviations, brevity codes, and acronyms
   b. Letters. Use only common abbreviations found in standard dictionaries. Do not use military abbreviations, brevity
codes, acronyms, or military jargon in letters addressed to persons outside DOD. Military personnel will use their full
grades (for example, lieutenant general, major general, captain, and sergeant first class) in letters.

b. Abbreviation guidelines.

(1) Established abbreviations are acceptable in all but the most formal writing. For reading ease, use only well-
known abbreviations or those you believe the recipient knows.

(2) When a title or complete term will be used repetitively in a document, use a shortened version of the title or term
instead of an acronym. For example, instead of “military interdepartmental purchase request,” use “purchase request.” If
the complete title or term is lengthy, complex, or not well known, place the abbreviated form in parentheses after the
first time the title or term is used. Thereafter, use only the shortened form. Do not use this method if the term will not
be used repeatedly. Avoid beginning a sentence with an abbreviation or using them in the subject line, except for
words like “Mr.,” “Dr.,” “Ms.,” and so on.

(3) For further guidance on correct capitalization when spelling out an abbreviation, refer to the U.S. Army
Records
Management and Declassification Agency’s Web site, https://www.rmda.army.mil/abbreviation/MainMenu.asp and

c. Acronym guidelines.

(1) Use military and civilian acronyms in memos, if appropriate. Do not, however, use military acronyms
when writing to individuals or organizations not familiar with their use. When an acronym is used, spell out the
acronym the first time it is used and follow it with the acronym in parentheses. Thereafter, use the acronym. Do not
overuse acronyms.

(2) For further guidance on correct capitalization when spelling out an acronym, see AR 25–32, the Records

1–15. Letterhead

a. Letterhead identifies the originating organization and provides the complete standardized mailing address.

b. Computer-generated letterhead is used for all official correspondence. For further guidance on using letterhead,
see AR 25–30 and DA Pam 25–40.

c. Paper

1–16. Paper

Paper used for Army correspondence generally will be the standard size (8 1/2 by 11 inches). Use
computer-generated letterhead for the first page of all memos and letters except when an approved form is
prescribed. Use plain white paper for continuing pages.

1–17. Type fonts and sizes

When creating official correspondence, use type fonts and sizes that make the correspondence easy to read and
understand. The following guidelines will provide the best results:

a. A font with a point size of 12 is recommended.

b. Preferred type font is Arial.

c. Unusual type styles, such as Script, will not be used in official correspondence.

1–18. Ink color

Correspondence may be signed in blue or black ink. Black ink will be used for date stamps.

1–19. Copies

a. Record copy. Make one record or file copy of correspondence after the original has been signed and dated. Stamp
or write “record copy” or “file copy” along the edge of the right margin. Record copies may be stored electronically.
Maintain file copies according to Army recordskeeping system requirements (see AR 25–400–2).

b. Record file copies. If reading files are used, maintain according to Army recordskeeping system requirements.

c. Copy furnished. Use “copy furnished” (CF:) on memos to keep other than the prime addressee(s) informed
of an action. Make copies after the original has been signed and dated.

d. Courtesy copies. Use “courtesy copy” (cc:) on letters to inform other readers of the subject if they have a need to
know or should receive a copy of the correspondence. Make copies after the original has been signed and dated.

1–20. Classified and special handling correspondence

a. General. Information that requires protection against unauthorized disclosure in the interest of national security
will be classified. Correspondence containing classified information will be safeguarded as prescribed in AR 380–5.
The contents of a classified communication will be revealed only to individuals who have the appropriate security
clearance and whose official duties require the information.
b. Marking classified correspondence. See chapter 8 of this regulation and AR 380–5 for detailed instructions on marking and downgrading correspondence.

c. Using for official use only marking. See AR 25–55 and AR 380–5 for the proper use and marking of for official use only (FOUO) material.

d. Controlled unclassified information. See Executive Order (EO) 13556.

1–21. Identifying a point of contact

Normally, when writing any type of correspondence, the writer or point of contact (POC) will be identified by military grade or civilian prefix, first and last name, commercial and/ or DSN telephone number, and, if appropriate, position, fax number, and email address. This information is generally placed in the last paragraph of the correspondence.

