

IDENTIFICATION, DIVISION, AND UNDERSTANDING IN CONTACT ZONES:
USING *VIETNAM, LONG TIME COMING* TO EXPLORE THE
RHETORICAL POWER OF INVITATION

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DEDICATION

To the Real Dr. Pepper made with Imperial Sugar: Thank you for staying in production long enough for me to finish my dissertation. I mourn your absence.

#DrPepperWithImperialSugar4Ever #theRealDrPepper

To Duncan Hines and Toll House: Thank you for the Triple Chunk Brownie and Chocolate Chip Lovers sugar bursts when I couldn't find #theRealDrPepper.

To my pillow, whom I have missed beyond words: I promise to spend much more time with you now, and I promise not to “rearrange” you so hard. 😊

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ABSTRACT

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In America, our military combat veterans are considered a vulnerable population, and in 2016, they were number four on the nation’s list of the top ten most disparate communities. The Vietnam War veteran leads by the numbers, partly due to negative publicity and unfair media portrayal. In 1998, World T.E.A.M. (The Exceptional Athlete Matters) Sports, an organization that works with differently-abled people in multiple settings creating amazing adventures, attempted to change this as they invited these veterans to join them and ride together with Vietnamese veterans from the same war. WTS hired Kartemquin Films to create a documentary film to record and air this adventure on public television, and the producers—Gordon Quinn, Peter Gilbert, Adam Singer and Jerry Blumenthall—realized this was going to be much more than a film as they had an opportunity to “show the complexity of humanity” itself through the participants’ physical and emotional experiences. Through analyzing the documentary, collecting oral history from several participants of this event, and researching archival records, this dissertation examines the workings of Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin’s invitational rhetoric and its importance in our society. I first explain Mary Louise Pratt’s

contact zones and the role invitational rhetoric plays in helping people with conflicting ideologies to enter into spaces where both parties may talk without fear of persecution or abuse. I then define and explain the term “rhetorical logistics,” and argue how this may help us understand people’s decisions on how they navigate themselves before and during interaction within contact zones while on this sixteen-day trip. By studying various examples of successful and seemingly unsuccessful invitational rhetoric, I claim that if one can yield the choice of change to the choice to understand, invitational rhetoric demonstrates various ways that we may create more of Burke’s *consubstantiation* and stronger communities within these disparate populations.

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CHAPTER I

BRINGING THE PIECES TOGETHER

There is a deeper side to coming home. The returning warrior needs to heal more than his mind and body. He needs to heal his soul.

—Karl Marlantes, *What It Is Like to Go to War*

A Vietnam Airlines airplane flies a few thousand feet above the landscape, a mixture of lush green foliage and murky rivers that cross over each other like a complex highway system in a large city. Fifteen seconds later, we see a middle-aged man in his late forties solemnly looking at the terrain from his window seat, and after a few seconds, we see and hear multiple men—black, white, disabled and abled—inform the audience that it has been between twenty-nine and thirty years since their departure from this place. The next scene is the Hanoi International Airport, where luggage, wheelchairs, and people disembark.

And so begins the documentary *Vietnam, Long Time Coming*, a film that follows a marginalized variety of people from different pasts, different countries, and different abilities as they engage in what was called the Vietnam Challenge. Thirty-nine American Vietnam veterans, fourteen Vietnamese veterans from the Vietnam War, members of World T.E.A.M. (The Exceptional Athlete Matters) Sports, and various important Vietnamese individuals ride bicycles together for sixteen days and travel over 1,200 miles by bicycle from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City. Sports Illustrated, NBC Sports

Television, and Reebok sponsored World T.E.A.M. Sports, and some of the patrons rode on this trip with the veterans and Vietnamese. World T.E.A.M. Sports, responsible for the outfitting and maintenance of the bikes, also hoped to fulfill their mission of showing others how amazing things could be accomplished when people came together to accomplish a single goal—in this case, cover the 1,200 miles of barely paved highway in extreme heat and exhausting conditions.

Not only does the film document the riders as they experience and work through past traumatic events, it also documents the tremendous effort individuals from previously warring countries put forth towards each other in efforts to heal and create relationships that without this adventure might never have happened.

The significance of this film is far-reaching and, like a spider web, shows multiple silk strands (people, organizations) that act as individuals who are also part of a bigger web (network). Rhetorical agents, including leaders, doctors, and the veterans themselves, create opportunities for people to stand and claim their own agencies by making decisions and exercising their independence as they engage with others who may or may not be the same as them. As Jeremy claims, “Rhetoric is a powerful tool of creation and destruction,” and we can see its various forms in this film and my work (144). This documentary also gives me an opportunity to study the invitational rhetoric employed throughout the event, as this dissertation aims to explicate the various ways invitational rhetoric occurs in order to help bring people of conflicting ideologies in a space where meaningful conversation and possible understanding can occur. As *VLTC* brings together veterans who were literally enemies in the past, we spectators are given

the opportunity to watch these warriors navigate their differences and retain agency over their decisions to continue on the journey with each other.

I also examine the visuals given to us of what happens before people commit to entering Mary Louise Pratt's contact zones, areas of "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other," most often in "contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths" (33). Whereas Pratt's contact zones occurred in her classrooms as college students from different backgrounds and different life experiences tried to find common ground in order to move class discussions forward into avenues of deeper learning and understanding, the contact zones in *VLTC* take place in various places with various people who have varied agendas. Contact zones encompass not just "clash" and "grapple," but also understanding, such as different veterans warring with military hierarchy systems, gender differences, and even dissimilar PTSD issues. Contact zones can be areas where power dynamics become unsettled, such as when filmmakers and patrons disagree on particular editing decisions. There are also the contact zones that the returning veterans and the hosting Vietnamese riders enter and share for more than two weeks. I explore these further in Chapter Two and ensuing chapters, but for now, there are at least four contact zones, each with their own sets of conflicts and resolutions, within this documentary.

We watch veterans and differently-abled celebrities from both countries learn from each other as they gravitate towards others, seek out new comrades during breaks, and eventually ride next to them. We see a veteran, his face disfigured by the war, remove his eye patch after talking to a classroom of children and is still accepted—

forgiven, even—as a schoolgirl gives him a handmade friendship bracelet. A Vietnamese woman who hides her prosthetic leg claims that she will not hide it from the public when she bikes, because she no longer considers her prosthetic a sign of weakness. We see negotiations between the veterans who want to ride and the organizers of the ride, and we see what happens when multiple people—in this case, people with different abilities paired with each other and with abled athletes, from countries that speak different languages--focus on one common goal. One day, crossing the Hai Van Pass is the goal. The Hai Van Pass is a mountain road of switchbacks that covers a climb of 3,000 feet in six miles. In order for each participant to succeed and reach the summit, each rider must support another. The blind men who ride tandem must use their legs to help move the bike up the mountain. People who use the hand bikes need assistance from others who can help push them uphill. It takes several hours, but the bikers make it, and at the end of this undertaking, the captain of the Vietnam patrol, Mr. Zion, says, “I now know because I’ve seen happiness on your face why this event was so important,” and puts his arm around the shoulders of one of the Americans who finished the ride.¹ Another day, biking 124 miles is the goal. One day—almost everyone’s favorite—doing laundry while drinking cold beer and simply hanging out and relaxing with each other, language barrier or not, is the goal.

There are moments of tension, as well—moments where the itinerary changes, such as when all participants are brought to the Mỳ Lai Memorial, or the moment when veteran Wayne Smith claims that the reconciliation that he’s participating in in Vietnam

¹This is discussed in more depth in Chapter Three.

should be mirrored back home, and there should “be a coming together of the races in America” (1:26:51), creating an awareness of the inequality and racial tensions we still face today, twenty-one years after this video aired and almost thirty years after the war. We see some veterans attempt to ignore new emotions, we watch some veterans share their difficulty navigating their heightened emotions, and we also witness tensions rise as negotiations and power dynamics fluctuate throughout the documentary. “The emotional pace of this film is brutal,” comments Gilbert in one of his interviews (11), but according to movie critic Chris Hewitt, the film of the bike ride felt “like a symbol” of the spirit of brotherhood that the Olympics give us, adding that this film is a “bright, shining example of how movies can bring disparate people closer together” (17). Indeed, even when they seem to be at odds with each other, they are still communicating in some way.

The film ends on two positive notes. The first is that at the next to last station, the team is joined by then-Senator John Kerry and then-U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Pete Peterson, who spend time with the entire team the rest of the evening and ride the final day with the veterans to their final destination of Ho Chi Minh City. The second and more positive note, however, comes at the very end, when one of the Vietnamese veterans joins Dan Jensen in the United States and receives a new prosthetic leg, which he uses to race against Jensen. However, the differences between disabled and abled bodies, or how each accomplishes challenges, is not the point: The “ultimate success of the Challenge,” writes Richard Rhinehart as he quotes KTQ editor David E. Simpson, is “[t]he emotional journey that the participants go through, which unites them as human beings.” It is through the challenge and participants’ conversations that we have the

opportunities to witness invitational rhetoric and discover the different methods employed throughout the duration of the trip and film.

Un-Silent Voices from Vietnam in History: The Warriors We Tried to Erase and Their Refusal to be Ignored or Unheard

Reclaiming our memory of the Vietnam era entails a struggle against very powerful institutional forces . . . It is a struggle for our individual and collective identities that calls us to reappropriate the making of our own memories. It is a struggle of epic importance
—Jerry Lembcke, *The Spitting Image*

One problem that continually occurs in *VLTC* is the perceived ethos of the different men and women on this trip. This film signifies a moment in time, after almost thirty years of fighting for equality, justice, and simple human rights, where underrepresented voices are given a chance to be heard on a bigger platform, which of national television—twice—before televised sporting events. World Team Sports (WTS), through MCI communications and Vietnam government approval, also had connections through the internet with certain international middle schools, in a communist country with a government that approved or controlled everything the American visitors did. These American and Vietnamese veteran soldiers were going to be known around the world during these two weeks as they grappled with their emotional baggage, their legacies, and their desired outcomes.

The Vietnam War was a first for the United States in several ways. It was the first war televised (which caused Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in viewers, something not acknowledged for several years). It lasted longer than any other war up until

Afghanistan.² It was the first war America lost publicly, even as government propaganda claimed we were winning. The draft was mandatory, and as more horrific images crossed the television screens, more troops were requested. More money was spent, so inflation raised quickly and harshly, and it became harder for Americans to support such a costly and abusive battle.

Soldiers rebelled in various ways, mostly brutal. During the Massacre of My Lai (1968), more than 500 unarmed civilians, including fifty children under the age of four, were brutally murdered by American soldiers, and women and young girls were viciously raped and tortured before they were killed. This event, along with the American government's attempt to conceal it for over a year, created more friction and anger between those that wanted to serve their country and those that could not justify this as a war "for" America and "against communism." As Vietnam veteran Gary Kulik writes, since this was such an extremely differently fought war, with no front lines, no ground "taken or held," no "strategy for victory," and no victory, coupled with the "televised snippets" of atrocity and violence from the news, only escalated this "growing sense of the senselessness" of this war (26).

The dispatching of soldiers was also different during this time. Whereas in the past battles, battalions or companies were released and traversed home together, during the Vietnam war, soldiers returned home by themselves, and when one soldier was released to return home, another was sent to war. As veteran Jeremy Lembcke claims, "For the family whose son is just coming back, you aren't going to have a public

² Up until that time. As of 2018, our presence in Afghanistan now has that distinction.

welcoming home ceremony when someone's son just down the road was just sent off to Vietnam" (Ciampaglia). This action served to isolate soldiers further, which also deepened their psychological problems. Later, movies such as *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Hearts and Minds* (another documentary, 1974), and *The Deer Hunter* (1978) attempted to illustrate the effects of the Vietnam War on everyone, including civilians, and also to show that some of the horrific acts committed were neither isolated nor singular due to, in many cases, the continuous assault on American soldier morale and sanity.³ Between the solitary return of each soldier and the movie world's creation of a myriad of negative *ethes*, one by one the American veterans "fade[d] into the American backdrop," virtually unnoticed (Egendorf *Healing from the War* 26).

The American soldiers fought both in Vietnam and on their homeland as they were abused twice as much: Vietnam War veterans were abused by civilians who called them "baby killers" and spit on them,⁴ and the returning soldiers were also ignored or abused by a government that denied veteran claims regarding problems caused by long-term injuries, their futility in dealing with extreme trauma, and after-effects of the chemical Agent Orange. The time period after the war became a time of what author

³ For more in-depth analysis of tropes created and sustained by such movies, see Keith Beattie's *The Scar That Binds: American Culture and the Vietnam War* (NYU Press, 2001), Rick Berg's "Losing Vietnam: Covering the War in an Age of Technology," (1986, part of a special edition entitled *American Representations of Vietnam*), Peter C. Rollins' "The Vietnam War: Perceptions Through Literature, Film and Television" (1984), Ryan Watson's "American Myth and National Inspiration: Bill Couturie's Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam" (2007). As of 2020, *Rambo* is still the most discussed movie with the trope of the angry veteran who suffers from desire for vengeance affliction.

⁴ According to author, veteran and historian Gary Kulik, this story has never been corroborated in that Kulik could not find one case where someone had this happen to him or someone witnessed this event. However, the verbal abuse of being called "baby killers" and "junkies" has been validated by Chaim Shaman, Robert J. Lifton and Peter Egendorf, psycho-analysts, authors, and counselors to the Vietnam War veterans in the late 1970s.

Keith Beattie refers to as “Vietnamnesia,” or the “authoritative repression of the war, and the American public tried to “forget the war and ignore” their veterans (13). Politicians also tried to “cover” the veteran’s “associated issues,” such as our defeat in the war, the very country called Vietnam, and the “guilt related” to the war (13). As researcher and professor Patrick Hagopian claims, even Ronald Reagan’s presentation speech of the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C. created havoc and disrespect toward the veterans (“Oral Narratives” 146).⁵

The Vietnam War was also the first war that created the necessity for a specific name for multiple physical and psychological problems created from a severely traumatic situation: post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Due to political “Vietnamnesia,” the government refused funding for the American Veterans from the Vietnam War until 1980, after psycho-analyst Robert Jay Lifton gave a speech and fully explained the predicament of mental health and its deterioration to Congress and the American Psychiatric Association (APA) added PTSD to its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (which was based on studies conducted on Holocaust survivors more than Vietnam soldiers). In a case of bitter irony, the American Vietnam veteran soldiers have been the most marginalized and yet they were the first completely integrated forces of the United States across all five branches: The Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines and Coast Guard.

⁵ For further reading on “havoc” from creating the Vietnam Wall, see Philip Napoli et al., “Oral History, Moral Injury, and Vietnam Veterans” (2019), Meredith H. Lair’s “The Education Center at The Wall and the Rewriting of History” (2012), Patrick Hagopian’s *The Vietnam War in American Memory* (UofM AP, 2009), Gary Kulik’s *“War Stories”: False Atrocity Tales, swift Boaters, and Winter Soldiers—What Really Happened in Vietnam* (Potomac Books, 2009), and Andrew E. Hunt’s *The Turning: A History of Vietnam Against the War* (NYU Press, 2001).

My passion for this topic grows out of my desire to find places where great conflicts also bring about a chance for peace through understanding, or possibly, some sort of change within those communities. I have always seen military people as heroes, for they have agreed to fight for an ideology that may seem crazy to some, and they have agreed to accept the possibility that they might die for a country of complete strangers that may never know their names. I would like to do my part in honoring these men and women who were fighting for an ideology that echoed so many Civil Rights movements, even as they were forgotten or ignored by others.

Kartemquin Films (KTQ), the company commissioned to film *VLTC*, had already released *Hoop Dreams* (1994), which was an extremely powerful and popular documentary at the time of its showing.⁶ Sports Illustrated and NBC Sports, along with Whisnant and WTS, were excited to have KTQ personnel use their ethos to help with telling the story WTS wanted portrayed to the national public. Part of KTQ's mission is to focus on people "whose lives are most directly affected by social and political change" and who are often "overlooked or misrepresented by the media" (Home page). KTQ's

⁶ While not relevant to this dissertation, *Hoop Dream's* awards would have been extremely relevant to KTQ's ethos: *Hoop Dreams* won the following honors: 1993, Special Distinction, Independent Spirit Award; 1994 Audience Award for Best Documentary, Sundance Film Festival; 1994, Best Documentary, Boston Society of Film Critics; 1994 Best Documentary, Los Angeles Film Critics Association; 1994 Best Picture, Chicago Film Critics Award; 1994, Special Merit, Producers Guild of America; 1994, Best Editing, Academy Award Nomination; 1994, Official Selection, Screen's Best of 1994; 1995, George Foster Peabody Award; 1995, Best Documentary, National Society of Film Critics; 1995, Best Documentary, New York Film Critics Circle; 1995, Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Documentary/Actuality, Directors Guild of America; 1995, Best New Filmmaker, MTV Movie Awards; 1995, Eddie Award for Best Edited Documentary, American Cinema Editors; 1995 Excellence in Sports Journalism Award, Sports in Society Northeast Illinois University; 2005, Inductee, National Film Registry; 2007, All-Time Greatest Documentary, International Documentary Association. Except for the 2005 and 2007 awards, NBC and Sports Illustrated would have ample reason to have complete confidence that KTQ was the right company for a human-interest story.

main goal is to “open up a dialogue, both in communities and between the general public and policymakers” in ways that “foster understanding, change thinking, and build support for social change” (“Kartemquin Films: Our Mission”). As Gordon Quinn, Founder and Artistic Director of KTQ, explains, “KTQ is about ethical filmmaking. We are not journalists. We are ethical filmmakers. There is a difference, and that difference is important” (Quinn). Friends and co-producers of this film Peter Gilbert and Adam Singer agree, knowing they had been commissioned because of expectations that they could “tell a story with a deeper meaning” than just a human-interest filler story about “differently-abled people riding around Vietnam” (Gilbert Interview #1). As I discuss in depth in Chapter Two, these KTQ men are instrumental in coaxing the veterans to talk to the camera and share memories, their current thought process and some intimate emotions with an unseen audience of Americans back home.

There’s more than One Way to Tell a Story: Mixing Methods for a More Complete Methodology

Everywhere you went people said, “Well, I hope you get a story,” and everywhere you went you did.
—Michael Herr, *Dispatches*

At its core, this dissertation is a rhetorical criticism of a documentary film, using invitational rhetoric as the main focal lens for analysis. While the events in *VLTC* are not in the exact chronological order in which they happened, the editors of Kartemquin Films edited the moments and particular scenes to create a very specific narrative that allowed viewers to witness and “share” in a story that combined emotional healing, overcoming obstacles, and making connections with people that some of these participants otherwise

would never have engaged. My question was not so much about effect as it was about the “how” of this, as in: How does rhetoric move participants in exchanges/movements beyond opposition?

To be clear, I am not analyzing the film for its effect, but rather I am discerning the multiple ways that the film demonstrates the possibilities of enacting invitational rhetoric, in both successful and seemingly unsuccessful situations. Like Martin J. Medhurst, I argue that “significant critical act blends theory, history, and criticism in unique ways to produce useful knowledge,” and that rhetorical criticism is more of a “mode of investigation rather than a method of analysis” (381). David Zarefsky adds, rhetorical criticism “explains the processes by which speakers and audiences adapt to each other” (386), and through the lens of invitational rhetoric, we can see this occurring in *VLTC*.

My initial contact was through email. I applied the “snow-ball method” or “gateway approach,” as Carolyn Lunsford Mears calls it, during my interviews in order to both acquire oral history and still allow for individual thought with the added hope that I may possibly acquire more contacts. I started out with five basic questions (see Appendix A), then continued more informally to allow for a more organic conversation. As Mears—researcher, professor, trauma consultant whose son survived the Columbine shooting—claims, through collecting data in different ways, the gateway approach can “evoke” understanding of the human condition, “reaching beneath the surface of conversation to connect those who have not lived an experience to those who have” (162). As Steve Whisnant, the major lynchpin of this whole endeavor observed, this type

of research also allowed me to gain “a greatly varied perspective” and a “very interesting story” (Interview #4). At the end of most of my interviews, I would ask if there was someone else I should contact or offer my time and attention for a follow-up interview.

In order to gain more understanding and a better awareness of the rhetorical decisions made during the making of this film, I contacted Kartemquin Films via email. Gordon Quinn, Artistic Director and founder of Kartemquin Films, offered me full access into the KTQ archives. This encompassed over 800 hours of VHS film outtakes, memos and correspondence, unpublished and published photographs, newspaper articles before and after the trip, reviews from various film festivals such as the Sundance Film Festival and Temecula Valley International Film Festival, and even audience feedback they received after the showings.

Quinn also offered me a personal interview. After we finished our initial discussion, he gave me contact information for the cameramen, co-directors, co-producers, and editors for this film. I contacted them via email, and scheduled appointments to meet them when I flew to Chicago for my archival research. When they finished talking with me, KTQ archivist Elise Schierbeek and co-producers Adam D. Singer and Peter Gilbert shared more contact information for people they felt would be “open” to my research and amenable to talking with me.

The participants that I interviewed had various roles in the Vietnam Challenge: some were veterans, some people were volunteers, and some were staff for or on the board of World Team Sports. I chose to do in-depth, semi-structured interviews, as I knew although these people would have shared the same experiences, they would not

have necessarily shared the same emotions nor the same perspectives. As Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis contend, in-depth interviews are a way for “detailed investigation of each person's personal perspective” and for possible “in-depth understanding of the personal context within which the research phenomenon is located” (58). It is also an opportunity to “collect data where it is important to set the perspectives heard within the context of personal history or experience” (58). Gesa K. Kirsch adds that this is a method where we can tell a narrative through “overlapping voices” that may help people “understand their own historically situated experience” (*Beyond the Archives 2*). As some people remember other events and information snowballs as I share information from one interviewee with another, the collective memory now belongs more to the community of actual participants who have shared a life experience, and less to the media and various “recorders” of the event.