1–22. Identifying the originating office

Office symbols and/or office names are used to identify the office that prepared the document for signature. It will normally match the POC’s organization and may or may not correspond with the signature block.

a. Office symbols are used when addressing or replying to memorandums. See the U.S. Army Addresses and Office Symbols Online Web site at https://www.rmda.army.mil/AAO/Welcome.aspx.

b. Office names may be used when addressing or replying to letters.

1–23. Expressing a date

a. Dates on memorandums. Express dates on memorandums in the following formats: 1 January 2013 or 1 Jan 13. The four digits for the year will be used only when the month is spelled out or when date stamps use abbreviated months and four-digit year.

b. Dates on letters. Express dates on letters and refer to dates within letters only in the following format: January 1, 2013.

c. Separating date elements. Avoid separating any of the three date elements (day, month, and year) from each other. If absolutely necessary, the four-digit year may be carried over to the next line.

1–24. Expressing time

Military time will be expressed in a group of four digits, from 0000 to 2400, based on the 24-hour clock system. The first two digits represent the hour after midnight and the last two digits represent the minutes. For example, 1:37 p.m. civilian time is expressed as 1337 military time. The word “hours” will not be used in conjunction with military time. Civilian time is used when writing letters. Military time will be used for memorandums.

1–25. Suspense date

a. Use a suspense date on memorandums when a reply is required by a certain date (see fig 2–2). Show the suspense date two lines above the date line and in the body of the memorandum in one of the following formats: 1 Jan 13 or 1 January 2013. Do not use a suspense date on a letter.

b. Consider the following time factors in setting a suspense date on correspondence:
   (1) The number of days required to send the communications.
   (2) The number of days needed to complete the action.
   (3) The number of days required to submit the reply.

1–26. Addressing

Address correspondence and envelopes as prescribed in AR 25–51 and chapter 5 of this regulation.

1–27. Postscripts

Do not use postscripts in Army correspondence.

1–28. References

List references in the first paragraph of the correspondence. (Enclose copies of references that are not readily available to the addressee(s) or list an Army Knowledge Online (AKO) or public Web site link that is accessible to all agencies on the distribution list; for example: https://www.us.army.mil/ suite/doc/3456789). List and number references in the order they are mentioned in the correspondence. However, when references are not included in the body of the correspondence, number and list them in order of precedence and ascending date order in the first paragraph. As a minimum, include the following information:

a. Publications. When referencing publications, include the number, title, and date (for example, AR 25–50 (Preparing and Managing Correspondence), 5 October 2013). In policy correspondence, referencing basic directives by the number and title prevents the correspondence from having to be revised and republished when one of the references is updated.

b. Correspondence. When referencing correspondence, include the type of correspondence, organization of origin,
office symbol, date, and subject of the correspondence (for example, Memorandum, HQ AMC, AMCIO–F, 20 Feb 13, subject: Training for U.S. Army Materiel Command Personnel; Letter, Office of the General Counsel, SAGC, July 16, 2013, subject: if used; and Message, HQ TRADOC, ATPL–TDD–OR, 101623Z Sep 13, subject: Correspondence Management). When referencing an email or fax number, use the name of the sender and office symbol, if included (for example, Email, HQ TRADOC, ATPL–TDD–OR, Mr. Samuel Jones, 3 Nov 13, subject: Correspondence Management; and Fax, HQ FORSCOM, Ms. Ella Johns, 25 Feb 13, subject: Copier Management).

Note. Enter subjects and dates verbatim.

c. Public law. When referencing public laws, include the name, public law number, section, statute number, and date (for example, National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Public Law No. 91–190, Section 103, 83 Statute 852, 853 (1970) or Social Security Number Privacy and Identity Theft Protection Act of 2003, H.R. 2971, 108th Cong. § 101 (2003)).

d. Classified or unclassified material. Use chapter 8 and AR 380-5 for portion marking when referencing unclassified material in a classified document or when referencing classified material in a classified or unclassified document.

e. Paragraphs of publications.

   (1) When referencing a publication, cite its name, title, and date: DA Memo 25–52 (Staff Action Process and Correspondence Policies), 1 May 2008.