My job in the interviews was to empathetically listen to discourses and use this lens in order to “highlight the pieces and connections . . . of social movements” without privileging one view more than another (Bone et al. 460). A relationship starts between the “storyteller and the story hearer,” and mine was different and the same with each person who shared his or her perspective with me: I listened and gave my speakers ownership of their stories, and their retelling of it brought their stories “into being” (Mears 163). I reviewed their life experiences “with intention” and respect, in ways that I hoped would help us understand the event and its significance through different perspectives and help expand the implications of invitational rhetoric.

Building Foundations from Identity to Invitation: Literature Review

As the Vietnam Challenge depended upon many foundations already built, so does this dissertation. The foundational theorists I use are Kenneth Burke, Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin, and Mary Louise Pratt. While Kenneth Burke may seem outdated or obsolete to some, most rhetoricians still very much use his terminology when discussing how social humans act and think during the process of identification, division, and consubstantiation. My dissertation is no different, for even though I look at different situations where Foss and Griffin's invitational rhetoric succeed and seem to fail, I will also document particular moments in the film where we can clearly see examples of identification, division and consubstantiation. Also, Burke, very similar to feminists, lamented over the misuse of words, which he believed created more dissonance than anything because by creating different definitions for standard words, clear meaning became lost and interpretations followed suit. He wanted to create a more cohesive community by way of agreement. In line with this, I will use his terminology to seek clearer explanations of what transpires in the film.

Foss and Griffin claim traditional (Burkean) rhetoric is defined as "the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or induce actions in other human agents" ("Beyond Persuasion" 12); however, they build upon his terminology and the argument of former feminists that in this capacity, rhetoric can be considered somewhat violent. Pratt, too, uses violent language when she discusses her contact zones as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power . . . of the world today" (33). While this article has come

under fire because Pratt does not give concrete examples as to how she created the spaces in her classrooms for such zones and the results she discusses,⁷ the fact remains that this article helps describe what happens when we allow conflicting ideologies to come together without giving preferential treatment nor detrimental attention to any single platform or culture.

Foss and Griffin, who recently celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of their original article with a collection of reference works and comprehensive essays with *Inviting Understanding: A Portrait of Invitational Rhetoric*, is easily the most important theory I interrogate and apply to this dissertation. They argue that invitational rhetoric is rhetoric that is more cooperative and builds around the philosophy that people want to understand each other's points of view more than they desire to convert each other to their singular point of view, and I engage this philosophy in six of the scenes that we see in *VLTC*.

Foss and Griffin argue that Burke's definition of rhetoric "as persuasion" is the "Western conscious intent to change others" (2), which is more about "a desire for control and domination, for the act of changing another establishes the power of the change agent over that other" ("Beyond Persuasion" 3). Foss and Griffin offer "an alternative," one based on the feministic rhetoric with principles embedded in equality, immanent value, and self-determination. They suggest that invitational rhetoric can be an

⁷ For instance, see "Fault Lines in the Contact Zones" by Richard E. Miller or "Negotiation the Contact Zones" by Joseph Harris. Both articles criticize Pratt for her failure (or poor choice in completely neglecting) to explain how she created the space in her classroom or how she convinced the students to engage with each other in these ways. They also give examples of what they did to navigate this concept within their own classrooms.

alternative when “changing and controlling others is not the rhetor’s goal” (5). Pratt initially uses the contact zones as a space created for discussion and meaningful idea exchanges within her classroom; however, since she uses the word “social” to explore an area where “cultures clash,” we can also apply this term to the spaces where the veterans of previous warring countries meet and ride next to each other, or the van where the American veterans discuss their purpose and goals for the trip, or even the kitchen where the KTQ editors emotionally discuss film cuts. A contact zone does not have to be an enclosed space; therefore, it can also be out in the open, such as a kitchen where editors discuss which scenes stay and which scenes go, or during a lunch break when the Vietnam Challenge riders break off into smaller groups and discuss different aspects of the day (or even a memory that just came through from thirty years in the past). As I discuss later in this dissertation, contact zones do not offer any promise of “safety” or privilege; however, they offer an opportunity for people to discuss their differences and perhaps find their sameness.

If all parts are treated equally, and none is given priority over another, we have entered Pratt’s contact zones. According to Foss and Griffin, all that is needed to start a connection with people is an invitation sparked with intent to listen. It is through the decision to enter a contact zone that one can participate in invitational rhetoric. If we use Burke’s terminology, we can better explain the phenomenon of two people who agree and align with each other for a moment before they resist each other again. Burke, Pratt, Foss and Griffin promote the attempt to create an atmosphere of intentional listening and

hopeful understanding. Foss and Griffin give us an opportunity to enter into contact zones and at least realize we have options as well as possibilities.

Whereas in Burke's world, the goal of rhetoric is to change others, change is not the purpose of invitational rhetoric: The goal of invitational rhetoric is to increase understanding, which gives all parties more options and opens both audience and speakers to possibilities of change. Hopefully, change occurs in both the rhetor and audience as they gain new insights and valuable contributions that both sides have made. Change is a choice in these moments, and as everyone feels equal and valued—every “being is unique and necessary part of the pattern of the universe” (4)—everyone recognizes the fact that every member engaged in this space at this moment are the foremost authorities of their own lives, and since they have the right to “constitute their worlds as they choose,” change is optional and the decision to change—or not to change, if the case may be—is equally respected. Between the veterans and riders who chose to participate in the Vietnam Challenge, to the cameramen and producers who decided what and whom to film, to the editors who had to make decisions on what to show the public and what to cut, there are a series of connections that create multiple opportunities for invitational rhetoric, identification, and even consubstantiation, all in a multitude of different contact zones, and the beautiful thing about KTQ (which I discuss later in this dissertation) is that its members believe this type of grappling is essential in their filmmaking, so they are willing to take the extra time to honor everyone's opinions and voices until a consensus is met.

While I also depend upon other theorists to support my argument, these seven rhetoricians help provide the base of my argument: that by examining how people convince those of conflicting ideologies to come together and willingly move into contact zones with the hope and intent of gaining understanding in order to create something better, we may be able to duplicate certain aspects and spread such hope.

In the following chapters, I discuss how valuable *VLTC* could be for rhetorical studies as I look to answer the question of how we can get people with conflicting ideologies to engage with each other in meaningful ways that may foster (at least the possibility of) positive changes. You have just finished reading Chapter One, Where I give a brief history lesson and a short literature review as well as my intention on how to extend their work through mine. In Chapter Two, I discuss the rhetorical logistics of creating the film. Here, I explain the roles that World T.E.A.M. Sports, NBC Sports, Kartemquin Films (KTQ crew) and its staff, both Vietnam and American governments, and the Support Staff had before and during the making of this documentary. I examine how the veterans, both American and Vietnamese, decided to participate in such an emotional and physical journey, and the processes by which participants were chosen. I even look at things that could have gone wrong, as well as things that did go wrong, and how different participants/organizations navigated these events.

Even in the logistic section of this dissertation, every group member's identity intersects and overlaps with members from different groups, and as they claim and maintain their identities in different situations, we see aspects of invitation, acceptance and rejection, the emotional and physical labor that went into this journey for sponsors

and participants. I would be unethical if I said all things have a happy ending; if you have seen the film, you know that like life, not every part of the Vietnam Challenge ends with rainbows. However, the romantic part of me argues that this project was important to so many people for so many reasons, and on several levels, the invitational rhetoric worked, and many people felt that this was a life-changing event.

In Chapter Three, I analyze three events from the documentary: 1) the first American veteran team meeting; 2) one of the veterans who talks to a classroom full of students who were about the same age of the child he shot when he was a soldier; 3) the unplanned friendship created by two men who suffered the same injury in the same war in which they had literally tried to kill each other. These three different proceedings occur in different contact zones and have different people navigating power dynamics and themselves. These events may seem more or less significant than others in the film; however, all of them exhibit great examples of my aim: that when people remain in the contact zones and attempt to release particular mind sets and dogmas, understanding can happen. Please note: I did not say “will happen”; I claimed that understanding “can happen,” which offers us hope in various rhetorical paradigms.

Chapter Four include events where invitational rhetoric appears to fail: 1) the “unplanned” visit to the My Lai Memorial; 2) the second team meeting in the film; and 3) the relationship forged between Jose Ramos and Duane Wagner. Reverting to Chapter Two for reference, it is important to know the contexts and intents of the different organizations and parties involved in these exchanges, since agency and trust are so important at these moments. I examine the idea that once trust is broken, so is the

exchange in a contact zone; however, I also argue that the basic premise of invitational rhetoric is still intact, even within withdrawal, and therefore successful.

Chapter Five serves as my conclusion. What does this mean for the realm of rhetoric, and what can we as rhetoricians learned from this? What worked for these people? What failed? Is navigating that which makes us uncomfortable something that makes us better as people or a society in some way? How does one recognize the difference between the traditional Western definition of rhetoric (to persuade or change as a power structure) and invitational rhetoric? What future implications does this have pedagogically?

Also, I add information from interviews that give further insight to decisions made during production and editing; clips that were omitted but still show a different rhetorical outcome, which gives them value; contact zones that the audience might not recognize without the proper context. At the very least, adding this element gives more depth to Pratt's contact zones and tracing Latour's connections within Burkean *identification*, especially when we consider that the veterans decided to vote on whether or not KTQ could film their meetings, which they deliberately opened only to other American veterans. Overlapping this scenario was the added tension that everyone—all members—of KTQ had been protestors of the Vietnam War. In this context, with one meeting, we are witnessing two separate contact zones, especially when we also add gender and ethnicity.

CHAPTER II
RHETORICAL LOGISTICS

*Evil floats all around us like a ghost or an
unseen . . . mist. Good floats all around us
too. It's all intermingles in this
['nonempirical'] potential state. What we
humans do is turn this potential into reality.*
—Karl Marlantes, *What it is Like to Go to
War*

In Chapter Two, I discuss the logistics of creating *VLTC* and introduce the term “rhetorical logistics.” If logistics refers to the process of coordinating and moving resources—people, materials, inventory, equipment, facilities—from beginning to the desired ending location, then rhetorical logistics can be defined as rhetorical strategies employed to create a particular action or movement from its inception to its ending. Depending on the goal, rhetorical logistics may be persuasive—such as applying for a grant or convincing someone to vote for a particular person—or informative—like instruction manuals or warning labels. In each case, the rhetor must define the successful goal of the activity, then make rhetorical decisions based on what she believes will work. If the activity does not succeed—someone else gets the grant or washed a red shirt with whites—the rhetor may change the rhetorical logistics as she attempts to reach her goal.

Through the scope of rhetorical logistics, this chapter examines the roles that Rap Groups and Congress played in creating the ethos of the American Vietnam War veteran, and how World T.E.A.M. Sports (WTS), NBC Sports, Kartemquin Films (KTQ) and its staff, both Vietnam and American governments, and the support staff had before and

during the creation of this documentary. I examine how the veterans, both American and Vietnamese, decided to participate in such an emotional and physical journey, and the processes by which participants were chosen. By considering information from interviews and outtakes, I also explore events or discussions that could have gone wrong, as well as those that did go wrong, and how different participants/organizations navigated these events.

After explaining the actor's role, as well as the individuals who made up a particular actor, I also discuss how these actors interact in contact zones with each other. Even in the logistical realm, each group member overlaps with members from different groups, and as they claim or maintain their identities in different situations, we can see aspects of invitation, its acceptance or rejection, and the emotional and physical labor that went into this journey for many of the participants. I would be unethical if I said all things have a happy ending: if you have watched the film, you know that part of its charm is the realistic admission that life does not consist of only one possible ending or emotion. This chapter examines how such emotions occurred.

This chapter is mainly about the Vietnam War veterans, for two primary reasons: 1) the documentary film revolves around them and their struggles; and 2) in order to appreciate their struggles and accomplishments, we need to understand those struggles from their return to the United States until they finished the bike ride on the Vietnam Highway almost thirty years later.

Before the Film: Rap Groups and the Emerging Veteran Ethos

What's the difference between a fairy tale and a war story? The fairy tale starts with, "Once upon a time," and the war story starts with, "This shit was real!"
–Wayne Smith, Army Medic, Vietnam 1966-69

One of the most agreed-upon facts is that the Vietnam War veterans had a difficult time readjusting to their home life. As Hollywood and television producers attempted to “rewrite” the Vietnam War and America’s inability to comprehend how we lost, writers and directors attempted to create formulas that would “fictionalize” the “Living Room War,” and do so in spectacularly miserable fashion (Lemke 100). Between movies such as *Clay Pidgeon* (1972) and *Apocalypse Now* (1979), or television series *M*A*S*H* (1972-1983) or *Magnum, P.I.* (1980-1988), the ethos of the Vietnam veteran seemed to move and swivel like a bobble head.

Rap Groups were formed when the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) asked some psychiatrists and psycho-historians to help them deal with their problems that no one else seemed to care about. Robert Jay Lifton, most famous for his research on trauma survivors from Hiroshima and The Holocaust, joined Chaim Shatan and Arthur Egendorf (who was a Vietnam veteran as well as clinician) to hold the first meeting in December 1970. Over forty of the “northeast’s best minds” in and surrounding New York volunteered, and through these veteran-run meetings, some accomplishments were made. Lifton, the more “clinical” of the three, is given credit for first creating the term *Post Vietnam Syndrome* (Post-Vietnam Syndrome, which Shatan and the veterans all hated “Grief 348”), and later establishing it as *Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome* and *Post*

Traumatic Stress Disorder with Congress; the American Psychiatric Association (APA) accepted and recorded it as an official mental disorder in 1980. Shatan and Egen Dorf contributed to the new veteran ethos as trauma “survivor” by speaking and writing about these men and inviting people to attempt to understand and help these particular veterans, now recognized as victims in a very specific category they shared only with the survivors of the Holocaust.

The value of collecting oral history for Lifton and Shatan was to help identify and treat veterans who needed more than a pat on the back. Sharing their oral history and trauma helped the veterans feel connected with absence of judgement and helped them move closer to the “normalcy” they felt they wanted. Twenty years later, moving through the rhetorical ecology of tragedy, trauma and collecting oral history work of Mary Marshall Clark, Carolyn Lunsford Mears, Stephen Sloan, and Mark Klempner⁸ have not only opened the door to discuss the value of interviewing and saving oral histories from the survivors of traumatic events: their work *demands* that we conduct such research, and do so as ethically as possible.

Both Mears and Clark contend that victims create a *trauma membrane* around themselves as a community and people readily ignore them or “allow them to heal” and “give them space,” this created a false narrative in the community memories and “interpretations,” as Mears and Clark realized that without the oral history of actual

⁸ Mary Marshall Clark (longitudinal study, interviewed “hundreds” of victims the week following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks), Carolyn Lunsford Mears (the mother of one of the students who survived the Columbine Shooting on April 20, 1999), Stephen Sloan (interviewed New Orleans’ survivors of Hurricane Katrina after its demolishing of iconic city August 23-31, 2005), and Mark Klempner (interviewed Dutch people who rescued Jews during World War II, worked with Dori Laub).

victims, “the representation” of the tragic event “is more frequently created” by those “outside the experience itself,” or outside of the trauma membrane. In other words, without the oral history of the actual victims or survivors of such major events, history is written by the bystanders and onlookers, who may or may not have an accurate account of the very experience historians and archivists wish to preserve and explore. The “personal interpretation” of the event becomes hidden or even lost by the “global, societal view” (Mears 164). This omission or deletion of personal recollection from the very community that was victimized by it only serves to let the trauma and pain linger, as well as silence the people who “rightly deserve” to have their own stories as both “a validation of their view” of the experience as well as a way to be empowered, which gives the power “to reaffirm and buttress community identity” (Sloan 184).

Much like the rap groups, survivors of catastrophes were given opportunities to use their own voice to tell their personal stories in front of a nonjudgmental listener. In the role of listener and recorder, these scholars practice Ratcliffe’s “rhetorical listening,” where this type of listening “signifies a stance of openness” can choose “to assume in relation to *any* person, text, or culture” (Ratcliffe *Rhetorical Listening* 17). It is the speaker’s choice of what and how much to share; it is the audience’s choice to listen, and both have the opportunity to connect by sharing (or not) identifiers that may intersect with each other’s, which paves the way for more open communication.

One of the problems with survivors of trauma is the fact that sometimes the emotions are so overwhelming that words cannot begin to describe what the person wants or needs to say. In some cases (survivors of the Vietnam War, the Columbine shooting

and Hurricane Katrina), the survivors would tell of tales they had heard rather than what actually happened to them.⁹ As Richard Kearney claims, sometimes people are “unable to deal with the traumatizing shock” that comes with “inadmissible pain,” which presents people from talking about it immediately after it happens but also may allow them to respond “in the most beautiful language” after, which also complicates the issue of believability (56). However, as Sarah Haley, the social worker who was the first person to hear from a witness to the My Lai Massacre, advised others, it was better to believe anything survivors told others in therapy sessions, “except when they say they are not affected.” Egendorf explains the biggest value of listening and talking in the Rap Groups: Rap Group meetings gave people a place “where you could tell your story,” including “the most horrible parts,” and the “other people would listen” without judgment (“Rap Groups” 91). As I mentioned earlier, the only things not tolerated were bragging or denial of trauma.

By using the rhetorical logistics of rap groups, other therapy groups and oral historians could find ways to speak with trauma survivors and “co-create” a narrative that was as authentic as oral history should be. As I move into the other agencies and actors that made *VLTC* possible, the authentic voices of the veterans is of utmost importance to most of the actors involved. In the most basic sense, here is what happened:

⁹ See, for instance, Gary Kulik’s *War Stories*, Philip Caputo’s *A Rumor of War*, and Jeremy Lembcke’s *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam*.

- Steve Whisnant and Jim Benson come up with the idea in 1996. Whisnant and Benson spend next two years going to Veteran Organizations to get their approval and support.
- Whisnant and Benson organize and pitch the plan to both the American and Vietnamese governments.
- NBC Sports and Sports Illustrated decide to run this as a human-interest story on national television.
- Sports Illustrated suggests Kartemquin Films and Whisnant contacts and sequesters KTQ films for the documentary.
- WTS sent blurbs to KTQ films so that the film producers and staff would have a general idea of who would be on the ride.
- Everyone goes on the trip.
- American Vietnam veterans vote to allow KTQ to film their private meetings and interview them individually throughout the ride.
- The Vietnamese officials change plans daily.
- Vietnam created a website for worldwide interaction with schools so the riders could interact with students and discuss the day's events as well as reflect upon both emotional and physical effects of their ride.
- Riders, disabled and abled, speaking different languages, worked together to accomplish the goal of ensuring that all participants crossed the goal of 1,200 miles in sixteen days.
- Everyone finished the event.

- Everyone returns home.

World T.E.A.M. (The Exceptional Athlete Matters) Sports

QUESTION: What would happen if you put able-bodied people on the same team with disabled people, then add people with different disabilities?

ANSWER: If you do it right, and all of them have the proper kinds and amounts of support, amazing things that can transform lives.

The significance of breaking up some of these groups appear in later discussions; however, while each group, especially in the case of WTS, has its agenda—in WTS’s case, that agenda is for everyone to finish the trip together and demonstrate how a diversely disabled group could do amazing things—there are people within these groups that have specific jobs or that move beyond the group’s one goal-driven purpose. In this way, a person’s identity can intersect three groups at once. For instance, Gruffie Clough was WTS staff, counselor for the riders, a rider herself, a wife to one of the participants, teacher for all participants on the trip, and activities director for the veterans in order to help them navigate communications better.

Whisnant, Benson, and Mark Hurley spoke with “most if not all” of the veterans’ organizations and according to Whisnant, WTS had 100% support from these establishments (Interview #2). An article ran in one of the military magazines in order to recruit veterans. The rhetoric invited veterans to be a part of something wonderful, and to return to the place of their trauma and possibly heal from some of their PTSD. Interested veterans, specifically from the Vietnam War—even though WTS included all veterans—

were encouraged to write WTS and explain why they wanted to participate.¹⁰ Staff chose whom to invite for interviews, and based upon specific criteria, chose whom to invite for the return to Vietnam. The veterans and members of WTS that spoke with me all remember being reached or recruited by friends, family, or Mark Hurley (whom I did not interview). No one remembers simply applying for a spot on the “team.” Everyone I spoke with agreed that the process was more networking than blind submission, even though Whisnant, Benson, and Kiernen later swore they all tried to get more people of color involved.¹¹

Whisnant also contacted Gruffie Clough, a friend of his who had been a part of other but similar outbound programs. As time neared the event date, Clough held conferences to help the staff of WTS learn how to help the veterans, then she held conferences to train the volunteer staff. Like KTQ Films, she did not meet the veterans until the night they met in New York a day before the flight to Vietnam.

Most of the WTS team remained hidden from the spotlight for various reasons, one of them because they wanted the event to be more about the veteran participants, both abled and disabled. Then Steve introduces support staff employee Gruffie Clough to talk “a little bit about the team dynamics” (*VLTC*).

¹⁰ While Whisnant is adamant that advertisements ran in military magazines, I could not find one, even with the aid of several veterans’ organizations and a few veterans. WTS did not have this archived, because when they changed headquarter locations, the “new” record keepers did not move any of the older stories. I did, however, find advertisements that asked for donations once the ride and riders were established.

¹¹ These are in outtakes, though Kiernen’s remark— “We tried and tried to get as many people involved as possible, and we repeatedly asked the veterans’ groups to help us find more women and more people of color,” is also on the Vietnamese film of this event. After two years of searching, nobody can find a copy of the article that invited participation in the Vietnam Challenge. Everyone that I spoke with was personally invited or invited by a relative of a friend.

Gruffie instructs everyone in the room to cross their arms “in whatever way is most comfortable,” and after a minute or two, she tells everyone to change and cross their arms the “other way.” As she explains very soon after this, this exercise represents the challenge to these participants as they “define World TEAM Sports and Vietnam Challenge [and] remember it probably won’t be your natural version of team.” This brings a challenge out into the open as she invites her audience to recognize the differences of each person and find a thread of commonality among them. Burke’s identification is at play here, where people find something to identify within people around them, and in this case, there is “a specialized activity makes one a participant in some social or economic class. ‘Belonging’ in this sense is rhetorical” (Burke *A Rhetoric of Motives* 28). Members of WTS and the veterans are asked to do this together, giving the appearance of a group participating in one thing together. She requests, “Please, please keep in mind that this is a very, very big, bold adventure and we create it as we go along,” and “that any previous definition that we have, individually and collectively, is a resource but not the only way that it can be done” (*VLTC* outtake).