   (2) Additional references need only include the regulation and paragraph number (for example, DA Memo 25–52, para 3–1a).

   f. Telephone conversations or meetings. When referencing telephone conversations or meetings, first cite the communication, then names of the individuals, headquarters or office of location, date, and subject, if applicable. (1) Reference telephone conversation between Mr. William Smith, this office, and Ms. Linda Jones, TRADOC, 23 Jan 13, subject: Office Copiers.

   (2) Reference meeting between Ms. Linda Jones, TRADOC, and Mr. William Smith, this office, 23 Jan 13, subject: Office Copiers.

g. Material that has the same subject. In memorandums, you may use the term “subject as above” or the acronym “SAB” in lieu of repeating the subject. You cannot do so in letters.

1–29. Page and paragraph numbering

See chapters 2 and 3 for exact guidance on paragraph and page numbering and placement of the page number.

1–30. Using boldface and italic type for emphasis

Use boldface or italic type to emphasize a specific or important fact. Overuse of this method for emphasis (like overuse of the exclamation point) defeats its purpose. In general, substitute more specific or forceful words to gain emphasis.

1–31. Distribution formula

Develop a distribution formula that is easy to understand and use. Make sure it is a fast and cost-effective way to distribute information to a great number of addresses. Do not use internal distribution formulas for correspondence external to your command or installation (see AR 25-51).

1–32. Identifying and listing enclosures

Use enclosures for memorandums and letters. Number and attach all enclosures in the same order they are mentioned in the body of the correspondence. Identify each enclosure in the lower right corner of the first page before making copies. Specify enclosures in the text. See paragraph 4–2 for the proper listing of enclosures. Attachments to enclosures are referred to as enclosures to enclosures (for example, enclosure 3 to enclosure 2).

1–33. Nine-digit ZIP code (ZIP+4 code)

Use the ZIP+4 code on all return envelope addresses and correspondence. The ZIP+4 code will be used on all letterhead.

1–34. North Atlantic Treaty Organization correspondence

For North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) correspondence purposes, see standardization agreements. All NATO correspondence will be prepared according to applicable NATO directives.

1–35. Recordkeeping requirements for delegations of signature authority

Records of delegations of signature authority must be created and maintained in accordance with AR 25–400–2.
Section IV
Effective Writing and Correspondence: The Army Writing Style

1–36. Standards for Army writing
a. Effective Army writing is understood by the reader in a single rapid reading and is free of errors in substance, organization, style, and correctness in accordance with PL 111–274.

b. Army writing will be concise, organized, and to the point. Two essential requirements include putting the main point at the beginning of the correspondence (bottom line up front) and using the active voice (for example, “You are entitled to jump pay for the time you spent in training last year”).

c. The standard English sentence order, subject-verb-object, works best. It speeds communication and helps the reader understand the main point.

(1) Active voice writing—
   (1) Emphasizes the actor of the sentence.
   (2) Shows who or what does the action in the sentence and puts the actor before the verb.
   (3) Creates shorter sentences. By eliminating passive voice, you reduce the number of words in a sentence.
   (4) Passive voice: The test was passed by SGT Jones (seven words).
   (5) Active voice: SGT Jones passed the test (five words).

d. Passive voice is easy to recognize. A passive construction occurs when the object of an action becomes the subject of the sentence. A verb in the passive voice uses any form of the verb “to be” (for example, am, is, are, was, were, be, being, and been), plus a past participle of the verb, which usually ends in “en” or “ed” (for example, were completed, is requested). Additionally, in passive voice the subject receives the action instead of taking the action.

1–37. Constructing military correspondence

a. General techniques.

   When constructing basic military correspondence, focus first on the main point. Use of active voice is the basic style of Army writing.

b. Specific techniques.

   Incorporate these plain language techniques to improve effectiveness:

   (1) Use short words.
   (2) Keep sentences short. The average length of a sentence should be about 15 words.
   (3) Write paragraphs that, with few exceptions, are no more than 10 lines.
   (4) Avoid jargon.
   (5) Use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
   (6) Use “I,” “you,” and “we” as subjects of sentences instead of this office, this headquarters, this command, all individuals, and so forth.
   (7) Write one-page letters and memorandums for most correspondence. Use enclosures for additional information.
   (8) Avoid sentences that begin with “It is,” “There is,” or “There are.”
   (9) Insert two blank spaces after ending punctuation (for example, a period and question mark).
   (10) Insert two blank spaces after a colon.
   (11) When numbering subparagraphs, insert two blank spaces after the parentheses.