She will report to Whisnant each evening because her responsibility is the emotional and minor physical aid of the riders. Halpern’s job is different because he oversees both the physical and mental well-being of the American riders and provide treatment as necessary. In his own words, Halpern will be one of the people “responsible” for finding “continuity” and “find areas” that will help keep everyone “reasonably comfortable” as he and others “try to understand both sides” and “bring them together” even “as they’re dealing with their own issues” (Interview). He will have a “mirror,” a

Vietnam physician, who will work with him as well as tend to the Vietnamese riders. Halpern will also be working with the physicians at the Bach Mai Hospital as he shares therapeutic exercises, prosthetics, and gives a check for \$240,000 to the institution in order to help them create a more current facility in order to serve the disabled better. Like Clough, Halpern will relate necessary information to Whisnant each evening, as will other leaders of the WTS team—teachers assisting in the Ask Asia program, bike mechanics, technicians, and lead counselors. Logistics depend upon information.

In each of these contact zones, power must be negotiated. On one level, Whisnant is the served: everyone defers to him, so he can work with all the leaders on this trip and accomplish certain goals. On another level, Whisnant is clearly a servant to this huge group of people, attempting to make this trip as best as he can for everyone. While Whisnant is obviously the most prominent of the WTS team, he must still keep the members of the WTS board (and funders for this trip) relatively happy as they bike down the Vietnam Highway, even though some of them have never ridden more than ten miles in a day. Whisnant must have information from the others so that he can ask for various help from the Vietnamese government.

The fact that none of the hotels had elevators meant that the disabled who rode in wheelchairs needed to be accommodated on the first floor or carried up to their rooms on higher levels (sometimes five or six flights). Who decides who gets what floor? Who decides who rooms with whom? Whisnant would let his team leaders handle these kinds of details, and then he would work to make sure their suggestions were met as much as possible.

While the Vietnamese had a feast prepared for the entire entourage when they finished a ride in the evenings, Whisnant still tried to negotiate for some western food. The Vietnamese also changed the itinerary every day: they removed or forbade sites the veterans had planned on seeing, they changed times for evening dinners and political fanfare, and they even changed routes in the middle of the day. In these instances, Whisnant negotiated with them. Sometimes, as the film suggests, he was successful; other times, he was not. As Caroline Doyle remarked in her interview, “Steve was the guy in the middle of everything, but when the Vietnamese government said we couldn’t do something, we couldn’t do it. There was no more conversation.” This was a constant source of stress for Whisnant and the veterans, as well, for sometimes they felt as if he had not fought for them enough.

NBC Sports/Sports Illustrated

For the most part, NBC Sports and Sports Illustrated were invisible except in helping promote and air the documentary film. Kartmenquin Films had produced *Hoop Dreams* (1994),¹² and the award-winning film had given Gordon Quinn and his

¹² While not relevant to this dissertation, *Hoop Dream’s* awards would have been extremely relevant to KTQ’s ethos: *Hoop Dreams* won the following honors: 1993, Special Distinction, Independent Spirit Award; 1994 Audience Award for Best Documentary, Sundance Film Festival; 1994, Best Documentary, Boston Society of Film Critics; 1994 Best Documentary, Los Angeles Film Critics Association; 1994 Best Picture, Chicago Film Critics Award; 1994, Special Merit, Producers Guild of America; 1994, Best Editing, Academy Award Nomination; 1994, Official Selection, Screen’s Best of 1994; 1995, George Foster Peabody Award; 1995, Best Documentary, National Society of Film Critics; 1995, Best Documentary, New York Film Critics Circle; 1995, Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Documentary/Actuality, Directors Guild of America; 1995, Best New Filmmaker, MTV Movie Awards; 1995, Eddie Award for Best Edited Documentary, American Cinema Editors; 1995 Excellence in Sports Journalism Award, Sports in Society Northeast Illinois University; 2005, Inductee, National Film Registry; 2007, All-Time Greatest Documentary, International Documentary Association. Except for the 2005 and 2007 awards, NBC and Sports Illustrated would have ample reason to have complete confidence that KTQ was the right company for a human-interest story.

colleagues the ethos of people who were proud of doing a job well: a job, as Quinn explains, of “ethical filmmaking,” which is distinctly different from journalism or one-sided documentaries that we see today (Quinn Interview). NBC Sports/Sport Illustrated provided a contact zones for Steve Whisnant and the leaders of KTQ to meet. “Ways to move *into and out of* rhetorics of authenticity; ground rules for communication across lines of difference and hierarchy that go beyond politeness but maintain mutual respect” (emphasis added, Foss and Griffin “The Metatheoretical Foundations” 11) WTS had final say over the cut, but up until the last edit, they had agreed to allow KTQ have full say in all filming and editing decisions.

They had also sequestered this film in the time frame of one year, which was a challenge for the KTQ crew, which I will discuss in a moment. KTQ would not have to worry about costs; however, this would also create a contact zones of power dynamics: when Company A pays Company B to do a job because of Company B’s expertise, who gets to make the decisions that Company B would normally finalize if money were not involved?

Kartemquin Films (KTQ)

This project was incredibly intense. It was quick, it was nonstop, and it consumed us all
—Gordon Quinn

Gordon Quinn is the founder of KTQ and was one of the filmmakers/producers on *VLTC*. His friends and co-founders Peter Gilbert and Jerry Blumenthal were excited to be a part of this project. According to Gilbert, Paulette Douglas from *Sports Illustrated* and Steve Whisnant from WTS contacted KTQ about the film. Adam Singer, also a friend

who had worked with KTQ on other projects, found the prospect of traveling to Vietnam and learning about the veterans “alluring,” and joined the production (Singer Interview #1). After doing some research, the KTQ men realized that this could be “more than just a ride with disabled and abled people. This could be a more meaningful production, especially with the veterans” (Quinn). Gilbert agreed, saying, “This was a way that we could tell the story of the war” without calling it “proof” or an “archival film” (Gilbert Interview #1). Both he and Quinn claim that when they saw that they could tell this story “on an emotional level of just the interactions between the Americans and the North Vietnamese.” Singer adds that this was also an opportunity for members of the KTQ crew and others to learn about these veterans and what “serve your country” and “sacrifice” meant to them (Singer Interview #1). Quinn and Gilbert pitched this idea back to Whisnant, who approved.

As Quinn states in an interview with Documentry.org, KTQ believes in ethical filmmaking, which was never defined. For Quinn and KTQ, three core values of this are: 1) transparency, to both KTQ’s subjects and viewers; 2) integrity, or “staying true to the mission of telling the story and letting the story inform the style of filmmaking”; and 3) *respect*, “for both the subject and the viewer” (emphasis added, Spitz).

We usually are trying to tell someone’s story, and help viewers see the world through the eyes of someone else. Our characters and their lives are filled with contradictions and flaws so that our viewers will believe that what we show of their lives is genuine, and we want them to be able to

testify, if necessary, that it is. We believe that our viewers can deal with contradictions and flawed characters—in short, with real life. (Spitz)

In the context of creating *VLTC*, Quinn and the staff at KTQ pitched their idea of creating something more than their original assignment. “We really wanted [this project] to be about the veterans . . . and the enemies also,” said Quinn, and Gilbert added, “[The] sort of mantra” KTQ men had was to let the audience “experience with” the person on the other side of (or perhaps inside) the television screen, the person they filmed. Once they obtained permission, it was all hands-on deck. “It was the first film we had done with a deadline,” claims Gilbert, and Jan Sutcliffe, one of the editors who remained in Chicago to make sure the incoming films were dealt with accordingly. The KTQ team that went to Vietnam consisted of Quinn, Gilbert, Blumenthal, Jim Fetterly, and Singer. They went to look at the locations a week or two before filming, and then returned so they could fly with the veterans as they began their journey.

KTQ went everywhere that the veterans went. Here, also, is a contact zone that creates several opportunities for invitational rhetoric in the fact that three things happened which we will not see in the film, yet everyone discussed with me¹³: 1) KTQ informed the American veterans that in some form or another, all members of the KTQ personnel had been protestors of the war or military in general; 2) the American veterans had a meeting and agreed to allow KTQ to record everything; 3) KTQ promised them they would have an opportunity to watch the screenings and if there was something the

¹³ As mentioned in the Introduction, people that I interviewed for this dissertation were: Gordon Quinn, Peter Gilbert, Adam Singer, David E. Simpson, Jan Sutcliffe, Leslie Simmer, George Brummel, Duane Wagoner, Wayne Smith, and Ed Weihenmayer.

“character” objected to, they were invited to “bring it up” to Quinn or the others; however, Quinn also told them “up front” that he was “gonna try to convince” them it “has to be in the movie,” promising, “We’ll have an argument . . . It’ll be a real conversation,” and adding, “[I]f I can’t convince you, we’ll take it out,” in reality, telling the veterans that they had “that power.” Quinn, Gilbert, and Singer all emphatically believe, even in their individual work, that they are “asking people to go so deep into their emotional” personas, sharing their “trauma and whatnot,” that the KTQ “family” invites their feedback and conversations.

This invitation to share, to attempt to learn, and to encourage decisions as well as discussions, is all part of invitational rhetoric. It may pause where Quinn admits his goal is to change their minds—the very opposite of invitational rhetoric—however, as Quinn also reiterates that he will omit the part if the person is not convinced, it offers a chance for them both to learn from each other’s perspectives. As Singer points out, these are “everyday people” who may realize there might be a “consequence” to a particular part of the film, and then it becomes the producers’ duty to do the ethical thing. “That’s the way we work,” states Quinn, alluding to his earlier mention of transparency and respect. This is also a part of the KTQ ethos that must be maintained.

The four men broke into two teams, and most of the time it was Quinn and Blumenthal filming and interviewing in one place while Singer and Gilbert did their thing. The goal was to get as much film and audio as possible each day, and every evening after everyone else was in bed, pack all the day’s tapes and ship them back to the States as quickly as possible so the editors could begin their work. It was insane, says

Singer. “At one point I’m riding on the back of a motorcycle, filming one of the Vietnamese riders, then the next I’m in the van.”

“At the end of the day,” adds Gilbert, “we would have to pack up all of our work for the day and hope it made it.” Quinn elaborates, “Remember we had no flash drives back then. We had the internet, but not DVDs. Everything was VHS tapes and cassettes.” In all, over 800 VHS tapes were used to record various moments during the trip:

Back in America, the editors would receive the tapes and separate them. Gilbert remembers that they had an unusually large crew because this film was due in such a short time frame. “Everyone had an equal amount of work,” says Jan Sutcliffe, one of the primary freelance editors for KTQ during this time. “There were all sorts of energies and power shifts that went on in the whole post-production process because it was massive. We were sitting there in front of computers not having gone on this ride ... and then ... working, working, working, and then sitting in front of these screening groups” (Sutcliffe). When Quinn and the KTQ crew returned to the States, they sat down with some of the editors and gave input. Whisnant was also partly involved with the editing. Explaining all the energy that filled the KTQ house, Sutcliffe laughs and says, “It was a really, really wonderful project in so many ways,” adding that “it was wild” as she and others attempted to “craft a narrative out of this huge beast” in such a short time span.

In the collaborative world of KTQ, it was normal for editors and producers to be in the kitchen cooking up another pot of coffee at 2:00 AM fighting to keep scenes in or take them out. Simpson laughs, saying, “I remember Gordon and another one of the producers arguing over a scene, and everyone had taken sides, and it was glorious

listening to everyone have their say,” adding, “Of course, Gordon won. He always wins at these things because he’s so good at seeing things in a different way.” However, with the deadline approaching, decisions had to be made. Sutcliffe half-heartedly jokes, “There is the Kartemquin way of working, and then there’s a lot of other ways of working.” All of them agree that the KTQ way “is to sort of beat it to death, to edit it, then edit it, and then re-edit it, and then re-edit it, and re-edit it, and it becomes a better film” (Sutcliffe).

However, there comes a time when they had to simply stop their revisions and take a breath. All the people I spoke with who worked on this project agreed with Quinn that it was “extremely intense” and “all-consuming” with “insane amounts of energy required” from everyone. Sutcliffe notes that from her perspective, “It was an interesting kind of contrast in post-production philosophy and ... in purpose as the creator who’s trying to pull together all these threads narratively, visually, and the team is just part of the protoplasm—part of the energy of the project,” meaning they were literally in the chair next to editors. When asked why work with KTQ, I was told, “Working with the Kartemquin team was the apex of working ... on the issue-oriented, important film making” (Sutcliffe) and, “They are really the best place to work on social issues and starting a conversation in the Chicago area” (Simpson) and, “Because it’s KTQ. And they were my friends” (Singer #2). Getting to work with them was a chance to do something more in line with Singer’s goals and belief systems than “just a job.”

Working with and in Vietnam

*We did not intend for it to be a political . . .
but we learned very quickly that there
[were] huge political overtones*
—Steve Whisnant

As I discuss the contact zones of the Vietnamese, please note that this is with limited information. While I spoke with Americans¹⁴ about them, I was not able to speak with the Vietnamese. While I attempt to be impartial, understand that this is still one-sided information, even if from different sources. I have taken the information from different interviews, along with newspaper articles, and have attempted to be consistent with the information given.

For example, this event was the first time the Vietnamese government opened its borders since the Vietnam War, and the American “team” was the first group of civilians to enter the country, albeit with conditions. WTS had offered to help the Vietnamese build a new section of their hospital in Bach Mai, and as we see in the film, WTS brought some equipment, physicians led by Brian Halpern, and a generous check for \$240,000 as a way to help Vietnam create better facilities.

Vietnam had just opened its borders to tourists, and the group riding in the Vietnam Challenge was the first tourist group to gain access to the country. During the two-year negotiations with Whisnant and WTS, the Vietnamese government agreed to allow the American veterans to visit the various places where they had served or been

¹⁴ Americans are from all groups—the riders, WTS, and KTQ—Ed Weihenmayer, Terry Cotter, Liza Cotter, Duane Wagner, Wayne Smith, Caroline Doyle, Adam Singer, Peter Gilbert, Steve Whisnant, Brian Halpern MD.

wounded. However, once the American riders landed in Vietnam, all of this changed. There were also a few other surprises for the Americans. For instance, in November of 1997, just two months before the Americans arrived, the Vietnamese government sequestered four companies to help create and manage internet systems. They also set up a website hosted by the Asian Society¹⁵ that connected middle school children from Vietnam and different parts of the world in an educational setting, with some of the participants joining in and journaling for the students as well as answering questions about the ride. Some of the WTS volunteers were also teachers, and their classes were online for part of the adventure, as well.

As Caroline Doyle explained several times in her interview, the Vietnamese government was very clear on what Americans were allowed and not allowed to do, stating, “If they did not want you to do something, you didn’t do it. Period.” The Americans were chauffeured by three Vietnamese officials, whom everyone called “The Minders”: one woman, who was also a karaoke star, and two men, who you see in the film. One of the Minders is the man who gets on to Duane at 40:00 and corrals everyone into the van so they can make their next destination on time. The Minders were responsible for making sure the Americans stayed safe, arrived at their destinations on time, and did not go where the Vietnamese government forbade them. The irony in this is that The Minders ended up—by spending time with the Americans and possibly being too exhausted by this event—having what Quinn called a “don’t ask, don’t tell” attitude

¹⁵ I had to find this on the Way Back Machine browser. All that it has now is a moving bike. You have to have credentials to sign in, but I don’t know if that would work, since AskAsia.com sold the web address in 2006.

after a few days, which becomes evident in the scene where Artie Guerrero and Heidi Ubel Baruch “sneak off” to see the hospital where they once were (1:31:17). Quinn says that everyone knew they had snuck off, and the female Minder kept asking, “Where are they? Where are they?” while everyone either ignored her or shrugged.

When Guerrero and Baruch finally appeared, she looked at them and then hastily looked away so she could pretend she did not see them completely covered with dirt. Also, the KTQ crew recruited the youngest Minder, Tran, and gave him a camera. When we see the upset Vietnamese rider at My Lai (this is Son Don), Tran is actually filming them, allowing him to speak to a familiar person and have a voice as he works through some of his own memories (1:21:38).

Conclusion: Contact Zones and Invitational Rhetoric Revisited

As I mentioned earlier, there are multiple contact zones in each of these groups or areas. As we watch the film, we can see riders with each other one day, then with someone else the next. Sometimes this is because a friendship has formed; sometimes it is because there is a certain amount of contention and competition between them. Negotiations and the itinerary changed daily, and we don’t see that in the film because that was not the goal of this story (if you remember, WTS’s goal was to show how people can do amazing things when they have the right tools, and KTQ’s goal was to give Americans a different perspective and story on the Vietnam veteran). However, Whisnant claims that “some of the negotiations,” such as the final discussion of the giving cyclists permission to climb the Van Nai Pass, Whisnant and Benson rose and threatened to take the American group back to America (along with the American money), and an

agreement was quickly established. Some of these veterans, such as George Brummel and Ed Weihenmayer, enjoyed the trip with minimum stress, and some of the other riders, such as Duane and Jose, still had emotional triggers to diffuse.

As Shatan had warned his colleagues back in the 1970s about listening to the horrors that some of the veterans spoke of—“Be forewarned; we, too, may have nightmares” and “be unable to sleep” or even talk to people “for days or weeks” (651) — some of the WTS volunteers and funders found themselves completely unprepared for the amount of trauma that the American veterans still carried with them, ended up with their own versions of PTSD upon their return after the ride.¹⁶

However, according to Shatan, while this can be horrifying (one of them took over six months to return to “normal”), it can also be a beautiful thing, because once we understand these veterans and become “emotionally connected” to them, Shatan believed we are fundamentally changed, and “through our identification” with these survivors, we can “truly . . . listen and feel with them” (651). Like Burke, Shatan claimed that this type of identification gave people willing to make this leap a huge reward: “nothing less than *sharing* in their new-found trust, compassion, and love for other human beings” (651) as we move closer to consubstantiation and they remember how to feel again.

¹⁶ I promised the people I spoke with that I would not reveal their names for this part of the narrative; however, other than Gruffie Clough, all of the WTS (non-veteran related) members that spoke to me were very surprised at how much trauma, guilt, and emotional pain the veterans endured, even thirty years after war ended.

CHAPTER III

SUCCESSFUL INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

*People don't share history so much as
interpretations of history*
—Arthur Egenderf, *Healing from the War*

*We turn to history during periods of grief
because history holds us in a community of
people who survived*
—Ashley Bowen, “The Shoulder We Cry
On”

This chapter focuses on three events in the documentary that serve as successful examples of invitational rhetoric: 1) The first veteran team meeting; 2) the exchange between Jerry Stadtmiller and a Vietnamese schoolgirl; and 3) the result of an encounter between American veteran Dan Jensen and Vietnamese veteran Son Don. As I explore these three embedded narratives and the forms of invitational rhetoric that seem to succeed, I will be focusing on two arguments: 1) vulnerability is the most important offering in invitational rhetoric and 2) there must be some level of trust in each other's vulnerability to help facilitate understanding and acceptance. I also will introduce the term *reparative reciprocity*, which builds upon Eve Sedgwick's reparative reading and Krista Ratcliffe's rhetorical listening to help explain the interactions that may occur during and after invitational rhetoric and in contact zones.

This chapter focuses on Foss and Griffin's claim that the beginning action of invitational rhetoric is to “offer” an “invitation to understanding,” adding that this sharing

of space between different or even opposing viewpoints is a moment that should be seen as an opportunity to “enter another’s world” in order to “better understand” both an issue and the person who holds “a particular perspective” on that issue (Foss and Griffin “Metatheoretical” 13). In many cases, the “offer” is that of one’s own vulnerability, and Foss and Griffin remind readers that the ultimate purpose of invitational rhetoric is “to provide the basis” for the “creation and maintenance” of future “relationships of equality” that they hope is forged by the offering of vulnerability within said spaces. As I discussed earlier in the introduction, when we feel safe and valued, which are both “external conditions” controlled by rhetor and audience, we feel more enabled to “present . . . perspectives to the rhetor” (“Metatheoretical” 13).

At its core, invitational rhetoric depends upon the sharing of information, of emotions, and of hope that this moment will create a ripple effect within different communities. Egendorf, author and himself a Vietnam War veteran, supplements this hope as he asserts that for veterans who have suffered trauma, healing does not come in the form of explanations but in the emotional “opening . . . to the entirety of what is,” allowing oneself to “be at one with a situation” or “life as a whole,” which does not require a “consciousness” that recognizes or adheres to “some new belief or knowledge of some theory or even fact,” but seeing “what dawns” as opens the mind up to possibility and future. As one gives up “various obsessions with control,” and “surrender[s]” one’s impulse or compulsion to “alter, manipulate, or explain whatever lies before us” (*Healing* 202). By allowing ourselves to just “be in the present,” to simply enter into an “equal space” and relax or quiet our cultural conditioning, we have a chance

to learn something from someone genuinely sharing, whom Egendorf identifies as a “source of infinite richness and possibility” (169). Through the realm of invitational rhetoric, we can choose to be inspired by having the opportunity to understand different perspectives and see a realm of possibilities, or we can choose the opposite. Even this choice, this freedom to make the decision for ourselves in this environment, is a form of cooperation and participation, which is a start.

There are several communities participating in the Vietnam Challenge: North and South Vietnamese veterans and disabled athletes, American patrons and volunteers of WTS, the KTQ crew, and the American Vietnam War veterans. We could further divide these people into communities of women, communities of people of color, communities of class system and wealth, communities of disabled—which could also become communities of specific disabilities—and also a community of tireless advocates fighting for the community of all Vietnam War veterans and their rights.¹⁷

In these contact zones, the WTS will remain consistent in its claim that the most important aspect of the Vietnam Challenge is to show the world what people with different abilities can do with the right guidance and the right technology/tools; however, the veterans will claim that they are there to heal from their trauma and the

¹⁷ At the time of filming, Evans was attempting to create and find funding for the Women’s Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.; Wayne Smith was a member of the VVAW who acted as therapist in the rap groups and helped navigate the funding of the Vietnam War Memorial. Guerrero who spent several trips and severe amounts of time in Congressional meetings advocating for better VA services for returning Vietnam veterans, especially arguing that Agent Orange should be recognized as one of the injurious weapons that American soldiers were ill-equipped to fight as the gas destroyed their bodies. Wagner, whose ethos was that of an international cycling competitor and several-time champion, was an advocate for disabled veteran athletes to get better treatment and better prosthetics. These veterans were used to arguing with people of power, and one contact zone I have not mentioned yet was that of the funders and veterans. I will explore that space more in Chapter 4.

misappropriated guilt that did not belong on their shoulders. As we see in the film, most of these men and women will share their horror stories with the KTQ crew and various listeners in different groups at different moments, and even though the veterans/survivors may fear a disbelieving or non-interested audience, Egendorf argues that these stories—that Shatan claims “exist as historical events” (“Tattered Ego” 1038) --are “precisely such stories that need most to be heard” (Egendorf *Healing* 52). Shatan, one of the original psychiatrists who worked with the Rap Groups in the seventies, calls the veterans’ PTSD a form of “unhealed psychic reality,” which occurs the moment the soldier’s brain cannot deal with a manmade atrocity coupled with the knowledge that this event may indeed repeat for them tomorrow. This reality is also referred to as “the survivor’s tattered garment,” which signifies that while the veterans may have overlapping symptoms of PTSD, they all carry a “specific wound,” and a soldier’s ego “remains bent and deformed,” in need of special care and a “mutual support system” to repair their “torn fabric of faith” in humanity (Shatan “Tattered Ego” 1032).

Trust may be manifested when we tell the truth to someone who does not judge or seem to think the horror we did was not as bad as we think (Egendorf *Healing* 52). Through the narration, listening, and the interaction that invitational rhetoric seeks, the “affective-cognitive deepening” that could lead to Foss and Griffin’s transformation happens during the “narrative/storytelling and direct questioning/inquiry” moments in invitational rhetoric, which reveal “origins and motives for beliefs, values, and actions” (Swiencicki 153). Through conversation, we have opportunities to understand one another more, especially if we can retain mutual respect and equality and even if the

“understanding” ends in the form of “mutual disagreement” (Bone et al. 449). The goal of invitational rhetoric is always engagement and understanding, not advocating for one belief system over another.

Rather than backward-looking language that emphasizes conflict and responsibility, reconciliation requires forward-looking language that imagines a future, acknowledges mutual responsibility, and encourages introspection about a group’s identity—then broadens it (Bosley 26). These eighty-nine participants begin as one “team” will turn into several groups throughout the trip, and that is the identity that WTS wants us to see at the end of the film as well as ultimately, these participants will create relationships and recreate their identities which will broaden through those relationships. Burke’s identification, much like Pratt’s contact zones, is fluid, constant, and ever-changing. Just as Pratt’s students chose to enter a conversation where they knew their cultural belief systems would “clash” and they would be asked “to grapple” with different ideas, this is also a popular condition in human beings. As humans, we long to learn things; however, we also are a race that thrives on interaction and as a community. In Burke’s world, when we meet someone and realize there is something of ourselves that we can identify with—a similar goal or a specific belief about something—we become connected with that person on some emotional level. However, as we become closer, we realize more and more that we are also different, which creates division because we tend to withdraw a little. Burke’s hope for humanity is when we can reach consubstantiation, which is when we are with someone we identify with, yet we can also maintain our originality of substance. Relationships are complicated, as human emotions, actions and

reactions become part of a shared history, so communities will never be completely in a moment of identification, nor completely in a state of division, nor in complete consubstantiation. With this party of eighty-nine participants with different abilities, different languages, and even different shared histories, the people involved here will move in and out of Burke's identification and division constantly, just as they will be invited into different contact zones throughout the trip.

At one moment, the veterans identified themselves as a group of veterans; in another scene, we watch that group become several sub-groups as the veterans experience *division* within several contact zones and intersections of identity. In this chapter, while I only focus on three events, we will have the opportunity to witness several examples of the fluidity of invitational rhetoric, entering contact zones, and *identification* versus *division*, as well as examine what success looks like when people have Glenn's hope and Foss's faith.

First, it is important to remember that this is a documentary film, and while the images "present people and events that belong to the world we share" (Nichols *Introduction to Documentary* 6), documentary film "is not a reproduction; it is a *representation*" of reality (4). We expect documentaries to be true to history, to tell us "about the world" with real people instead of actors or performers, and as an audience, we have an expectation that we can both "trust the indexical linkage between what we see and what occurred in front of the camera" as well as "assess the poetic or rhetorical transformation of this linkage into a commentary or perspective on the world we occupy" (26). Still, it will best serve us if we remember that the filmmakers of documentaries

strive to represent the story from a unique perspective, and while done in a cooperative manner, *VLTC* is still a version of KTQ's (and WTS's) "way of interpreting the world" in a specific way for us.

For instance, in the first meeting in Vietnam, where everyone came together for the first time after landing—WTS staff, WTS volunteers, American veterans, KTQ film crew—there were two foundational expectations made. First, Steve Whisnant, president and co-founder of WTS, advises everyone: "I think the key word for us as a team is flexibility. There's so much that's going to happen off the bicycle. And in some respects, [that's] the most important stuff." Notice that Whisnant uses the word "us," he uses the word "team," and he uses the word "flexibility." "Us" and "team" are words used to create a sense of unity, to allow the myriad of individuals here—able-bodied, disabled, men, women, most of them strangers—to feel connected in some way. The word "team" brings forth certain images (relying on memory and imagination) to each person, and in this case, they know they will be wearing the same clothing (provided by WTS and sponsors) as they all participate in a specific activity together. "Us" can be another element used to diffuse any tensions about power dynamics, as Whisnant attempts to imply the thought that says, "We're all in this together, so we'll handle this together." However, in some of the outtakes, you can tell that "us" is not "team" all the time.

In the following three scenes, I thoroughly examine some of the rhetorical logistics of the veterans' choosing to enter contact zones and explore the meaning of "successful" invitational rhetoric. As I analyze the spaces held by Diane Carlson Evans and the van full of veterans, Jerry Stadtmiller and the group of private high school girls,

and the relationship development of Dan Jensen and Son Don, I demonstrate multiple ways that invitational rhetoric can be employed.

Diane Carlson Evans: First Veteran's Meeting before the Tomb of The Unknown Soldier

As long as everybody understands where we're coming from. Veterans needs are different.
—Diane Carlson Evans, *VLTC*

It is Oh-God-thirty, and the veterans are talking in the parking lot in front of their hotel. Diane Carlson Evans and Blas discuss the development as they have been “invited” to visit the Vietnamese Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Hanoi (12:56). The veterans in general have reservations; however, they also have the fear of exploitation or misrepresentation, and some of the more engaged advocates wish to address this with WTS and the powers that be (the Vietnamese government officials). Evans tells Blas, “We are team, yes . . . and we are greater united than divided On the other hand, we are also veterans, and the veterans’ issues are different” (13:19). Beattie claims that “within the privileging of the unhealed, victimized, male veteran,” the idea of “universal” affliction and suffering was created. However, by categorizing all people involved in the Vietnam War and the establishing the “image” that “we” are all “equally . . . victims or casualties of the war,” the government could (and tried to) erase the Vietnam veterans (56). WTS also seems to have this philosophy, as everyone wears the same uniforms, has the same gear given to them, and they plan on the entire “team” visiting the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Nevertheless, at this point, Evans is creating both an opportunity for cohesion with one group and separation from another. As she agrees that all who participate in the Vietnam Challenge create a “team,” a unit of conformity and a specific type of community with a shared common goal, Evans divides individuals by pointing out that the veterans also cross a unique intersection that can only be claimed if one can meet a precise criteria, leaving most WTS members and the entire KTQ crew in their own spaces of division.

Burke argues that identification and division are not direct opposites, but more counterparts, as “Identification is compensatory to division” (*Rhetoric of Motives* 22). As he further explains, the human condition is such that we are “apart from one another,” and our “competing motives” create both moments of cooperation and moments of conflict with one another. When our goals, or motives, align with someone else’s, that creates a form of identification, and this inspires us to engage with that person and support or assist them until our goals or ideas or ideologies no longer align, and then division occurs, and we detach ourselves from them. Examples of this could be Americans coming together to help those injured or lost after tragedy such as a school shooting or natural disaster like Hurricane Katrina, then going back to their “normal” lives after they feel as though they have completed their neighborly duty. In this scene in *VLTC*, Americans in the van are forming an alliance based on their identification as American veterans, and those who do not have this distinction—most WTS members and the entire KTQ crew—will not be privy to this meeting. Indeed, the veterans held a

meeting in which they voted on whether or not the KTQ crew could film their meetings, rap groups, and private moments before the group left American soil.

Dean McKee, whose identity on this trip intersects that of fellow Vietnam veteran, counselor to veterans, and employee of WTS, is at the van's door and off camera as the veterans exchange similar worries. Diane asks for clarification as she says, "This will be veteran to veteran. The World Team staff will not be standing up there with us, right?" (13:36).

McKee assures her by saying, "That's what I understand. It's veteran to veteran" (13:36). Edited out of the film, McKee also asks Evans, "As a consensus, would you like me to make that an absolute?" to which everyone in the van replies, "Absolutely." This is a clear moment of consubstantiation, where everyone in the van unanimously voices one answer as one person. This is an odd moment for McKee, because he is not of this identified group and has become more of a liaison or emissary for them as he reports this non-negotiable back to Whisnant and WTS. In the outtakes, McKee identifies himself as a "combat vet" who has also been a "readjustment counseling therapist since 1979," so he claims to know "many, if not most, if not all of the issues" that these vets are experiencing and will experience as they travel to places where they fought or were stationed or were injured. In truth, it seems as if his own self-identification has divided him from the other veterans, excluding Dan Jensen, so maybe this part is not so strange for McKee as much as it is for an audience that was not privy to the KTQ archives.

Bob M's comment of "Welcome home, brothers and sisters" (14:10) leads everyone to put their hand in the circle, reminiscent of a team finishing its huddle before it goes into battle or competition with an opponent.

There are several things to notice in this short clip, which lasts about one minute and fifteen seconds. First, Diane is the center of focus, the matriarch, who has decided to make a stand and create a space for the veterans. While we hear from the men during this shoot—Bob M, speaks, Artie speaks, we see shots of Duane, Blas, and others—it is Evans who argues for their unique positions and intersectionality of veteran. According to both Singer and Quinn, the veteran women, former nurses during the Vietnam War, received less attention during the filming and editing of *VLTC* than their male counterparts. When questioned, three of the KTQ producers remember the women in the stereotypical "nurturing" position (Gilbert Interview #1, Singer Interview #1, and Quinn). While the men remember this event one way, Gruffie Clough, the lead counselor for the Vietnam Challenge, and Jan Sutcliffe, co-editor of the documentary, claim that this memory may be a product of the chosen narrative, either because "the women's stories were too different to align with the story we were trying to portray" (Sutcliffe Interview #2) or that "the women may have chosen their behaviors during the ride as their own type of healing process, not because it was their chosen profession or because they were women" (Clough Interview #2). We cannot assume to know their thought processes or their reasons.

Whatever the case, Evans has decided to make a stand here, in order to create or maintain something special and understood by those with a collective shared experience:

her comrades in the van. We can see this as Burke's "ambiguity[y] of substance," where Evans is "substantially one" with a person or persons other than herself, while "at the same time [she] remains unique" (*Rhetoric of Motives* 21). In the dark morning under a cement awning and pale yellow light from a bald lightbulb overhead, Evans reminds her audience—Bas, the KTQ film crew, WTS, future viewers, and her fellow veterans--that the veterans in this van are unique in this situation, that these former men and women soldiers share a communal memory of "sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them consubstantial" (21) which creates a solid unit where each person is still empowered to retain his or her own identity through personal memory, in a way that only they understand. The members of this small community are "both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another" (21). They are all in this group together, and they all allow each other and themselves to maintain their own unique identities and independence. In this act, Evans is both holding her space and including others in her space.

When we realize a person is not like us, we have the chance to engage with these people, which will put us in a contact zone, where we can decide how to proceed as we are given an opportunity to understand the other person and that person's differences. In invitational rhetoric, we give the other person the equal power to decide how to react to us. The beautiful thing about Glenn's rhetorical feminism and Foss and Griffith's invitational rhetoric is that there is choice. In Glenn's work, feminist rhetoricians have agency—the "power to take efficacious action" (4)—and employ different rhetorical strategies in order to disquiet the norm, create change and "realize our hope" of creating a

world where everyone has an equal voice and deserves to be heard with respect (8). Foss and Griffin stress that one of the “key principles” of invitational rhetoric is “based” on the concept that “individuals should be allowed to make their own decisions” about their own lives (“Metatheoretical” 65), and this is an opportunity for everyone in the van to do so.

Invitational rhetoric specifically honors the feminist principles of equality, immanent value (all individuals have unique traits and ideas that may contribute to the good of the community or group), and self-determination (Foss and Griffin “Beyond Persuasion” 4). When both the rhetor/presenter and the audience, in this case Evans and first the other veterans, then all the veterans in the van and McKee, can offer to release some of their strenuously held beliefs for the good of greater understanding, trust may be created. This indicates that the rhetor is also willing to be the audience, and because “the rhetor’s ideas . . . are not privileged over those of the audience” (*Rhetoric of Motives* 12), respect turns into one feeling valued. In this moment, Evans is both rhetor and audience; she is both the person making the request and she is part of the unit of veterans who wants to create a more unified memory with their Vietnamese veteran companions. And the other veterans follow this pattern.

By her use of the word “issues,” Evans makes it clear that WTS and those not identified as Vietnam veterans are removed from a specific community. Evans also implies the “contrary principles of identification and alienation” which also “re-enforces the protection of privilege” (Burke *Philosophy* 104) as her language moves those historically shunned—in this case, Vietnam veterans—into the open, claiming agency

and equal power in the decision-making process. Ede, Glenn and Lunsford remind us, “[A]s human beings we are both limited and empowered by our individual and collective memory and invention” (413). By creating space between people with “issues” of PTSD and physical disabilities and those who are volunteers or sponsors, Evans allows people to remember one of the goals of this trip: emotional healing. The veterans are operating within limits not of their choosing—WTS dictates the bike ride length, and the Vietnam government changes the itinerary daily, sometimes multiple times in one day. Through this small word, “issues,” Evans gives the opportunity for everyone to remember who these veterans are and why they are riding, and the other veterans are empowering themselves and Evans as they unanimously support her in their unified “Yes” to McKee’s question.

One question I asked the KTQ and WTS people was, “What was one thing that really surprised you on this trip?” Apart from Clough, who had worked with veterans and was married to one, the people I interviewed commented on how much trauma the American veterans still carried with them. Evans’ use of the word “issues” would have triggered a relatively current memory in the WTS staff and volunteers, and this would both serve to emphasize the veterans’ vulnerability, which is Evans’ offering to her audience to ensure that “everyone understands” why she has decided to create *division*. This phrase also brings forth an opportunity for protection, as well, as the WTS and KTQ are now required to remember the veterans, their plight, and their fragility in the midst of their perceived strengths and toughness.

While Evans gains strength from her vulnerability, she also gives her fellow veterans the same opportunity. As Foss and Griffin argue, invitational rhetoric “offers an invitation to understanding—to enter another’s world to better understand” both the issue and the “individual who holds a particular perspective on it” (“Beyond Persuasion” 13). If we remember that the primary purpose of invitational rhetoric is “to provide the basis for the creation and maintenance of relationships of equality” as well as to offer “external conditions of safety, value and freedom” (14) that ensure audience members have the same chances to offer their perspectives to the rhetor, we can see how this is a type of reciprocation, regardless of the outcome. As part of building trust in invitational rhetoric, the individuals involved “must see others” for their “uniqueness” and their “contributions to a conversation” (“Metatheoretical” 65), as the inhabitant veterans in the van are all given the opportunity to voice their concerns, their remembered grief and lost intimacy, which creates offering and acceptance and a moment of *reparative reciprocity* as they also have the opportunity to agree, hold one another’s shoulder, nod, and support one another.

Evans is both rhetor and audience; so are her fellow veterans as they signal agreement with their military battle cries (“Oorahs” from some of the Marines, “Hooah” from the former Army) and unanimous vote with her to make their request non-negotiable. Through their offering of vulnerability, Artie Guerrero and Bob M. share their perspectives, and allow others to realize that these perspectives create a type of emotional pain that others are allowed to witness and recognize within themselves. Through Krista Ratcliffe’s definition of accountability, everyone has the opportunity to remember that

“we are indeed all members of the same village, and if for no other reason than that,” all of us “have a stake in each other’s quality of life” (*Rhetorical Listening* 31). This is the moment that “asks us to recognize our privilege and non-privilege and then act accordingly” (32). As in Foss and Griffin’s invitational rhetoric, “the rhetor’s ideas are not privileged over those of the audience” (“Beyond Persuasion” 12).

This scene also enacts a component of Cheryl Glenn’s rhetorical feminism, as rhetorical feminism “employs and respects vernaculars and experiences, recognized them as sources of knowledge” (4). As the rest of the veterans join Evans in her request and the others start to explain why this decision is so significant to them, there is a shift to “transactional” rhetoric as the men and women demonstrate a “reshaped ethos rooted in experience, and a reshaped pathos that values emotion” (4). Their experiences give them permission to be a part of this group, their vulnerability gives them an authentic sense of freedom and purpose, and here we also can see a value of their strength: Through their willingness to share their experiences, they have the freedom of not forcing others to accept them or change. They are only, as Evans states, trying to help “everyone understand” where they are emotionally at this specific juncture in time.

This is also a moment where we can see *reparative reciprocity*, which can be described as a moment where one’s offer of vulnerability and memory are acknowledged, accepted, and reciprocated by the listening audience. As Eve Sedgwick describes most readers as people who read from the “paranoid position,” which is “marked by hatred, envy, and anxiety” . . . [and] is a position of terrible alertness to the dangers posed by . . . the world around one,” (128). It is “distinctively rigid,” and the person hates surprises

because she believes they can only be terrible, whereas a reparative reader can “surrender the knowing, anxious paranoid determination” to see that it is both “realistic and necessary to experience surprise” in order to recognize that the future “may be different from the present” as well as the “crucial possibilities” that past events also “could have happened differently” (148). Similar to reparative reading, *reparative reciprocity* occurs when a person can set aside defensiveness and present mindset, allow vulnerability to exist as one speaks, and, as sociologist and author Dr. Brené Brown suggests, “allow ourselves to be seen, really *seen*” (emphasis added, “The Power of Vulnerability” 4:43,).

As Egendorf explains, “What inundates a traumatized life” is the feeling that is “at once overwhelming, void of meaning” that is “unsayable.” He adds that this “is what people in pain are telling us, if only we will hear” (“Hearing People” 20). Several traumatized veterans, upon returning to the States, had a difficult time returning to the world they had known because they could not reconcile it with the military world of “fury and hate” or even describe how two extremes, along with their torn perception of life and the human condition, battled inside their heads. This van sitting by itself on a dirt parking lot is full of traumatized veterans, most of whom have been silent. And yet....

In *reparative reciprocity*, it is not enough to do one thing: “talk is not enough,” Shatan argues (“Tattered Ego” 1037), and we must realize that “hearing is no longer simply an activity we perform” (“Hearing People” 7). Like Ratcliffe’s rhetorical listening, *reparative reciprocity* “signifies a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in cross-cultural exchanges” (“Rhetorical Listening: A Trope” 17); however, while Ratcliffe uses listening as an act of interpretation, especially when decoding

intersections of race, gender, and other “cultural categories” (11) that complicate and “confuse discussions of race” and any other topic associated with race, Egendorf and Shatan claim that true *hearing* is more than simple identification. It is more than listening and experiencing empathy for someone. As Egendorf explains, we listen without “habitual judgments, opinions” and “thought patterns,” and herein lies the miracle:

When you truly hear people, they know it. They hear that you hear *them*, and you hear their hearing of your hearing them, to the point that you may hear, in addition to the ordinary meanings, the resonances, and the presence of one who lives, another order of hearing that resounds between you. (original emphasis, “Hearing” 21)

Hearing is no longer considered “an activity we perform” or “an interpretive receptiveness” (22). It is more than an act, because those sharing in this speaking and hearing start to create a new kind of memory and what Egendorf describes as a “common, social body” that enables the people involved to share the pain together, with the hearing and co-creating a new identity, “at once what we are, how we are, and who we are in being together,” transforming pain “into mutual attunement” (22). Mears observes that the recognition of the “narrator [as] an expert” with his or her own traumatic experience is one that also has an offering—that the narrator, or rhetor, is “making a valued contribution” and this provides him or her with a “positive sense of validation” (160). *Reparative reciprocity* works in both directions: there is an invitation to share, there is speaking, and then there is a deliberate, conscientious “hearing” or a deliberate listening which validates and resonates with the speaker. This is more than a way to “bear witness

to trauma” (Mears 162). This is the creation of a relationship between storyteller and “story hearer” that is “characterized” by one’s “interpretation of the story . . . in all its complexity and contradictions” (163). Like Egendorf and Shatan, Mears contends that when the speaker and “hearer” delve into this “interpretation together,” they are actually “sharing the interpretive process.” Even though Mears’s work was with collecting oral history from the surviving community after the Columbine shooting, she echoes the two psychiatrists who worked with the Vietnam War veterans when she claims, “The story being told belongs to the narrator, yet it is the telling of it to another that brings it into being” (163).

When a person reads reparatively, she becomes open to the idea that things can be different—there can be traumatic experiences, but there can also be extreme and “profoundly relieving” surprises and possibilities in life. “Listening is such a simple act,” even though it takes practice to be present, but by “giving the opportunity” to an individual to “voice those personal memories,” the hearer/listener serves to “validate” the speaker’s experience. “If we can tell our story to someone who listens, we find it easier to deal with our circumstances,” (Mears 164), and Egendorf mirrors Perelman when he refers to the hearing as a “social body” as he adds, “In hearing that we hear each other, we raise communication to communion” as those involved here—at this point, all of them “hearers”—are also consubstantiated as they are many “who remain distinct” and “meet as one” (“Hearing” 23). The veterans in the Vietnam Challenge attempt to move from a paranoid position to a reparative one as they plan to move physically and mentally out their past trauma and into building new experiences to replace the memories that haunt

them. In this scene, where the veterans sit in a crowded van in the darkness of early morning and claim their space, they also practice *reparative reciprocity*.