Chapter 2
Preparing Memorandums

2–1. General

Figures 2–1 through 2–17 illustrate examples of use and general rules for memorandums.

2–2. Use

The memorandum is used for correspondence sent outside the headquarters, command, installation, activities, units, or similarly identifiable organizational elements within DOD; for routine correspondence to Federal Government agencies outside DOD; for notification of personnel actions, military or civilian; for showing appreciation or commendation to DA Civilians and Soldiers; and for internal correspondence within the same headquarters, command, or similarly identifiable organizational elements.

Note. Refer to DA Memo 25–52 for correspondence originating within Army Secretariat or Army Staff organizations.

2–3. General rules


(1) Original pages. For memorandums, use computer-generated letterhead for the first page and plain white paper for continuing pages.
### Appendix C: Army Rotc Writing Assignments By Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MSL Course</th>
<th>Lesson Number</th>
<th>Lesson Name</th>
<th>Number of Writing Assignments</th>
<th>Writing Assignment Details</th>
<th>Length of Assignment</th>
<th>Rubric Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Lesson Journal Assignments</td>
<td>3 paragraphs</td>
<td>Each Cadet will write a journal paragraph at the completion of each lesson (three to five sentences)</td>
<td>3 paragraphs</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness</td>
<td>1 page</td>
<td>Each Cadet will develop a written short response of four pages in length. The written short response will consider a position or article they read from their Soldiers to use the C2F2 program.</td>
<td>1 page</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>2.5 pages</td>
<td>Cadets will complete a three-paragraph essay using the completed course journal paragraphs. Essay Topic: (Leadership) Cadets must select one element of leadership to discuss, present, and analyze. Each Cadet must develop a 2.5-page essay.</td>
<td>2.5 pages</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Squad Tactics &amp; Basic Patrolling</td>
<td>1-2 pages</td>
<td>Provide a brief discussion addressing the five main types of patrolling. This will include: conditions when each one will be applied, a patrol plan (from the five key points), and a role in the situation.</td>
<td>1-2 pages</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-52</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Leadership Training</td>
<td>100 Words</td>
<td>Write a self-assessment essay and plan the steps to take to improve areas of weakness. This will include:</td>
<td>100 Words</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Semester Journal Essay Assignments</td>
<td>3-5 pages</td>
<td>At the midterm and end of each semester Cadets will complete a three-page essay using the completed journal paragraphs. Each Cadet will be required to complete semester journal essays during 120-53. Cadets may be required to present their essay to the class.</td>
<td>3-5 pages</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment [WU7]: If you intend to include an appendix, all of the items must fit within the one inch margin requirements and all of the items must be present for the initial format review. If you add anything to this section, then the reviewer will have to review your document again.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SRL Course</th>
<th>Lesson Number</th>
<th>Lesson Name</th>
<th>Number of Writing Assignments</th>
<th>Writing Assignment Details</th>
<th>Length of Assignment</th>
<th>Submitting Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>101.19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Lesson 19: Journal Assignments</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Each writer will write a short paragraph at the completion of each lesson. (three files per lesson)</td>
<td>1 paragraph</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cultural Awareness and CSP Overview</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Each writer will develop a two to three-page paper on a country or culture they select to enhance their understanding of Cultural Awareness. The paper will provide an argument in the following: the language, religion, national make-up, other cultural considerations. Why the above topics are important to the formation of Arms.</td>
<td>2 to 3 pages</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Theories of leadership</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Read the questions below from the handout and write your answer in a 2-3 paragraph per question in the form of a brief essay based on information provided within the lesson. The essay should directly respond to the prompt for you in the Army. What is the most important leadership style for you? If you were a managerial style, what would your leadership style be? If you were a transformational style, how do you view your life after the Army?</td>
<td>2 to 4 Paragraphs</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transactional/Transformational/ Situational Leadership</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In accordance with Student Handbook, the assessment for this lesson is in the form of a short essay. (3 pages)</td>
<td>2-3 Pages</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Adaptive Leaders in History</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Develop a short essay detailing the adaptive leadership of at least two world leaders. Provide specific examples of how these leaders exemplify the characteristics and factors of adaptive leadership. Include any additional information. Your written essay will determine 40% of your grade.</td>
<td>2 pages / 100 words</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Leadership Expectation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Develop a short essay detailing your adaptive leadership of at least two world leaders. Provide specific examples of how these leaders exemplify the characteristics and factors of adaptive leadership. Include any additional information. The written essay will determine 40% of your grade.</td>
<td>2 pages / 1000 words</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Army Problem Solving Process</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Select one of the common command-related student problems to identify. Using the steps of the five-choice problem-solving process, determine how you would go about solving this problem. Your written essay will determine 40% of your grade.</td>
<td>&lt;2 pages</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Operations Order F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Write an Individual Order for your group task.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson 19
Team Building