As they share a portion of their memories, the veterans create a new narrative. When Bob M. claims that “Never again will one generation turn its back on another,” and Artie adds the quote from a past general, “without the support of our government,” they are both sharing a traumatic moment from their pasts, but instead of using this as a “rigid” or anxious moment, Bob and Artie are using this to create a narrative that holds the space that Evans has created with the request for the visit to the Vietnamese Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. In this moment, the Vietnam War veterans are sharing trauma in their vulnerability, they are offering an invitation for others to understand their perspectives, and they are also selectively choosing memories to build a reparative history for their newly identified community. The offering of vulnerability, acknowledging different perspectives, and recognizing each other’s pain is reparative; the reciprocity comes from their listening to each other, their acceptance of each other, and their willingness to build healing stories for their group.

When we watch and listen to Bob M. and Artie, we are given the opportunity to understand their pain through their shaking voices and tears, why this is an important moment for them, and why they want to be apart from the corporate world of WTS during this unscheduled “visit.” As Bob repeats Diane’s sentiment, “It’s gotta be [veteran to veteran],” he agrees with her idea to create solidarity among soldiers who were once enemies but are now unified by that shared memory and violence. This moment, with Evans’ use of the word “issues” and claiming that she wants “everyone to understand”

creates the opportunity for us as audience to embrace this group that up until this moment has felt alone and divided. Here we have a chance to join their world and allow them to be empowered in this moment. We are, on a small level, also contributing to *reparative reciprocity*, because we bear witness to their grief and become a part of their world for the few moments that KTQ allow us to see and that we decide to share with them.

Both Anzaldúa and Burke understand the pain of loneliness when people do not feel accepted, and both rhetoricians understand that the individual is important. Individuals, even in communities where the community or tribe is more important than one person, has a choice: “to feel a victim where someone else is in control and therefore responsible and to blame . . . or to feel strong, and for the most part, in control” (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 21). A person can be a victim, and let others decide upon the status quo, or a person can decide her own status quo, and decide what to do and when to do it. For her part and to create her space of empowerment, Anzaldúa does indeed leave the mainstream communal status quo as she tells us, “I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture—*una cultura mestiza*” (*Borderlands* 22), and she invites others to both hold their own spaces as well as join her. Burke, too, laments that words are misused and misunderstood, and calls for people to be more understanding so they do not descend into the “ultimate disease—war.” As Brené Brown tells us, people want connections, and people who are willing to connect authentically are the ones willing to “let go of who they thought they should be”—one kind of *ethos*— “in order to be who they were”—their true *ethos* (*Daring Greatly* 32).

Evans, Jensen, Wagner, Smith, Blas, and the other veterans depicted in the film are not victims in the dark. They have chosen to return to a particular home, the birthplace of their trauma, and they will not be denied their hope. Sitting shoulder to shoulder, sweat and breath mingling with the person's next to them as the tiny dome light shines on their shadowed faces, this group of veterans decides which status quo—which space to claim—with their own tools. At this moment, their tool is the “absolute” vision of American veteran honoring the Vietnam Tomb of the Unknown Soldier without political affiliation or corporate sponsorship. Coupled with the extracted promise that the Vietnamese would visit the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., the following year, the veterans allow themselves to feel empowered as they grieve together for the loss of life and innocence, but also reconnect with people who have experienced both war and a trip that gave them a unique opportunity to heal their personal wounds.

Jerry Stadtmiller and Schoolgirl

Saying the worst to someone who cares enough to listen never sounds as bad to him or her as you're afraid it will, for the very saying of it dignifies your listener as someone you trust, and reveals you as one who cares about the truth.

—Arthur Egen Dorf, *Healing from the War*

Jerry is one of three blind veterans on this trip. Like George Brummel, Stadtmiller was injured during the Vietnam War, and he was recruited by WTS. His injury, which needed over 100 facial reconstruction surgeries, made him almost completely blind. He and other members of the WTS group (Jose Ramos, physician Dr. Brian Halpern, Ed Weihenmayer, Wayne Smith) visit a “prestigious girls school in Hanoi” (10:15), and after

the men and young women sing “If you’re happy and you know it,” the girls bashfully ask the veterans questions, many of them general and innocuous, such as, “What is your favorite part of this visit so far?” and “Where have you biked or visited so far?” before a young teenage girl asks, “You were in Vietnam thirty years ago. What was the most unforgettable memories of yours about Vietnam?” (10:21).

The invitational rhetoric is quite different here than it was in the earlier case of the veterans. In Evans’ case, the invitational rhetoric came in the form of a woman reminding others of their group identity as well as their unique status in order to create a space for them. The stimulus for the veterans’ empowerment was the Vietnamese government’s decision to “invite” them to visit a place of stress and remind them of their pasts. In Stadtmiller’s case, a grown man tells a group of giggling teenage girls his “most unforgettable” memory is that of killing males younger than these young women because he was certain it was self-defense. The catalyst here was a moment of invitation when the girls’ questions “contribute to a feeling of safety” in a room where Stadtmiller did not feel judged. In a matter of twenty-four seconds, they go from singing, giggling, and nervously pulling on their ears to listening about murder of children in their own homeland. Their surprise and shock are almost palpable.

While Stadtmiller’s claim that he knew “if I didn’t kill [the young Vietnamese enemy], he was going to kill me” may offer a certain line of defense or lend itself to a certain type of acceptance toward these actions, the moment he gravely admits, “I have had to live with the guilt” and asserts that this has been “the pain . . . for the last thirty

years,” he has now moved into a contact zone and issued an invitation, for it is at this moment that he becomes the most vulnerable.

When Stadtmiller confesses to murdering a young boy, he is indeed exposed. However, when he admits his guilt, his vulnerability increases because this is an inadvertent way of asking for forgiveness from the very people he once considered enemies. The rhetoric of “personal confession . . . can be effective” in that it also offers another avenue for *identification* to appear as the listener has an opportunity to recognize herself even as she may reflect upon their differences (Roof and Wiegman 65). Through both of their “visible social identities,” they have power of choice of how this contact zone will be negotiated (Alcoff 8). He is offering an invitation for the girls to join him—to hear his words and connect somehow with him. At this moment—the moment where we become afraid of some form of rejection and as a nation we try to “numb our vulnerability” (Brown “The Power of Vulnerability” 15:15)—he has no control, which is terrifying to anyone, but now try being a Vietnam War veteran with PTSD asking for discourse and communion with teenage girls after he has just told them he shot a boy younger than them.

The contact zone here, where “cultures clash” and people must wrangle with cultural belief systems and their desire to connect or understand another person, is painfully obvious: the teenage girls must decide if they believe Stadtmiller’s admission of guilt and remorse. They must somehow hear his lament that, “I’m just grateful I didn’t have to kill that many people,” and decide if they wish to engage further. Also, as Stadtmiller obviously feels “safe” enough to allow these strangers to see his shame and

fear, he “makes no attempt to hurt, degrade, or belittle audience members or their beliefs,” which allows his audience to “trust the rhetor and feel [as though] the rhetor is working with and not against them” (Foss and Griffin “Beyond Persuasion” 11). Stadtmiller is not trying to change these young women, nor is he trying to “force” any kind of identity or understanding upon them. He is simply offering a moment of “courage to be imperfect” (Brown “The Power of Vulnerability” 9:31) and allowing them the freedom to react in whichever way they think is appropriate or they feel is “right” for them.

Unlike the scene with Evans, who strongly negotiates a moment of “veteran to veteran” in a public sphere, Stadtmiller humbly offers a non-dominant position as he “is willing to share, to make [himself] vulnerable to foreign ways of seeing and thinking” (Anzaldúa *Borderlands* 105). Identification comes to the group not in the form of gender nor age nor race nor culture, but that of one human attempting to connect with another. Each “person, animal, plant, stone is interconnected” in various ways, and “we are each responsible for what is happening down the street, south of the border, or across the sea” (Moraga and Anzaldúa *xxviii*). At least one person believes this, and the contact zone creates a space for this to evolve into one person caring for another, sharing a moment with another person despite differences and cultural belief systems. “Society functions as a looking glass” in that “people tend to conform to the labels they are given” (Bosley 27), but where remembering and sharing of traumatic events are involved, one’s identity becomes a slippery thing. When Stadtmiller admits his guilt, he also signals that he is not yet whole, “unfinished,” and by holding this unfinished yet hopeful space as he invites

others to join, he is giving both himself and his audience the chance to “open their hearts to love” (Egendorf *Healing* 135).

As the girl in the red sweater (the same girl who asked the tumultuous question about memory) comes up to Jerry and says, “I think you must be cheerful to return to Vietnam, you know we are friends and are greeting you,” (11:21) she has decided to enter the contact zone and help Stadtmiller create a new memory. Many of us think, of listening “as sympathizing, or ‘believing what he says’” says Egendorf, “It doesn’t.” Listening, he claims, “is attending”—being consciously aware— “that [what] you’re hearing . . . is important, at this moment, for this person to say” (*Healing* 51). By her tears, the teenager acknowledges that she has heard his offering and chooses to see him in a different way, which also allows him to see her and her fellow countrymen differently, as well. She offers him a friendship bracelet, which is both symbolic and a “subtle way” for them to “internalize” their identification, as “images and emotions” can be “tied to [one’s] identity” (61). Perhaps they identify as two people who have shared a painful memory and are trying to move on, or perhaps she understands his need for forgiveness and has decided that she has the power to do so.

Odds are that the young woman had planned to offer the friendship bracelet to someone during this visit, but she had multiple choices here: she could have kept the bracelet to herself, or she could have given it to any of the other American visitors. However, I argue that at this moment, she knows her question created Stadtmiller’s opportunity to share his confession, and this is her way of showing that she does not blame him or “hold him accountable for an unfortunate situation” (Ratcliffe *Rhetorical*

Listening 91). She has been given freedom in that her “lack of acceptance” or her “adherence to” Stadtmiller’s quandary will not change the connection, because invitational rhetoric is not about judgment or approval: it is about sharing perspectives and allowing the audience members to share theirs in any manner they choose.

While vulnerability may be the “core of shame and fear and our struggle for worthiness,” it can also be “the birthplace of joy . . . of belonging, of love” (Brown “The Power of Vulnerability” 12:21). We can see aspects of both shame and love in this exchange between these two. Invitational rhetoric is also about navigating “power differentials,” and with invitational rhetoric, power may be acknowledged, but it is not a cause for struggle. In Foss and Griffin’s words, “The participants are engaged in interaction because they *want* to understand . . . the other person’s perspective” (“Metatheoretical” 68). In this particular environment, the traditional “white male patriarch” is not in power, nor is the young teenage girl who is on her own turf. They are both visitors exploring what the other has to offer in way of possibilities and a different future.

As the young schoolgirl chooses to forgive and share a physical gift, Stadtmiller chooses gratitude as he hugs her and says, “Thank you.” They share a common physical and emotional space they both recognize and accept. Later, when Stadtmiller is outside and covering his face, the schoolgirl returns to him and starts crying, feeling responsible for his reactions. As “all people circle in and out of dominant and non-dominant positions on a daily basis,” we can see that this is a possible changing of that position, as Stadtmiller now has the opportunity to comfort the girl and assure her that she has done

something amazing and not shameful as he repeats, “You’ve given me so much” and kisses her on the head. They are now connected in some way. They have chosen to “look beyond the order” of strife and found “the principle of identification in general, a terministic *choice* justified by the fact that the identifications in the order of love are also characteristic of rhetorical expression” (Burke *Rhetoric of Motives* 20).

There is a connection between these two, a moment where both “fully embrace” their vulnerability, which is “absolutely” a must to make a connection. In Brown’s words, these two could connect as “a result of authenticity” and seem to share “the willingness to do something where there are no guarantees.” In this case, they both seem prepared “to invest in a relationship that may or may not work out” (“The Power of Vulnerability” 10:31). Through his vulnerability, Stadtmiller can admit his shame to a room full of young women, and one young woman sees his vulnerability as the “most accurate measurement of courage,” reaches out, and connects with him with tears to match his. Their connection is another example of *reparative reciprocity*, for by being authentic and allowing each other to “be seen, to be honest,” they are both empowered to allow change in themselves as well as another. If the other person does not change, this is still acceptable for the rhetor, for each person has received grace and attention during his and her moment of honesty and vulnerability. Just as invitational rhetoric is not about changing the attitude of one’s audience, *reparative reciprocity* is not about creating change in our audience, either. Both are about accepting the fact that we may not change those around us. Invitational rhetoric and *reparative reciprocity* allow us to share our outlooks and belief systems in a genuine manner so that others may have the option to try

to understand and the ability to decide what to do with their understanding thereafter. It is the permission to be authentic and the empowerment of choice that makes these moments reparative.

The young schoolgirl recognizes something in Stadtmiller's pain, and she uses that and her bracelet as a bridge. Stadtmiller feels validated and acknowledged, and as he hugs her again, part of his identity has changed. For the rest of the documentary, Stadtmiller only wears his eye patch in one more scene, at one of the evening small group meetings on the beach (1:14:10). David E. Simpson suggests, "This is a representation of his healing during this event". Stadtmiller, who had over one hundred surgeries to reconstruct his face, does not hide his scars for neither they nor his eye patch serve this newfound—or perhaps regained—part of his identity. When he speaks at another function later in the film, Stadtmiller notes that, "We were selected because we were veterans of the Vietnam War. But now we are friends of the Vietnamese people" (32:45), and he faces the podium and microphone without his eye patch. At the end of the film, when the veterans are sharing their final reflections with us, the camera closes in on Stadtmiller as he rides a tandem bike with Greg Lemond, again patchless, and claims that he now realizes, "The war is over. The war that was in my heart is now over. Vietnam is not a war. It's a country. It's a beautiful country with beautiful people" (1:45.37). For all intents and purposes, it seems as though WTS's goal of "accomplishing an extraordinary event" was successful with this particular veteran.

This is part of the narrative that KTQ wanted viewers to focus on—the emotional trauma and healing that became transformative for some of the veterans who participated

in the Vietnam Challenge in 1998. As Bill Nichols reminds us, “As audience members, we often find what we want, or need, to find in films” (*Truths* 74) and in this moment, the documentary *VLTC* serves as a “cohabitant of our shared reality” as KTQ gives viewers a chance to witness “a lived experience in a way that engages and moves us” as we identify with what we observe (83). As we watch Stadtmiller change from an emotional guilt-ridden, broken man to a veteran who enjoys being around other people and participating enthusiastically in the WTS event, one cannot deny the fact that something has emotionally developed within him. If we act like a polite audience on the receiving side of KTQ’s invitation, we are expected to rhetorically listen with an open mind in order to understand someone else’s perspective—in this case, Stadtmiller’s—without judgment.

Dan Jensen and Son Don

It was crazy. We were enemies—literally, enemies—and now here we are, friends on FaceBook and running marathons together. It was the most incredible thing.
—Dan Jensen, Interview #1

When peacetime come, [I] have a chance to meet American and realize, “Hey, they are human too. Now time to build a new future and work together as humans.”
—Son Don, *VLTC*

By all accounts, Dan Jensen was one of the favorite stories, which is easy to see when one realizes he gets more airtime than the others (the film also ends with him). Jensen, with freckles on his boyish face, had a cheerful smile and a willingness to speak with anyone who wanted his time. As we learn in the first thirty minutes of the film, Jensen was one of the veterans who had a complete panic attack, one of “pure paralysis”

that kept him closed in his room to the point where he admits, “the overload was just too much; I couldn’t handle it. I thought I was going to have to go home” (20:07). For Jensen, who was one that had been “steeped in death and evil beyond imagination,” merely talking or sharing his “grief and outrage with comrades” who had the same experiences is “worthless” and “unsatisfying” for him (Shatan “Grief of Soldiers” 649). He was one that needed active participation to move beyond his denial of a “never-ending past” where he found no meaning (648). The film does not show this, nor does it show any of Jensen’s other panic attacks or Dean McKee’s constant engagement with Jensen on this night and throughout the rest of the ride in order to assist with Jensen’s psychological equilibrium. As Jensen discloses later in our interview, if it had not been for McKee and Jensen’s wife, Jensen would have been on a plane back to the United States within the first twenty-four hours of landing in Vietnam (Interview #1).

Jensen has two communities where he attempts to connect with others: one is the community of American veterans, and the other is the community of Vietnamese people. On camera, he seems to easily talk with his veteran companions. He concedes to his companions in the veteran group, “I was thinking about shooting myself, because I was so scared” (41:47), and when the camera swings around the room, several men are nodding, and some are smiling. This is a moment of Egenorf’s “hearing,” which in this instance becomes “appreciative” as others acknowledge his story, which also “helps create relevance, an achievement usually welcome by someone who suffers” (“Hearing People” 14). As Dan continues, it is obvious that he has suffered, and this is a moment where he creates invitation for the others to join him as he both attempts to understand his

grief and personal truth. “When I came back from the war, I had nothing to do with veterans, and I never have. And so I’m here, and it’s like, first time in my life...I have fellow veterans. I mean, I feel like a veteran!” (51:36). Sometimes, the biggest amount of pain exudes from not “being able to discern or express any meaning at all” (14), and this is both a moment for Dan Jensen the veteran to have an identification that resonates with the other veterans in the room, which allows everyone to “value the reason, intuition, and expertise of the self and of others to come to a . . . way of knowing” (Cavin 403). He attempts to move beyond just “story-telling” and create a connection of this “knowing” with the people in the room, and from their expressions, it seems to be working.

McKee is almost out of the camera’s view, sitting about three feet behind and to Jensen’s left for moral support. In this moment, Jensen is using his admission of difference—one of cowardice instead of that of a trained killer or healer—as one of several “opportunities, or pathways” which enable humans “to forge complex commonalities” (Keating 46). He is not asking for permission here, as one might think; Jensen is offering an example of Foss and Griffin’s self-determination—explaining how he has chosen to live his life up to this moment as well as how this experience has dramatically challenged those decisions (“Beyond Persuasion” 4). As he explains his decisions and mental thought processes from this specific past, Jensen allows his fellow companions their own forms of self-determination by way of showing respect for them and giving them the opportunity to “seek commonalities—defined not as sameness but as intertwined differences and possible points of connection” (Keating 54).

In this manner, Jensen exhibits invitational rhetoric by embracing his perceived weakness—admitting his fear and reluctance to have “anything to do with veterans”—and allowing it to become his *courage* as he now claims to “feel like a veteran.” Jensen infers that his identity as a non-veteran had been created by a “filtering screen” that limited his “awareness” and his ability to internalize his Vietnam War experience in multiple ways (Anzaldúa *Light* 119), so he avoided such an act. Through his claim that he now identifies with his veteran companions, Jensen also implies that he has been listening with “serious intent—listening carefully, thoughtfully, and humbly,” maybe not ready, but most definitely open-minded “to be changed by” what the other veterans have said up to this point (Keating 53). He is both rhetor and audience on this stage, as he attempts to share his thoughts and feelings and let his fellow veterans know, regardless of how they feel toward him, that he is understanding instead of blaming anyone. Like Stadtmiller in the aforementioned example, Jensen has the honor of being “heard,” and as Egendorf stresses, “In any full hearing of pain,” an individual’s “strength and resilience may also emerge” (“Hearing” 13). Truth has a certain strength to it, as we know, and in sharing his truth, Jensen has the opportunity to increase his identity and create *consubstantiation* with those around him.

This meeting is also a time for us to examine *reparative reciprocity*. While the veterans are somewhat isolated here, they also have emotional support from each other (Heidi touches Wagner on his shoulder, they make direct eye contact with each other, and they laugh when a joke is told) and McKee. While KTQ edited the events out of order, it is still clear here that everyone has the opportunity to share his and her identity, and to

notice where there might be “nodes of connections” or intersections that they can share. They are fully aware of who is talking, who is listening, and who is “checked out” during this time. Except for a few people (Wagner gets called out for being fake, Sanders disrespects others as he acts completely disinterested), these veterans are very much engaged in listening to each other’s defining moment that split their identity from that of “soldier” into that of “traumatized soldier,” and through their sharing of their stories, they share the vulnerability that also enables them to respond to each other. The very “nature” of crisis is that it forces us to “imagine meaning in our worlds,” and in this space, these veterans may co-create a new narrative together (Taylor et al. 10). Through *reparative reciprocity*, these veterans hear one another “giving voice to a life,” and as they listen and share stories without judgment or suppression or denial, they have an opportunity to change the trauma that Egendorf defines as a “life-sucking void” and leave the shattered pieces behind and co-construct new meaning into both the past and the future.

While this moment is important, both the KTQ producers and Whisnant wanted to focus on the story lines regarding the success of the Vietnam Challenge team as well as the success in building relationships between the Vietnamese riders and the American riders. Jensen’s actions also accomplish this goal with his various interactions along the route, and his unique relationship with Son Don. Almost twenty minutes into the film, we see Jensen taking photographs of the landscape and children who smile brightly for him (19:43). A few minutes later, we see the team of cyclists stop at an intersection, and a couple of Vietnamese men touch and study Jensen’s prosthetic (23:41). Jensen moves his arms to show the men where the doctors had to amputate his leg, then mimes “land mine”

to show how it happened. The men all nod, say, “Ah” in acknowledgement, then one displays his deformed arm, pointing to where an incendiary device of some sort mangled his left forearm and hand. Jensen nods and smiles with his own acknowledgement, the men shake hands, and Jensen rides on with the other riders as they move forward and out of town (24:00). It is a quick moment—nineteen seconds—these men have identified within each other “terms of some principle they share in common,” their less-abled limbs lost in war, which “does not deny their distinctness” (Burke *Rhetoric of Motives* 21). In this moment of identification, smiles and handshakes, there is an opportunity to “create a relationship in equality” (Foss and Griffin *Inviting Understanding* 5), which becomes invitational by its design. The relationship does not go further, but a seed toward goodwill from all men involved has been planted here. Invitational rhetoric has been employed, acted upon, and finished in the space of nineteen seconds. It is important to recognize this time span because that gives us knowledge that such connections and acceptance—or refusal—are possible in less time than it takes to snap one of Jensen’s photographs. There is also *reparative reciprocity* in this amazingly short time span, as all the men in this conversation are victims of manmade atrocity, and their smiles and nods both affirm and “shout out” to each other in celebratory shared admiration. In the podcast *The Doc Talk Show*, KTQ crew members Adam Singer, Gordon Quinn join their friends—director Steve James and cinematographer Dana Kupper—to discuss the making of the film *Stevie* (1997), and during their discussion of ethical filmmaking, Kupper reads a comment from the screen that says “Survivors find each other” (47:32), alluding to how people tend to gravitate toward each other “as if they have antennae for each other”

(Spitz 47:11), and it seems as if this is true, because it happens again and again in *VLTC*, especially where Dan Jensen is concerned.

The most celebrated relationship is that of Jensen and Son Don. They start talking with each other at the Troung Son National Cemetery, and Jensen does a mock line kick with Derry—another veteran’s son—and the cemetery caretaker (59:21), and Don explains that he did the marathon twice. Jensen is also a triathlete, so they have two starting points for identification, which they realize turns into three: they both have lost one leg, they both have turned to running as an outlet, and they survived a war in which they fought on opposite sides. Society, especially in America, serves to alienate people who are “incomplete” or “missing” something that citizens feel they need (emotions, fully functioning limbs). However, “subcultures,” like this Vietnam Challenge “team,” have the power to “welcome” those same people, which empowers them to create a “new social identity” as it concurrently “broadens” the group’s identity (Bosley 26-27). As they have identified themselves within each other, both men attempt to practice rhetorical listening and make a point of respecting each other. Jensen is properly impressed—smiles and hugs Don, says, “Excellent!” and shakes Don’s hand—when Don tells him that he can run the 100-meter-dash in fifteen seconds (59:46). Jensen looks at Don’s leg, and as he tells me later, he could not believe that Don ran raced, including the New York marathon, with such an outdated prosthetic (Jensen). “It made Son’s accomplishments all the better,” he says. Don convinces Jensen to race him across the bridge, and they end up in a tie, holding each other’s hands high in the air and embracing each other (1:00:08). As Jensen uses words such as “excellent” and “amazing,” he is actually reinforcing Don’s

“uniqueness” and offering the idea that Son’s perspective is “of equal or greater value” than Jensen’s, which is another type of offering in invitational rhetoric, as it both acknowledges and reaffirms the speaker’s worth. Together, they are creating a “shared reality” and a future with different possibilities (Taylor et al. 7).

We next see Jensen and Don riding bikes next to each other as they gesture and try to communicate. Jensen tells the viewers, “[W]e were enemies,” but, “Out of all the people that were there, we just kind of connected” (1:00:20). This is more than just an invitation accepted, for the men have learned how to communicate without a translator, and their combined gestures and dialogue serves to “engage in building” a “redemption narrative” which reflects “events from the past” and simultaneously “imbue meaning for the present” (Bosley 28). The two men are almost inseparable for the rest of the film. Invitational rhetoric “constitutes an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor’s world and to see it as the rhetor does” (Foss “Beyond Persuasion” 5), and it becomes hard to distinguish who is the rhetor, and who is the audience as both men share information.

With very few translators on the ride, only so much could be done; however, both Jensen and Don obviously find a system of communication that works for them as they both exhibit a sense of “equality, respect, and appreciation for the other” (6), which is demonstrated on one of the last days of the ride, as Jensen and Don examine the differences between their prosthetic limbs and attachments, and a group of men come up to them to ask Don if they are veterans. Don explains that they both are, then further explains that Jensen is “a veteran for our opponents. But today we are on the same team” (1:41:31). The men laugh, and one says, “You are like two peas in a pod!” (1:41:39),

firmly placing Don and Jensen in the same identity category. In this moment, Don provides “interpersonal support” for Jensen as they have now co-created “experiences and stories” about themselves with each other (Taylor et al. 9). This support creates a safe space for both men, which continues throughout and to the end of the film.

One of the public relations’ goals of both governments was to show that two previously warring countries—embattled in what Burke calls “that ultimate disease of cooperation” (*Rhetoric of Motives* 22)—could bring men together and create peace. The action that Jensen and Don take requires that both face a “boundary between the world you’ve just left and the one ahead” which is “both a barrier and a point of transformation.” As they choose to co-create new meaning from their shared trauma, they cross this barrier, and as they do this, they “invite a turning point, initiate a change” (*Anzaldúa Light* 137). Both men have decided to be open to possibility, and as they show each other how they deal with their disability, and “insights are gained in the exchange of ideas” (Foss “Beyond Persuasion” 6). Through listening to each other, both Jensen and Don have the opportunity and ability to examine their stories “alongside one another’s” (Ratcliffe “Rhetorical Listening: A Trope” 8): each a warrior ordered to kill or be killed by the enemy, each wounded in the same battle, and each finding a way to manage a better life through forgiveness and acceptance.

In the final minutes of the film, viewers are given the equivalent of an epilogue: Son Don flies to South Dakota to visit Jensen and his family four months after the Vietnam Challenge. Jensen wears the Vietnam riding shirt that Don gave him, and Don wears a Vietnam Challenge baseball cap when he descends from the plane with a

translator. It quickly becomes apparent that Don is about to receive a new prosthetic leg. The men visit Lincoln Senior High School, where Don tells the high school students that he no longer hated Americans because he realized they were “humans, too, and now is the time to build a new future and work together” (1:50:57). As viewers watch Don and Jensen do a photo shoot in Jensen’s studio, drive to the hospital and try out Don’s new leg, and watch the two men jog together, we can see the value of Burke’s consubstantiation, where “in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts . . . ideas, [and] attitudes” that bring them together (21), while each man also retains his own identity. Here, we can see that their vulnerability is having the courage “to be imperfect” and allow themselves “to let go of who they thought they should be in order to be who they were” in order to have an authentic human connection (Brown “The Power of Vulnerability 9:29). They are not soldiers, nor disabled, nor somebody’s media puppets. They are two men who found a way to connect with each other and enjoy their engagement with each other as they both offer different perspectives and additional ways of thinking about subjects, which is another key aspect of invitational rhetoric (Foss “Metatheoretical” 8).

Conclusion: Reparative Reciprocity and Good Deeds

While all three scenes are different, they all offer possible examples of invitational rhetoric and *reparative reciprocity*. In the scene where Diane Carlson Evans and the American veterans hold their ground and ask that their visit to the Vietnam Tomb of the Unknown Soldier be limited to “veteran to veteran,” the invitation is “to contribute to the understanding by all participants of the issue”—in this case, the American

veterans— “and of one another” (Foss “Beyond Persuasion” 6). As Evans argues, “Veterans’ issues are different,” she helps other veterans use this as a platform in which they can empower themselves and act as one unit, or one team, with the same goal. The *reparative reciprocity* can be seen through the empowerment of others as they unite in this request and form an understanding within their group. They offer support to each other as they acknowledge each other’s pain by contributing to the dialogue, exchanging looks, or giving kind human contact.

With Jerry Stadtmiller and the young schoolgirl, this is one case of invitational rhetoric that may be painful. As Foss and Griffin contest, “there may be a wrenching loose of ideas,” which in most cases “may be uncomfortable”; however, “because rhetors affirm the beliefs of and communicate respect for others,” and since they both have gone to great lengths not to “engage in strategies that may damage or sever” their connection, they can have “an appreciation for new perspectives” or change their own (“Integrity” 9). The choice to change or understand is theirs, and through their vulnerability, their intent to rhetorically listen to each other, and then offering “openness and respect” to each other, *reparative reciprocity* gives them both a future of different possibilities as they make a connection with humility and acceptance, and they do this with words, silence, and human contact by way of a hug. Like vulnerability, kindness is a conscious decision that allows for the potential of change.

Dan Jensen and Son Don make invitational rhetoric look like an easy feat, for both men were open to each other and to change from the beginning of the Vietnam Challenge. They recognize the value of their unique similarities and differences, and in

their offering to each other, they “present their vision of the work and show how it looks and works for them,” but they also had a “willingness to yield,” which made their invitation to each other seem extremely easy, despite cultural, governmental, and language complications (Foss “Beyond Persuasion” 7). Their *reparative reciprocity* was a little different, as well, as it seemed more in depth than the scenes with Evans or Stadtmiller. Jensen gained pleasure from helping Don obtain a “new leg,” a better prosthetic that would help him run without pain, and Don offered to share his views and his changed perspective on Americans with high school students. The two men ran in the New York Marathon together twice after this documentary aired, and continued to talk and meet each other in various parts of the world to do other activities (Interview #1).

It is important to note that *reparative reciprocity* is similar to many theories we have in our rhetorical toolbox, such as rhetorical listening, reparative reading, therapeutic listening, and even invitational rhetoric; however, it is different. While rhetorical listening offers a way to interpret what we hear and its goal is to help us decode and deconstruct social constructions, *reparative reciprocity* is a way to consciously hear someone on a level that transcends interpretation because it is felt on a heartfelt connection that bypasses empathy and somehow resonates between speaker and listener. It may not be true love, but it comes close in that it does not have to deal with social constructs that have become our barriers. While reparative reading helps one explore a different world if we can put our pasts to the side and attempt to understand with an “open mind,” *reparative reciprocity* allows us to connect with one another by our pasts and co-create a different, hopefully less traumatic pasts that have different meanings.

With invitational rhetoric, people understand that they are entering a contact zone, and they still agree to listen, with the goal of learning and understanding different perspectives; change is completely optional, neither expected nor forced. When *reparative reciprocity* occurs, change occurs for both people, because the intent is to deliberately connect by hearing on a level that is so deep that it bypasses empathy, sympathy, and empty “I understand” comments and goes straight to honest truth of story, followed by complete acceptance and the genuine action of support, in whatever form the listener chooses, which is also accepted by the speaker. They may even change roles, such as Jensen and Don did as they “served” each other in their own way: Don explained to other Vietnamese men that Jensen was one of them, and Jensen helped acquire a new, more advanced prosthetic for his leg.

Reparative reciprocity is not about “fixing” each other; it is about acknowledging each other on a level that touches one’s heart in a way that they can feel vulnerable, accepted, and empowered. Invitational rhetoric is one way we can open the door for people to engage with each other, with absolutely no pressure to reach this stage, which hopefully helps us become less defensive and more accepting of different perspectives. In the next chapter, I mirror this chapter in that I discuss three scenes from the film and one outtake, and I examine how invitational rhetoric can be successful, even if it has the air of failure.

CHAPTER IV

UNSUCCESSFUL INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

Vietnam changed us as a country. In many ways, for the worse: It made us cynical and distrustful of our institutions. . . . If all we do is debate why we were there . . . we will miss this truly important question: What did the war do to us as Americans?

—Karl Marlantes, “Vietnam: The War That Killed Trust”

While Chapter Three explores the various ways that invitational rhetoric and *reciprocal reciprocity* may look, Chapter Four will focus on three events where invitational rhetoric appears to fail: 1) the visit to My Lai; 2) the second team meeting (on film); and 3) the relationship between Jose Ramos and Duane Wagner.

First, however, I must digress and return to the predicament of the Vietnam veterans. In both the Introduction and Chapter Two, I discussed some of the problems and rhetorical nuances of the construction and rebranding of the ethos of the Vietnam War and its soldiers. In this chapter, I focus first on the various ways that the American veterans’ trauma worked through the participants of the Vietnam Challenge. By looking at political and public views of national memory and how the perception of the Vietnam veteran’s trauma as symbol and myth was orchestrated, I can better extrapolate certain rhetorical choices of the participants in the Vietnam Challenge. I will then discuss how these choices affect the perception of invitational rhetoric in the visit to My Lai, the second veteran meeting, and the interaction between Jose Ramos and Duane Wagner.

Ethos and Perception of Trauma

The image of the spat-upon veteran is, of course, only the grounding image for a larger narrative of betrayal . . . and elements of military culture make GIs and veterans particularly vulnerable to its appeal.

—Jerry Lembcke, *The Spitting Image*¹⁸

As discussed earlier, the American public's perception of Vietnam veterans was complex and mostly negative. As Kulik, Shatan, and Nicosia have noted, *Time's* photos of the My Lai massacre pretty much decimated any illusion that the good ol' "American boy" was innocent; during the Vietnam campaign, even the government had them listed as "baby killers," "ticking time bombs," or "junkies," and even movies conveyed this ethos. Despite the work of Shatan, Lifton, Egen Dorf, and other well-known psychiatrists and historians, it was hard to help Americans understand that the Vietnam veterans were both executioner and "victims of atrocity" (Shatan "Grief" 640).

There is a difference between *crisis* and *trauma*. A *crisis* occurs when we encounter a problem that "exceeds" our ability to cope with a "particular situation" by using our normal, every-day problem-solving methods; however, when we cannot cope with something, we experience a "temporary state of upset and disequilibrium" and this also effects our language and our ability to communicate (Taylor et al. 2). *Trauma* is considered a "mental disorder" where the person experiences "inadmissible pain" that creates psychological and possible neuro-psychological responses that lead to long-term

¹⁸ Veteran and journalist Jerry Lembcke's *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam* shares a completely different point of view on Lifton's and Shatan's work, criticizing the men's work for its political tones.

suffering that may never truly be erased.¹⁹ By now, the physical and emotional effects of the Vietnam War upon American soldiers has long been established, and we are not surprised that almost thirty percent of our veterans experience some form of PTSD; however, in 1997, when *VLTC* was filmed, the American general public was still unaware that this was such a severe or debilitating affect on men and women who returned from war. Everyone I interviewed, including Gruffie Clough—who had extensive experience with victims of PTSD—said the most unexpected part of their trip was realizing the “amount of trauma” the vets “still carried,” even twenty-nine years after the war (Liza Cotter). While Clough had given them small signals to watch for—someone taking another person’s helmet, or one rider deliberately wrecking another—most of the volunteers and staff struggled to understand why the veterans were so “easily” upset (Clough).

Part of the disconnect was lack of information, but part of the division between the veterans and others on this event was the fact that some of the WTS members and volunteers did not want to communicate with the veterans. People like Liza and Terry Cotter (you see her making the “fish face” at 4:58 and cooling herself down with a bottle of water at 1:17:58) befriended Ed and Erik Weihenmayer on the flight to Vietnam, and admitted that they stayed with Ed and Erik and to themselves, because some of the other veterans were a little “much” for them, which is a very polite way of claiming *division*.

¹⁹ For more information, consult the works of Arthur Egendorf, Robert Jay Lifton, Chaim Shatan, Vitali Rozyenko and Harvey Dondershine, Richard Kearney, Andrew E. Hunt, and Robert Reynolds

The veterans, especially Wayne Smith and Duane Wagner, were aware of these decisions. In one interview, Smith laughs and says, “Oh, yeah. Some of those guys—those big, multi-millionaire playboys—made sure we knew they were not there to ride with us, but to spend their money and do something else,” and Wagner criticizes them, adding, “They were always trying to control us through the ride, riding way out in front or too far back, making sure that we knew they didn’t want to have anything to do with us. I didn’t care, until the one time we had to ride four miles per hour,” which he repeats slowly: “FOUR. MILES. PER. HOUR. I mean, good God, man, don’t be an ass” (Wagner).

Just as there were people who avoided the veterans or whom the veterans chose to avoid, there were people truly engaged with the veterans. I discuss this more in the conclusion, but world-class athletes Greg LeMond (five-time winner of the Tour de France) and Diana Nyad (long-distance swimmer who swam from Cuba to Florida, twice) were extremely interested in communicating and spending time with the veterans. McKee struggled to maintain his own mental state as he tended to Jensen and other vets who spoke with him and maintained his ethos of WTS employee on this trip. The KTQ crew took this opportunity to learn as much as they could from the veterans, as Quinn saw this as an opportunity to “tell the complexity” of the veterans’ stories along with their “emotional life and who they were” in an effort to diminish the “bad rap” that they had been branded with. Adds Singer, who had no previous experience with the military, “I wanted to learn from them and be with them” and understand the meaning of “serve your country” and “sacrifice for your country” at the age of eighteen (Singer). As a result,

most of the people who made connections during this trip stayed in touch after the trip, though they did not run two New York Marathons like Dan Jensen and Son Don.

As we know, bringing different personalities together--especially in this rhetorical situation--creates both opportunity for invitational rhetoric and the chance to assert agency as one makes the choice. As we see from the following scenes I examine—the second veteran meeting, the impromptu visit to My Lai, and the relationship between Jose Ramos and Duane Wagner—for some of these people, it is extremely difficult to “speak and stay” and remain “engage[d] with a person who is actively working against interests” one sees as “integral” to their discussion (Swiencicki 165). While we look at these examples of seemingly “failed” invitational rhetoric, I look at the moments of perceived distancing and where invitation might look more like confrontation before I explain how these can still be considered as successful examples of invitational rhetoric. At the very least, these scenes serve as ways that we can see the agency of veterans claiming their own identities as they merge their memories and oral histories with each other’s and demonstrate that they are more than labels, more than two-dimensional “hero/victim dichotomy” as they have been characterized, and that like everyone else, they attempt to “understand their own experiences” and appear both troubled and creative, “both suffering and capable of significant insight” simultaneously. The participants on this trip want to know that they are part of something significant, and they will find ways to engage with and commit to that ideology.

Veterans’ Second Meeting

For the veteran with the dream, as for all of us, the group . . . confirms as nothing else does that we

carry a legacy of the war in our memories, that we exist as veterans despite the denials within and around us.

—Arthur Egendorf, “Vietnam Veteran Rap Groups and Themes of Postwar Life”

Even if Mantegna had not mentioned the fact that this group has decided to hold a meeting “apart from the group,” the audience should recognize the division, for this is a much smaller room, with a much smaller group. We see about fourteen people in a horseshoe made of tables. Artie’s and Heidi’s backs are to us, but the first person to speak is Wade Sanders (Lieutenant, U.S. Navy, 1966-69), whose words and actions immediately set the stage for this meeting. His demeanor—his rhetoric and his body—gives a clear message to the other people in the room: *We are not identical. I am indeed very different from you.*

His face rests in his hands as he slouches over the table that his elbow rests upon. At best, his voice sounds tired; at worst, it sounds as if he is disinterested in this event as he makes eye contact with only one person in the room (we do not see this person because the camera only focuses on Wade at this moment) and claims, “Your particular trauma and your particular experience is no more or less valid than mine or anybody else who sat in a fighting hole and saw horrible trauma” (49:33). At this moment, someone might claim that his rhetoric could be understood as an attempt to unite all the veteran soldiers, as his words seem to say everyone’s pain and trauma are to be recognized and respected the same amount, because one cannot judge someone else’s trauma, and therefore one person’s trauma cannot be worse or more important than another’s.

However, I contend that Sanders' body language and his tone contradict this idea of neutrality. The hand he rests upon covers part of his face, which is a nonverbal cue that signals his disinterest in listening to others. The other arm silently folds in front of his body, a defensive action that silently blocks others. The camera spans one side of a table quickly and we hear a couple of assenting grunts, then Sanders continues to voice his concern "about the *mea culpa* aspect" that he notices "coming into this process," telling his veteran audience that he has "no shame and . . . no guilt about what the United States did in Vietnam" (49:39). What is also interesting is that when the camera spans on the other veterans around the table, only two of them—Herman Gallagher and Bob M—are looking at Sanders. The other veterans are either looking down at the table or their hands, or like Guerrero, looking around the room at each other. This is a rhetorical move, as they are giving Sanders their attention, but by not engaging with him with eye contact and by crossing their arms and legs—mimicking his earlier blocking arm move—they silently abstain from giving Sanders their complete assent. The other thirteen veterans, for their parts, are merely being polite to someone they realize is indeed different, and there is a moment of physical representation of Burke's division. As Sanders strongly—and much more emotionally—stated at the My Lai memorial site, he does not share Whisnant's vision of a united "team" or the WTS's mission of American and Vietnamese soldiers coming together, nor is Sanders supportive of those who do.

In this scene, we can clearly see Burke's identification and division appear simultaneously within this group through body language. Members must decide immediately if they are in the Sanders camp of unwavering hostility toward the

Vietnamese, or if they are on the Vietnam Challenge in order to heal their trauma by joining in the “*mea culpa* aspect” of the ride. They may be tired and a little emotional after the trip to My Lai and the shortened bike ride, but Sanders reminds them that this trip matters on many levels, and he has drawn the proverbial line on making friends of former enemies. These veterans may also question Sanders’ motives, or feel that his explanation has become an argument for social conformity, even though, in Burke’s words, Sanders’ words and motivation may “involve merely a difference in the scope” of how he is witnessing the process of how some are internalizing this event (Burke *Permanence* 24).

Now the veterans share their identification with each other as they enter into this conversation; each individual stands in his or her own ethos in order to create a bond with each other as well as give a reminder that this experience is each person’s choice. While KTQ edited this meeting to fit into time and their narrative, it is still possible to recognize the parts of invitational rhetoric, identity, and *reparative reciprocity*. It is also easy to find the moment where the trust is broken, which signals the end of invitational rhetoric within this exchange.

The invitation comes from the veterans deciding to meet. According to Singer, Gilbert, and the veterans I spoke with, most of these impromptu meetings were just that—things would wind down, or people would wind up and when they became upset, someone (it could be anyone—the counselors, but mostly the veterans) would suggest a meeting. Those that wanted to share insight or vent would attend; others would do something else. The choice was theirs, and the meetings were completely voluntary. By

choosing to do something else—go shopping, go out for drinks or karaoke, or simply rest from the day’s excursion—other veterans politely choose to decline the invitation and not participate.