1. Each Cadet will develop a Reading Reflection Paper of one to two pages in length which consists of:
   a. What are the main points of the reading?
   b. What information did you find surprising? Why?
   c. What did you find confusing? Why?

Length: 3-5 pages

Lesson 20
Team Building - Tactical Decision Exercises (TDEs)

1. Each Cadet will develop a 500 word essay on what they think is the most important element in teamwork.

Length: 500 words

Mid-term/Final Exam

All mid-term and end of each semester Cadets will complete a 4 page essay and/or short answer exam. The letter grade for the essay will be based on a 1 to 4 scale with 4 being the highest possible grade. Cadets will turn in the completed Semester Final Exam during the Letterm. Help is available from the instructor for those who need it.

Length: 3-5 pages

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson #</th>
<th>Lesson Name</th>
<th>Number of Writing Assignments</th>
<th>Writing Assignment Details</th>
<th>Length of Assignment</th>
<th>Rubric Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>301.1.10</td>
<td>Introduction to the Army Operating Concept</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The assessment for this lesson will be in the form of a short (2 page) essay. This assignment will enable instructors to assess the comprehension and understanding of the lesson content.</td>
<td>2-3 Pages</td>
<td>No (DG) No (DG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301.1.14</td>
<td>Leadership Behavior and Peer Evaluations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The objective is for the Cadets to write a short self-assessment, identifying their strengths and weaknesses from the leadership attributes and core competencies discussed in the lesson. This assignment will identify the Cadets writing skills and how well they articulate thoughts into the written evaluations, in preparation for completing the formal peer evaluations that each Cadet will be required to write for MIL 5630 Peer Evaluations.</td>
<td>No (DG) No (DG)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301.1.15</td>
<td>Peer Evaluations PE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The lesson Assessment will be in the form of written peer evaluations and providing feedback to the instructor for evaluation and future improvement.</td>
<td>1-2 sentences on the Peer Eval Report form</td>
<td>No (DG) No (DG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson No.</td>
<td>Lesson Number</td>
<td>Lesson Title</td>
<td>Number of Writing Assignments</td>
<td>Writing Assignment Details</td>
<td>Length of Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302 1 02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Army Operations and Professional Readiness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Each student will write and turn in a three-page (double-spaced) paper on one of the battles that had professional military leadership as outlined in Module 3. Polish your paper and submit it to your instructor.</td>
<td>&lt; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302 1 06</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Direct Command Leadership</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Write a one-page summary (not including specific examples) or in full in MLA format of how your assigned leader either demonstrated or failed to demonstrate key characteristics of effective leadership. Provide an example in your paper.</td>
<td>&lt; 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302 1 09</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Base of Power &amp; Influencing Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Use the assigned reading (MCCCLL) to write a one-page summary of the Base of Power and Influencing Others and provide a two-page example of your understanding.</td>
<td>1 page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302 1 08</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Motivating Soldiers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Each student will develop five words they would use to describe motivation and justify this choice in a two-page, 500-word essay.</td>
<td>2 pages / 500 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302 1 10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing Conflict Negotiations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>During President Obama’s inaugural address on January 20, 2009, he said, “The world must not provoke the inevitable conflict.” Using these quotes and today’s lesson, write a one-page essay on how you would negotiate in times of crisis. Discuss any technique you may use to negotiate that you feel comfortable using.</td>
<td>3 paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302 1 11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Negotiating Practical Exercise</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A lecture will conclude with case studies that provide a real-life understanding of the concepts taught. Each student will present a one-page summary of 500 words or less, indicating how they would handle the dilemma.</td>
<td>500 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302 1 19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Leadership Case Review</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Read “For Whom the Bell Tolls” by Ernest Hemingway. Write an essay proposing a three-page proposal that addresses the author’s main points (including the Tideline in the novel) and how the author’s viewpoint compared to that of the characters.</td>