By speaking in this group and by identifying themselves, each veteran is claiming agency over his or her participation in this bike ride, this meeting, and the decision to be part of the veteran group. Armin Merkle (PFC, U.S. Army, 1964-66), one of the more popular veterans on this ride, is the first to speak up and address Sanders. “I know who I am and I know how I feel, and I can’t kick that under the rug” (49:49). His voice is strong, and he attempts to make eye contact with everyone else in the room as he explains his stance, which is not about division or “*mea culpa*,” but about one experience that deserves accountability and forgiveness.

As Merkle tells his story of American soldiers violating a Vietnamese kid’s dead body and his attempt to get them to bury the body, Merkle’s voice cracks, and his eyes water as he says, “That’s all I can say now” (50:31). The camera has once again swept the room while Merkle speaks, and this time, all eyes in the room are on him. Even Sanders, is clearly paying attention to Merkle as he looks directly at the speaker, though his arms remain crossed in front of his body on the table and his eyes drop when the camera zooms in on his face. Here is a moment where two ideologies have entered into a contact zone. One claims to have no regrets; the other claims that Americans cannot forget that some of them did atrocious things to the Vietnamese during war time, and they should not be forgotten until they have been forgiven. Very quickly, two more ideologies

become voiced in this contact zone: Ed Weihenmayer and Bob Steck each have something to say.

In invitational rhetoric, the object is to hear and understand different perspectives, and Ed Weihenmayer (Captain, U.S. Marine Corps, 1962-1967), who decidedly did not participate in any of the abusive acts during his service, adds, “I just don’t want to feel” that Ed’s “great service” and “great honor” to “serve . . . is sullied in any way” (50:37). When Merkle interrupts Weihenmayer to assure the latter that Merkle would “never, ever, sully your service or anybody else’s” because “I know what guys went through,” Merkle is at this moment identifying with Weihenmayer’s service as well as that of the lost lives that he witnessed as Merkle returned their bodies to the States in “the metal boxes” he helped load unto the planes. “You don’t have to worry about me,” Merkle promises, and in that moment Merkle has assured the group that while he understands multiple events—both honorable and dishonorable—have occurred during the nineteen years of the American occupation, he is not there to judge the men nor the women that share this space with him. Merkle is here to share his pain and his feeling of accountability, but he is also here to honor the veterans who have returned to ride with him on this Challenge.

This is also a moment of *reparative reciprocity*, as Merkle acknowledges both Sanders and Weihenmayer, has listened with respect, and has shared his own perspective regarding atonement, and he has assured the listening veterans that he has no intention of “sully” or demeaning anyone’s service or sacrifice. For his reciprocity as well as to maintain the aspect of invitational rhetoric, Weihenmayer offers his own vulnerability

and admits that his views are changing as he listens to the men's testimonies. Whereas invitational rhetoric is about opening up to vulnerability and listening, *reparative reciprocity* is about opening up to vulnerability, listening, and also offering the healing aspect of emotionally allowing oneself and one's audience a future with possibility and hope.

Bob Steck (Radio Operator, U.S. Army 1970-72), as well, adds that "we don't need to fight" this particular war again, and while he accepts the fact that they all have "different perspectives and so on," he almost appears to admonish the group as he rubs his face and says, "for Christ's sake, I do think we can move it along," like a father tired of playing with his kids. He advocates that these veterans, who have participated in this particular example of invitational rhetoric willingly, should stop living in the past and start living in the present and find joy. He even suggests that the American veterans look "at Vietnam's present and its future" in order to "focus" on each person's own future (51:11). Here is a third voice: the first one refuses to take any blame for the actions of others and is proud of his service; a second voice claims that witnessed barbarity needs to be accounted for and friends' deaths deserve to be mourned; a third voice tries to pull the others out of their painful pasts and into a healed present.

There are things we should understand when watching this scene. First, in the span of two minutes (49:22-51:23), we have seen four men, all with different service records and *ethos*, try to inhabit the same space—the same contact zone—without creating more dissonance. While Sanders is completely at ease acting as if he is in charge, probably because he was a Navy Lieutenant, Ed Weihenmayer is actually his equal—

Marine captains have a different structure system, even though they are part of the Navy—and he is not nearly as combative or upset as Sanders, though he identifies with Sanders in the way that he did nothing wrong. Bob Steck was a radio operator for the Army, and while that position has significant status, he was still a grunt, his “boots on the ground,” during his tour. While they are somehow attempting to reach *identification* by attempting to vocalize their discomfort with the Vietnamese and each other during this moment on this trip, they are nowhere near *consubstantiation*. Here, there is an undercurrent that viewers may or may not recognize: that of power dynamics. This moment becomes problematic because there is now an unsaid battle which occurs in the very contact zone where these men and women have decided to congregate; that of military veteran who will either acknowledge or fail to acknowledge rank in others.

Merkle, ironically, is the lowest ranking soldier in this part of the conversation, as he was a Private First Class, which is the third lowest rank in the Army, above private without an insignia and private with an insignia. I use “ironic” here because of the four men, Merkle has the loudest voice with the strongest argument: 1) *some of us did or witnessed bad shit*, and 2) *those of us who feel guilty need to find forgiveness while we are here*. As discussed earlier, there was already some dissention since some of the veterans on this trip were not injured nor traumatized by the Vietnam War. However, with the distinct officers and grunts merging into one meeting over a specific moment in their shared experience, this moment adds to the silent underlying tension that nobody really wants to address. “It's like people who are privileged end up in the Navy, in the Air Force, and they're kind of above it,” Singer explains as he witnessed this in person, and

he felt this crosscurrent often. “And then I think it's the grunts,” the veterans who were not enlisted but were forcefully thrown into the war without adequate training or aid and “who see the shit on the ground run and sort of the front line and there's that distinction” (Interview #1).

Though never discussed in the documentary scenes, this power dynamic tension is present in most interactions. In most situations, the men and women on this trip attempt to navigate this contact zone by respecting the fact that the other person has the title of “veteran,” regardless of how they may be defined by others. When non-veterans are involved in these meetings, identification depends upon trusting that active participants are listening with goodwill and the intent to understand. However, in instances such as this meeting, where officers such as Sanders tries to assert his authority, other veterans are placed in a position of either ignoring the power dynamic or claiming their agency by identifying themselves and their place in the specific rhetorical situation during this trip. This is also a move of invitational rhetoric, for it allows the people involved in each specific moment during this trip to choose to engage, how they wish to engage, and choose when to disengage. Choice is the key component in these situations.

Steck, for his part, does not address rank nor guilt nor pride; he acknowledges that everyone “has different perspectives” (51:09), which could be a way to ease the tension and bring people back into the discussion. He is almost a peacekeeper here, as his eyes span the room and he reminds everyone in this room that they are still a specific community with a specific shared history and identity, even though they have had different experiences within that history. Then his tone changes.

Steck's peacekeeping moment dims somewhat as he comments, "For Christ's sake, I do think we could move along" (51:16), signifying that he does not necessarily care about hearing the argument about right or wrong, guilt or pride. The fact is that Americans are in the country that they ravaged twenty-five or more years ago, and with his counter-punch that, "Maybe if by looking at Vietnamese"—Sanders' past and current adversaries—"present and its future," Steck suggests that these American veterans quit looking at their personal traumatic pasts and look to their futures. While this could be an invitation to enter into a model of *reparative reciprocity*, since it follows a moment of reciprocity between Weihenmayer and Merkle, it falls short as Steck talks. By advising the group to look at how their hosts view war and its aftermath, Steck signifies that he chooses to ignore the sorrow—for some, anguish—they obviously still carry. He also drops his eyes and looks at the table when he talks about learning from the Vietnamese, which is another nonverbal cue that he either feels at worst, shame while he offers this idea—as a part of him may realize this particular audience finds this suggestion inappropriate—or he may feel at best, fear—unwilling to make eye contact with his comrades because he suspects he will not be supported, or he may be attacked, as he shares his philosophy. In either scenario, it appears as though he no longer respects other points of view, because he has dismissed them. In this way, *reparative reciprocity* is not enacted, and invitational rhetoric comes dangerously close to rhetoric as persuasion instead of rhetoric of invitation, as this is the moment where the question, of "whether the desire to change someone can ever truly be suspended" occurs (Swiencicki 153). As

Steck speaks, is he trying to persuade others to change their minds, or is he inviting them by giving them an option they may not have conceived yet?

As Roof and Wiegman argue, as we speak and claim responsibility for our words, “we do not have control over their meaning” because “responsibility carries beyond intention” (234). The context of this rhetorical situation—whatever has created the veterans’ necessity for this meeting away from the rest of the group, even other veterans—gives guidance to how Steck’s statement “is comprehended or interpreted,” and he has no control over how the others receive his idea. What keeps this interaction in the realm of invitational rhetoric is again, choice. As Foss and Griffin remind us, the “rhetors do not place restrictions on an interaction,” and the participants in every meeting, including this one, “can bring any and all matters to the interaction for consideration,” and all ideas “can be challenged” (“Beyond Persuasion” 12). In this context, any suggestion is allowed, as people are in this contact zone precisely to talk about an issue and gain a new perspective; their freedom of choice to accept that perspective is what strengthens invitational rhetoric in this scene (12).

When Merkle makes eye contact with Weihenmayer and moves from his own focal point of trauma to assuring Weihenmayer that he “would never sully” anyone’s service, because he understood that so many men had sacrificed themselves in service of what they thought was a bigger purpose, patriotism, for a good cause, it is a moment of *reparative reciprocity*. as he assures Weihenmayer—with both nonverbal cues and the inflection of his voice—that he has heard what Weihenmayer said, understands Ed’s concern, and reciprocates with reassurances that Weihenmayer “doesn’t have to worry”

about Merkle disrespecting or dishonoring his service or honor. In this moment, Merkle has noticed that same thing that the KTQ crew members have noticed: “To some of these men, their service and sacrificing what they had to was probably the most important part of their identity” (Singer Interview #1). Both men will carry Merkle’s confession, which may—or may not—lighten Merkle’s psychological burden, and both men will remember Weihenmayer’s part in the war.

In Steck’s invitational rhetoric, Steck tries make an argument that the Vietnamese have a more forgiving and accepting mentality, which we have seen in several scenes in the film. For example, when resting at one of the many temples they visited, the KTQ crew films a quick interview through a translator with Thi Phu Nguyen—the disabled Vietnamese woman with a prosthetic leg from the knee down—who informs them that she “thinks” that by “nature” the Vietnamese are a “tolerant and forgiving people” (26:45). She remembers the “U.S. planes, the B-52s” that “destroyed” Hanoi, adding that the people have a saying in Vietnam: “We fight against those who run away, but not against those who return” (27:04). She seems to echo Steck’s contention as she states that she harbors no ill will toward the veterans who have returned, and she is happy to share a new experience that encompasses physical cooperation and emotional support from participants belonging to both countries. In the daylight, after riding bikes next to each other, it may be easier for the Americans to hear. However, inside and joined together as veterans during this meeting, it does not seem as though they are eager to release their deliberate division just yet.

Recalling that the KTQ crew edited this meeting as they edited everything to keep a certain storyline, we can see an example of Steck's invitation to "move it along" as an invitation that piggybacks off of Merkle's and Weihenmayer's *reparative reciprocity*. After Steck gives his advice to copy the Vietnamese, the next four minutes are filled with other group members sharing their trauma and guilt. Dan Jensen admits to wanting to shoot himself in order to be released from his Vietnam tour and his denial of his identity as a Vietnam veteran. Jose Ramos speaks about his "ten weeks of training"—or lack thereof—as a medic, how solitary his job was, and how he also denied everything for the first five years after his eventual return home. Heidi Ubel Baruch (Captain, U.S. Army Nurse Corps 1967-69), also a medic in the trauma room, shares her experiences and beginning inability to make decisions about soldiers who could be saved or not as she had to choose who lived or died. Weihenmayer, who did not realize he was keeping "things in," admits that after listening to these "strong people letting their feelings out," that he's "thinking about" his own feelings, telling the people around him that he hasn't done that "before" they landed in Vietnam (54:31).

This is one of the stronger indications of success in invitational rhetoric, where the veterans exhibit their own agency as they actively listen, explore, and attempt to learn, share, and exchange their stories with each other (Foss and Griffin "Metatheoretical" 64). While the stories are different, they also intersect in ways that the veterans actively interpret—Baruch and Ramos both identify as life-or-death decision-makers, the laughter that answers Jensen's confession that he did not want to be in Vietnam indicates that several listeners shared the same feeling—and "consider" what

perspective each person “brings to the moment,” and each individual also acknowledges that this is a moment of “critical information sharing” (Alexander and Hammers 6) which allows them to bond in some ways and detach themselves in other ways. In these ways, the veterans also have the opportunity to claim agency in how they “make their own decisions” and see “the humanity” in the “contributions” of this “exchange” (Foss and Griffin “Metatheoretical” 65). They may find similarities and increase understanding, as when both Ramos and Baruch explain their roles in how they served as death dealers; they may detach themselves from someone as they hear him claim to share none of their guilt or grief that still lingers from the past.

Then Duane Wagner speaks. Baruch has her arm around his shoulders, and Wagner does not make solid eye contact with anyone as he starts with, “I’m just confused as hell,” and then, “I didn’t think I had any problems” (54:38), then jokes, “The thing that upsets me the most is not my legs; it’s going bald!” (54:50). Some of the group members laugh and enjoy the joke, but Ramos is visibly agitated: he shakes his head, clenches his jaw, and looks pointedly down, silent. The camera focuses back on Wagner, now consoling Baruch as she hugs him and rests her head on his shoulder, her eyes closed. When Wagner speaks again, the ethos of “a white guy with black legs”—which both have American flags painted on them, as everyone who spoke to me noticed and mentioned—is challenged as Ramos calls Wagner “another professional liar” (55:15). Wagner still does not make eye contact.

At this point, this meeting could be considered a failure in the realm of invitational rhetoric and *reparative reciprocity*. Trust seems to be broken, people such as

Sanders and Ramos, appear to be disrespectful or others perceive the speakers as discourteous (Ed with Merkle, Jose with Duane and his jokes). However, I would argue that is not the case. Through claiming their identities and their various forms of agency of choice, the veterans (and the filmmakers) explore several ways that this eventful meeting could be a success.

When Sanders speaks, the veterans allow him to finish. They may not make eye contact with him or agree with him, but they do listen to him, and having the choice of whether to change or not to change one's perspective is a specific aspect of invitational rhetoric. This very act of listening, of letting someone discuss the world or an event from his point of view, matters; while Sanders' invitation may come in the form of a challenge instead of a request, the other veterans actually claim their spaces and agency as they respond. What is also important to note here is the fact that other veterans speak up to create an opening in the contact zone—perhaps in a moment where they realize that “perspectives are inherently partial” (Foss and Griffin “Metatheoretical” 61) — to allow each other to share different perspectives and attempt to understand how different experiences can create a fuller, more enriched viewpoint, that can help shape the veterans' reactions and thoughts during this ride.

The rest of this scene shows several examples of Krista Ratcliffe's rhetorical listening features: different cultures within a culture as we listen to a trauma nurse (Baruch), a medic (Ramos), Army grunts (Jensen and Steck), and Marines (Weißenmayer and Wagner) as they share part of their past pain and allow each other to support them in silence or by nodding their heads. When Wagner talks, Baruch makes physical contact by

resting her hand on his shoulder and later hugging him as he becomes more serious and more vulnerable; when Jensen contributes his story, counselor Dean McKee supports him by sitting close behind Jensen, but out of anyone's line of sight. I will return to the end of this meeting in the next section; however, right now I would like to focus on the interaction between Sanders, Merkle, Weihenmayer, and Steck as it relates to identification, agency, reparative reciprocity, and how these relate to invitational rhetoric in this scene.

Up to this point, veterans have shared the vulnerability with each other as they shared their emotional stories, each person's past service—and past transgressions—ingrained into his and her identity and ethos. Duane Wagner almost creates *division* when he tries to bring humor into the meeting, because Jose and a few others do not feel that this meeting, where other veterans have shared their fears and thoughts of their failed service, was the proper setting for such a disconnected remark, especially since humor is a known coping mechanism. When Jose calls Duane a “professional liar,” he admonishes Duane for deflecting as Jose follows one of the most notorious rules of engagement and clear expectation from the former Rap Groups: be honest, and don't let anyone spout BS (Egendorf, Shatan, Rozynski, and Lifton). Jose may be calling Duane out, but he is also inviting Duane to be honest with himself and this group.

When Jose asks Duane if he's ever felt this way or done this type of debriefing before, Duane responds with, “No,” and adds that he feels divided inside himself because “one part of me says I'm proud and the other half of the time it says I'm ashamed” (55:37). At this moment, Duane has not changed his perspective; however, he

has changed from the cavalier joker to one that is more honest, more sincere, and now more vulnerable, which now puts him in the community of suffering veterans that share this contact zone space. The male voice we hear respond may be Jose, but it also may be Blas, a veteran whom we see often but rarely hear, who says, “Maybe you can be both” (55:51), confirming acceptance of Duane’s sincerity. It is also important to note that this is the only eye contact that Wagner makes during this interaction, which also tells the speaker (Ramos or Blas) that Wagner has respectfully heard him, which is significant in that Wagner has accepted the “invitation” to be honest, in a moment where the purpose of invitational rhetoric is “to trust the invitation” and be “open” to the “possibility of something more” (Alexander and Hammers 12), which can lead to healing and the possibility of more *reparative reciprocity*.

In the communication between Merkle and Ed, both men reciprocate towards each other as they listen to each other. Merkle claims agency as he identifies himself as both a victim of atrocity (forced to watch his comrades abuse an enemy’s corpse) and admits his guilt in not feeling like he did enough to stop things. Ed feels as though Merkle’s admission has been blanketed upon all of them, and he has never felt guilty for his service, and this difference creates his moment to take agency and share that with Merkle. It may be important to note here that Ed played a different role from Merkle during the war, and Ed did not experience major PTSD. While Merkle was on the ground avoiding bullets and shrapnel, Ed was flying 118 missions over the Vietnam highway. By his own words, Weihenmayer never had to experience the “grueling ground experience” of being “in a foxhole”; he was “simply proud to serve during a

time of war,” and did not make “any mental formation of opposition” to the war. Consequently, he did not have “that anguish” that several of the Vietnam veterans felt (Weihenmayer).

During this exchange, however, Weihenmayer recognizes Merkle’s role and grief, and Merkle recognizes Weihenmayer’s patriotic pride, and they both recognize themselves as part of this community that shares a history and this bike ride. Merkle displays *reparative reciprocity* when he shares his duty of transporting dead American bodies from the field of battle to the planes that would fly them home and assures Ed that he will “never sully” Weihenmayer’s service or pride. Ed, later in the meeting, muses aloud that he has noticed “strong people letting” go of their feelings, which has created an opportunity for him to “think about” his own since he has yet to do this (54:08). By their acknowledging different aspects of the other’s ethos, each man honors the other, and each man reciprocates by moving into the future with a part of the other’s identity, Merkle with a thought about service and duty, and Weihenmayer with a thought about examining his emotions of the aftermath of war.

My Lai

*Memories from war never fade. If left alone,
they come alive to seep and reach through
time with searching and grasping claws.
Ignore, they consume, just as they now
consume me. So how do I make this right? I
will move forward. That is my choice.
—Lieutenant Colonel Bill Russell Edmonds,
God Is Not Here*

On the afternoon of the ninth day of the excursion, the Vietnamese drivers and Minders “pull” the team off Highway 1 and have them bike an extra sixteen kilometers—

close to ten miles—to “visit” the My Lai Memorial. As a point of reference, this was part of history that created the ethos of the American soldier that was forever changed from that of hero to that as murderer as this became known as the confirmed most ruthless massacre in the Vietnam War perpetrated by our soldier (Theiss).

Each day has been somewhat frustrating for the Americans because the Vietnamese government has changed the itinerary each day. As Whisnant explains, at the beginning of the logistical planning, the Vietnamese officials had agreed to allow the American veterans to visit places where they had been stationed or wounded during the Vietnam War; however, “When we got here, it was, ‘No, you cannot go here today’ and ‘maybe tomorrow.’ and then the next day was. ‘No, you cannot go here’ all over again.” Wagner and Weihenmayer both confirmed this.

According to Wagner, the Vietnamese Minders would never tell the team exactly where they were on the map, ensuring that the veterans could not simply “go off on our own.” “We would ask, and try to figure out where we were, and we were usually within three or seven miles of where we wanted to be, but we were never sure of the direction we would need to go to get there” (Interview #1).

Groups have been formed, friendships have begun, and divisions have sprouted. It is not between the Vietnamese and the Americans as much as tensions are elevated between the veterans. According to co-producer Adam Singer, “You could see animosity between them, especially between the grunts and the officers,” but also in other intersections of ethos: soldiers or medics; those who were proud to serve or those who were ashamed; conscientious objectors or “John Wayne” followers; and even division

between those who were injured during the war/because of the war (such as the aftereffects of Agent Orange) or some other reason (a motorcycle accident after returning to the States).²⁰

So, amidst all of these contact zones, amidst all of this underlying tension that everyone attempts to navigate by riding every day and healing by doing or doing their chosen activities at the end of the day to relax, the Vietnamese hosts “bring” the American veterans, who have already shown respect for the dead when they visited the Vietnamese Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to visit what psycho-historian and psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton calls “a human-made *atrocious-producing situation*” that created an atmosphere of “inevitable genocide” in My Lai:

The ‘masculine initiation rite’ of basic training and the ‘manly status’ acquired in it become inseparable from what is best called the *machismo of slaughter*. That machismo is in turn directly associated with simple fear, with the message that *any* Vietnamese—man, woman, or infant—may be setting the booby trap that will kill you;’ the implication being that to survive you must ‘kill them all.’ (Lifton *Home* 44)

American soldiers had been victims of firefights with deadly snipers and unseen armies in the jungles, hidden under and behind dense foliage. Women and children were

²⁰ Both Wayne Smith and Duane Wagner also made a comment about one of the men who claimed to be a cook and had PTSD. Both scoffed at this: Smith laughed at said, “Come on, man! You were a cook? You didn’t do shit!” (Interview). Wagner commented similarly, saying, “You were a cook? A damn cook? I ran ambushes and got my legs blown off. What did you do, duck from falling lettuce? A cook? That’s not combat, come on.” This is a moment of *division* as both the Army medic and Marine believe that their injuries are more important because they were somehow *earned*, during battle, making their injuries warrior bound, which is a clear distinction for them.

also known to attack American soldiers. Finally, the men lost sense of reality and “forced” the enemy to engage. Unfortunately, in this instance, the “enemy” was a village of 504 civilians—old men, 182 women, 133 children (Lifton *Home from the War* 50).²¹ When the vans arrive at My Lai, the Vietnamese hosts ask the veterans if they would “like to visit” the Memorial (Wagner Interview #1). As we hear the tour guide give this information, we see twenty yellow bike tops in the crowd. Most of these are WTS personnel and Vietnamese cyclists, but there are a few American veterans in the crowd: Merkle, Wayne, and Bob C. are among them.