<td>500 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302 1 20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Paroling and Parole Board Operations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Write a one-page summary (not including specific examples) or in full in MLA format of how your assigned leader either demonstrated or failed to demonstrate key characteristics of effective leadership. Provide an example in your paper.</td>
<td>3 paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302 1 21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pitching Offensive Air Attack and Nuclear Weapons</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Write a one-page summary (not including specific examples) or in full in MLA format of how your assigned leader either demonstrated or failed to demonstrate key characteristics of effective leadership. Provide an example in your paper.</td>
<td>500 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson MSL</td>
<td>Lesson Number</td>
<td>Lesson Name</td>
<td>Number of Writing Assignments</td>
<td>Writing Assignment Details</td>
<td>Length of Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401.03</td>
<td></td>
<td>Military Decision-Making Process</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Write a 3-5 page essay which describes your duties and responsibilities in a selected staff position. The essay must address the following: 1) Identify and discuss the duties and responsibilities of a selected staff position. 2) Discuss personal strengths and weaknesses. 3) Discuss responsibilities of this position. 4) Discuss responsibilities of the position in which you will work.</td>
<td>3-5 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401.04</td>
<td></td>
<td>Training Units and Developing Leaders</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Write a three to five-page paper that coherently ties each of the topics below together. You will relate how the training process is managed and conducted to prepare leaders and their unit for a future deployment to the Combat Training Center (CTC). The essay must include: 1) Training goals and developing leaders 2) Unit Training Management 3) Unit Training Leadership</td>
<td>3-5 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401.07</td>
<td></td>
<td>Risk Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Write a one-page paper that coherently ties each of the topics below together. You will relate how the training process is managed and conducted to prepare leaders and their unit for a future deployment to the Combat Training Center (CTC). The essay must include: 1) Training goals and developing leaders 2) Unit Training Management 3) Unit Training Leadership</td>
<td>3-5 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401.09</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mission Command Case Study 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Answer the following short answer question in the space below. Ensure your answer addresses both parts of the question in the space given. Describe how you would handle a moral dilemma in a real-life scenario and what is important to the Army that differs from a real-life scenario.</td>
<td>1 page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Officer as a Moral Example</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Answer the following short answer question in the space below. Ensure your answer addresses both parts of the question in the space given. Describe how you would handle a moral dilemma in a real-life scenario and what is important to the Army that differs from a real-life scenario.</td>
<td>1 page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401.26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Leader Self Development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Write a one-page essay that identifies the areas you would like to enhance your strengths and weakens the most. Consider your unit environment and your plan to enhance your strengths (at least) and improve upon your weaknesses (at least three). Include your training and education courses (at least two). Use your lessons if you are in leadership development. Be creative and explain how each training or education will help you become a better leader.</td>
<td>1 page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401.30</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Property Protection PC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Answer the following short answer question in the space below. Ensure your answer addresses both parts of the question in the space given. Describe how you would handle a moral dilemma in a real-life scenario and what is important to the Army that differs from a real-life scenario.</td>
<td>3-5 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401.31</td>
<td></td>
<td>Law of Land Warfare and Rules of Engagement RG</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The assessment for this lesson will be a two-part essay. Each Cadet (or partner) will be assigned a case study focusing on RG. Cadets will: 1) Answer the following question: 2) Write a brief paragraph discussing each of the following: a) Identify the protection of this location (military or non-military)</td>
<td>3 paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401.52</td>
<td></td>
<td>Civil Military Relations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Answer the following short answer question in the space provided. Describe what you would do in the situation described and why (as a service department) think such situations could positively influence the relationship between the military and the citizenry you will help protect.</td>
<td>1 page</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>