This is a moment of a forced confrontation: Americans and Vietnamese are brought together to “remember” a moment in history, regardless of feelings or choice. As Americans, the WTS participants are forced to “face [a] difficult, complex . . . truth” about their legacy as a country and now “confront” how that truth “reverberate[s] in the present” (Bowen). While the editing crops out any picture that would lead to bias, there were several more veterans who stayed in the parking lot, away from the memorial site and away from those who might use them for any type of political propaganda. According to Weihenmayer, this was the proudest part of the trip for him, because once the veterans learned where they were going, most of the American veterans silently rejected the invitation to enter the site. There was no discussion; they just moved away from the entrance and vans. Even Dud Hendrick (Captain, U.S. Air Force 1963-1967,

²¹ The lone survivor gives this account when Lifton interviews him, mentioning that “the men behaved in many ways as *if* they were in a combat situation,” even noticing that the soldiers kneeled and crouched,” and one American soldier admitted that “judgment was all screwed up” during this incident and he thought he had finally “got” the Vietnamese to “stand up and fight.”

whom you see speaking at 22:27), officially a WTS employee, used his Vietnam War veteran ethos to avoid any fanfare. In the outtakes, he tells the others, “If you are going to go in, do so now, so we can get this over with and get back to the hotel.” He is not being disrespectful; rather, he is encouraging those who are undecided to make their decisions and commit. For some of the people—Dan Jensen, the Cotters—chose to stay outside to support others; Jensen stayed with McKee, who stayed outside in case any of the veterans needed him, and the Cotters stayed with Weihenmayer to show their support of him and his decision.

As Mantegna narrates that this “temporarily divides the Americans on the team,” this division is interesting. Most of the people who went into the Memorial were, as I mentioned earlier, members of WTS: Diane Nyad, Stephen Whisnant, and Dr. Brian Halpern. These people were not veterans of the Vietnam War, and therefore held no deep-seated trauma nor painful memories from this event. Devon Archer, a son of a passed veteran, is visibly upset with the guide’s information, especially after the KTQ cameraman tells him that the waterway Archer is staring pensively into is the very waterway that the American soldiers “threw the bodies” into on that fateful evening.

While he understands the horror of this event, Archer cannot conceive how this happened, and he echoes Lifton’s expert claim that the soldiers “just went nuts” because “they were scared to death” (1:22:45) and “a lot of things had to have be going wrong at one time for that to happen.” In one sentence, Archer sounds like he is trying to understand this event and give grace to the soldiers who participated in it; however, in his next comment, he consciously divides himself from these men who “were nuts” as he

claims, “I can’t imagine myself or anyone I know being a part of something like that” (1:23:02), even absolving his father, absent from this trip, saying, “I can’t even imagine my dad doing this.” Archer mimics what the other veterans walking around the Memorial have done: show respect to the hosts and the deceased but claim no part in the massacre. It is a fine line to walk, to be sure, and the remaining sixty or so members of this “team” are quietly hanging out in the parking lot with the vans and each other, protesting very politely but very visually as they refuse to participate in this “visit.”

Wayne Smith, one of the two black men on this trip, felt that he needed to pay his respects, both for his sins and to act as an ambassador for other veterans who may be across the ocean but still might want to atone for their actions during this war. “We did some horrible things here, that’s a fact,” he says, “and we should apologize,” he argues (Smith Interview #4). While Smith was an Army combat medic who genuinely opposed the Vietnam War, he was trained in the brutal “desensitized” system that Robert J. Lifton, Arthur Egendorf, Chaim Shatan, Liam Corley, and Lenny Grant have all tried to convey: During basic training, trainers made all attempts to desensitize the soldiers. Smith supported Russell’s claim that military instructors called the Vietnam natives “gooks”; they took bets on which FNGs²² would be killed the earliest once he landed in Vietnam (Shatan “Grief” 12); they “cheapened” life as they managed to “stir up the most extreme resentments and rage” the soldiers had ever felt, and then they either required these soldiers to “completely swallow those feelings” at some events or encouraged these soldiers to exhibit “uncontrolled frenzy at others” (Egendorf “Rap Groups” 119). By

²² “Fucking New Guys”

dehumanizing the enemy, trainers furthered the “psychic numbing” that made it possible for atrocities such as My Lai to occur (Grant 201, Lifton *Home* 492).

Smith, a peace-loving man, admits that even he came to his “lowest point” in Vietnam and “struggled” with taking responsibility for “wanting to kill the enemy” and eventually shooting at him (a “baptism of blood,” Wayne calls it), because his company had suffered so many casualties by traps, snipers, and bombs (Smith Interview #4). For his transgression of demonstrating this “sub-human mentality,” Wayne found redemption in helping others through Rap Groups in the VVAW. Upon his return to Vietnam during the Vietnam Challenge, however, Smith felt as if he and his fellow veterans owed a debt to the My Lai victims, if for nothing else, than maybe for a “reconciliation experience” and a chance to release some of that “real psychic pain from what we did” as humans, not just as each person. Wayne is clearly using his identity as medic to bridge an unseen gap between warrior and healer, and he claims his right to his choice. However, another healer—Jose Ramos—does not share in this perspective.

With Blas sitting next to him, Jose claims, “I’m here to celebrate life,” reminding the audience that, “The dead are dead . . . gone . . . in God’s hands, not in my hands” (1:20:56). The people memorialized here are not the men he patched up and sent back into battle; these are not his former comrades or brothers-in-arms. While he does not say anything else, the audience can see frustration on his face and hear it in his voice. Ramos barely looks at the camera, choosing to look at the interviewer instead, which is interesting in itself, because as the camera is usually a type of “confessional” (Singer Interview #1), speaking to an interviewer, Blas, who usually does not care about the

camera, purposefully looks away, making it clear that this is something he does not wish to—and will not—discuss in front of the KTQ crew.

Sanders is also visibly angry with what most of the veterans believe to be more of a political ploy than anything else (Smith interview #4, Brummel, Weihenmayer, Wagner Interview #1), and he claims that the North Vietnamese “routinely destroyed every village,” insisting that they also killed women and children that Sanders “cared for . . . as a matter of course,” finishing with his belief that this is a “propaganda play” from the Vietnamese government of which Sanders refuses “to be a tool” (1:21:04). He also refuses to look into the camera, and as a public speaker/former politician, this cannot be accidental. Sanders speaks with the interviewer, as Ramos did, which is more of a collaborative act than a confessional.²³ As a co-creator for a particular version of a particular story, Sanders resists taking responsibility for those who came before him and committed this horrible crime.

We see Ed Weihenmayer and his son Erik speaking. Weihenmayer, like Jose and Wade, is also visibly upset as he says, “I don’t know one veteran who wants to be here.”

His son Erik tries to give him a different perspective as a person who did not participate in the war but is aware of some of the aspects due to his father. As he tells his father about his class called “Facing History and Ourselves” and explains that this class is

²³ Adam Singer and Gordon Quinn both call the act of speaking into the camera as a type of confessional for the speaker, as the speaker realizes he/she is speaking to a particular audience (even if that audience is simply the cameraman) but still have something of a buffer (the camera lens). However, *VLTC* usually has one person (such as Peter Gilbert or Jerry Blumenthal) asking questions, the interviewer and interviewee become more of a collaborative pair that co-creates a shared understanding of the “meaning and significance of the testimony.” See Sloan, Klempner, Napoli et al, Patrick Hagopian’s “Oral Narrative: Secondary Revision and the Memory of the Vietnam War”, Taylor et al., Dori Laub, and Mary Marshall Clark for more information on interviews and oral histories.

specifically designed to study moments in history like My Lai—where humans “kind of went astray and committed atrocities” so that people can “keep a handle on society” (1:23:46).

When Weihenmayer interrupts Erik to tell him that this “was an awful isolated incident” that he hopes was not “taught as any kind of pattern” (1:24:14) because to do so would taint the good decisions that other men made during this time, or as Kulik claims, weaken or even erase the stories of restraint and good judgment that “provide evidence . . . of men serving with honor, of doing justice in the face of a greater injustice” (170). Weihenmayer also calls this event “inexcusable,” though he finds it an “understandable” situation. He also reminds Erik that he was proud and felt “privileged” and “glad to have the opportunity” to serve his country during a time of war, and he starts to cry, trying to get both Erik and the audience to think about “the guys who wasted their lives” that “people don’t appreciate” (1:25).

This is a moment of using one’s agency to maintain identity and a moment of invitational rhetoric. Weihenmayer is one of the few soldiers on this trip who was in actual combat, although his combat was in the air and not in the jungle. He has maintained his pride in his job and his military status throughout the film, and just like in the veterans’ meeting earlier, he refuses to allow anyone—not even his own son—to make him feel guilty or “less than” in any way. Invitational rhetoric’s goal is the vocalization of individual perspectives “as carefully, completely, and passionately as possible to give them full expression and to invite their careful consideration by participants in the interaction” (Ryan and Natalie 7). As the ideas and feelings

respondents share with the interviewer are received with respect and care, respondents are provided a feeling of safety (10) in the belief that their perspectives are valid and informative, even when those perspectives are fragmented, uncertain, and partial—when they are antenarratives (Taylor et al. 5).

At the end of his explanation to Erik, when Ed starts to cry and tells the cameraman that he is “finished,” Ed becomes vulnerable, and in that moment, Erik reaches out to him and touches him on the shoulder. First, it’s a “manly” kind of slap, like the stereotypical “man up, Cowboy” slap we so often see in our culture; however, after Ed makes the comment about men dying and how it is not appreciated, Erik solemnly and heavily puts his hand on his father’s shoulder for a moment, and here is the moment that Adam Singer considers one of the most powerful in the film, and even Erik’s “man up” slaps are gentler and appear more genuine. Two points of view have been shared in this space, and while Ed is not giving Erik accolades for teaching a class where history shows the brutal side of humans, Ed is listening to him. Erik, for his part, both listens and displays *reparative reciprocity* when he allows Ed to explain sacrifice and honor; he accepts what his dad is telling him—and even wipes away a few of his own tears, supports him as he holds on to Ed’s shoulder for a moment before giving him two “comfort pats” on the shoulder, which could also be a signal to emotionally move forward. There is now a future with the two of them having a deeper understanding of what history means to each man.

Many think of listening as sympathizing, or “believing what he says.” Ratcliffe, Egendorf, Brown, and Shatan remind us that when we speak from a place of

vulnerability, our honesty and truth appears in our voice, and when our audience consciously and deliberately listens with the intent of understanding and sharing, there is a chance for creating “tangible effects” (Alexander and Hammers 6). The primary strength of sharing that vulnerability in explaining tragedy, or recover, is that it “evokes understanding of the human consequences” of critical events and issues, “reaching beneath the surface of conversation” to connect those “who have not lived an experience to those who have” (Mears 162). Ed served his country with honor, and he sacrificed in a way he believed was honorable. During this trip, he has listened to others and as he reflects upon what he is learning from the other veterans, his perspective now has multiple layers, and as he is deciding how he wants to absorb this and co-create a past with a different future, he is still maintaining his own unique ethos, and is giving Erik a chance to share in that transformation. Both father and son are given the chance to understand the other and see the world differently.

What we are really witnessing here is the American Vietnam Veterans reclaiming their agency and their voices as they respond to this invitation from the Vietnamese government. As Carolyn Lunsford Mears and Mary Marshall Clark’s interviews after the Columbine shooting and the 9/11 attack, this is significant. In most cases, after a tragedy occurs, the “representation of such a major event is more frequently created by those who are outside of the experience itself,” or the history of the event is most often discussed by people who were outside of that specific community or trauma membrane. As a result, individual memories may not match the collective memory, and the personal interpretation of the event is often lost in the global, societal view. The Weihenmayer

men and the other veterans, as they share their emotions and perceptions and convictions, are connected to one another through their shared experiences of past trauma and war, as well as their dedication to be heard and understood at this junction. For those who did not fight or were not traumatized by combat in Vietnam, they show *reparative reciprocity* in the fact that they still understand grief, and sorrow, and guilt, and share their own stories in order to allow for the connection.

Arthur Egendorf asserts that all killing, no matter how “thoroughly sanctioned,” or by whom, is a violation of the “unseen relations that bind all to all” (*Healing* 135). The collective view here is that this moment in history, the My Lai Massacre, will not be carried by the American veterans as a burden for them to bear when they all are atoning for other burdens on this trip. Although some men—such as Wayne Smith and Jerry Stadtmiller—decide to offer condolences for the men who committed the crime, others feel as though they have given enough to the war and its memory. The guilt of this event will not be absorbed into the Vietnam Challenge legacy through these American veterans who did not participate. While on film they may look fractured and separated by viewpoints, the American veterans are gifting us with a “chorus of experiences,” through their sharing their “own stories, in their own words,” which are both empowering these men and woman, here and now, and connecting them with their own “community identity” (Sloan 181-4). As they offer *reparative reciprocity* toward each other in both silent and vocal support, this group of veterans and non-veterans becomes more of a community.

Jose Ramos and Duane Wagner

[F]or all these years, man, I had been carrying around the weight of all the men that I left, all the guys that were there. I am thinking . . . that I'm the only one that hasn't buried them.

—Jose Ramos

Whether you're missing your legs or missing your soul, it's the same damn thing, brother.

—Duane Wagner

By now, Jose Ramos and Duane Wagner should be familiar faces to us. Two minutes into the film, Wagner picks up a small toddler at the airport, and he confesses to killing another little girl during his tour of Vietnam, remembering “all the f[**] up things I did” (3:20). For Wagner, who agreed with Stadtmiller that “We are here to heal” and “also help [other] veterans heal,” this trip was harder than expected, and it started as soon as he landed.

While some of the participants I later interviewed scoffed at Wagner, saying he was an “attention hog” or simply a “liar,” Singer and Gilbert dispute this. “His emotions and expressions looked pretty real to me,” states Singer (Interview #1), and Gilbert agrees. “Look,” he says, “think about landing and smelling all the same smells. . . Imagine all that being that in your head or the last time you had two legs was when you were there. It's insanity” (Interview #1). Daniel Stolar, another counselor who volunteered for the WTS team, insists that the one night he saw Wagner exhibiting signs of “hypervigilance and perseverating,” he recognized Wagner's PTSD and talked with him until Wagner was ready to go back to his room. Stolar accompanied him, because Wagner did not want to go alone and his room was in another building, and even though

Stolar had heard some criticism that Wagner’s “symptoms tend[ed] to be most pronounced” when the KTQ film crew was close by, Stolar adamantly protests this, claiming that “this was not the case” when he hears Wagner “motioning wildly” and repeating the phrase, “that was them, that was Charlie, right out there, all around” and no cameras were to be found (3). Wagner was clearly in serious distress, and Stolar was grateful that he could help.²⁴

Wagner is a former Marine, and seems to be a stereotypical one, at that—adapt, bull forward to get to the end, because quitting is not an option. He is loud, and sometimes he wants to be noticed—just look at the prosthetic legs he had made for this trip—and sometimes he only wants to be in a small group with just a few people, which ironically are in the outtakes and not on the film. Also, after the eventful evening where he met Stolar on the balcony of a strange hotel, Wagner has only shared details of his past with two women—Nyad and Evans—and Blas, another counselor but who is participating in this ride as a veteran with wounds hidden by his clothes. While his other “teary” moments may or may not look real to the audience, his quiet, solemn description of the “villages getting smaller” and “the trails that go off” are signs that as his memories “come back” to him, even the ones where he drinks water that has animal waste in it because he “was thirsty” (37:10), are creating some sort of emotional discomfort within him.

²⁴ To add my own insight to this, Wagner and I have kept in touch constantly since the first interviews. During our phone conversation in March 2021, Wagner stated that he needed to get home early once he realized it was a full moon night, because he still has “problems” that still “come up.”

In contrast, Ramos comes across as affable and genuine, and through his confessions and rally speeches, he seems to be fighting hard to move his emotional baggage into a more positive state. “Jose was constantly, constantly struggling,” mentions one of the editors, Leslie Simmer. “Even though he wanted to change, and he would talk about yeah, he thought he was getting better, he wasn’t getting better,” which is one of the human complexities of dealing with trauma. We see this, as well, where at the very beginning of the ride, Ramos tells the camera that “all of Hanoi is here to celebrate with us” and, “this is exciting,” and that he’s “honored and pleased” to be there. We watch him place incense in bowls at temples to show respect, and we hear his confession as he admits his fear of not knowing just where and when he would be shot, saying that “not knowing was the killer” (28:16). Like Liam Corley explains, “the way of things in war” is that so often, veterans do not “think at first of deeds described . . . for awards,” but instead often remember things they would rather “hide” (“Brave Words” 358). Ramos shares with us his fear of being killed, he shares how his fear consequently caused another man’s death, and he shares his memory of running away and his determination to forgive himself for such deeds.

He tells us that “the hatred and pain” he felt from thirty years ago was almost “overflowing,” but his “cup” “is getting filled up with happiness” (31:51), yet five minutes later he confesses, “I’m not sure if it’s the weather, or because we’re going south, or because of the terrain,” listing logical reasons for his sudden emotional overloading, which he eventually terms as “fear” (35:51). He wants to go home, a phrase he repeats four times in the film, even though he laughs self-consciously and claims, “but

I don't want to do that," and he gets back on his bike to finish the day. Clough suggests that Jose's decision to ride his bike is part of remembering the WTS goal, "that of teamwork, and doing the ride together as a team, and not leaving anyone out, no matter what" (Interview #1). By doing this, Clough proposes the idea that Ramos has supplanted his fear with his greater desire to be a part of this group and do something meaningful within this moment.

Simmer remembers that even at the end of editing the film, the KTQ crew discussed Ramos. "There was a lot of concern for him" because "he was not healing." Roof and Wiegman claim that "context will guide the way in which [a] statement is comprehended or interpreted," also arguing that location always has a part in our interpretation of that statement (233). While we see only minutes of Ramos' struggles and many in screened audiences commented upon Ramos' emotional torture, the KTQ crew filmed and edited over 800 hours, many of which contained footage of Ramos and Wagner. For Simmer, Singer, Quinn, Gilbert, and the others I interviewed, the question of "Does this do more damage than good?" or "How much good can one person [or one crew] do?" (Singer) guided their editing and decisions afterward, including to keep in touch with Ramos as much as he wanted to (which, incidentally, he did not). In contrast, all the producers had Wagner's contact information.

Ramos and Wagner are not really seen together until 37:48. Wagner has his hands resting on Ramos' shoulders, cupping his neck and chin, while Ramos starts tearing up, admitting that he "can't look out the . . . window any more" as Wagner tells him, "It's all right." In this moment, we can see identification, as these two are both hurting and

simultaneously identifying with each other's pain, signifying that as Wagner hugs Ramos, he is willing to "bear" with Ramos as Ramos "struggles to say" what has been for him, up to this point, "inexpressible" (Egendorf "Hearing People" 11). At this point, invitational rhetoric has been established, and because Wagner is willing to listen, he is also "legitimizing" Ramos' experience, allowing Ramos to feel his own power in speaking (Hagopian "Oral Narratives" 147).

When Wagner pulls away from Ramos, points a stern finger in Ramos's face and says, "Don't make me . . . cry" (37:58), here is a moment where the invitation may seem to fail, especially since Ramos takes no responsibility for how Wagner reacts to Ramos' problem.

Ramos responds with, "I don't make you cry, man," and tells Wagner, "Your heart makes you cry. Your memories make you cry," which may seem to be rebutting or arguing with Wagner, but I contend that Ramos is really offering an opportunity for them to "co-construct a shared appreciation for the importance" of what they are feeling, how they are connecting, and what they remember (Taylor et al. 6). Wagner's response of "This is our Vietnam" (38:10), he is signaling that along with Ramos, he appreciates and is validating "the other's perspectives" so they can "build an understanding" and conscious agreement of each other's "equal value," (Ryan and Natalie 7), which is one of the first three original conditions of invitational rhetoric. This could also be a moment of consubstantiation, as each man keeps his own identity, his own demons, but shares the part of "veteran"—and the fact that they both have demons—as a form intersectionality and overlapping distinctiveness.

The film cuts to the ferry for a minute or two, then returns to the men as Ramos confesses, “I go by, I see the scenery, but I don’t see the scenery,” continuing that he sees “the same young men and women, just laying there,” waiting for his judgment as the medic, noting “those [dead] are still there,” admitting his solitary guilt as the failed medic, and asking, ‘When’s it all gonna end, man? . . . I think I want to go home’ (38:08). By their nature, trauma narratives encompass great vulnerability, and unlike “ordinary narratives,” trauma narratives are prone to creating “shame, anger, guilt in the victim,” and are usually considered “secrets” instead of “stories” in which the narrator “almost always” attempts to ‘find closure’ (Klempner 70). Ramos is explaining his vision of corporeally manifested ghosts that overlap the current landscape of Vietnamese people, and the fact that he wants to disengage from this could be a failure of invitational rhetoric, because he is not changing, either. However, the fact that he has choice also moves this exchange into invitational rhetoric. He will not be able to go home at this exact moment, but he could choose to go home at the end of the day.

Another moment that proves their connection is that Wagner, as he listens, also becomes triggered, and at 39:39, he has his own crisis, where he tells Nyad—who ironically is not anywhere close to him in this part of the film—and (now an assembly of people, whom he did not want around him), “I want you people to take and realize some of the fear” that the veterans now have, because “all that innocence” that the WTS team and non-veterans see “isn’t innocence to us.” One of the counselors says something to him, and he gets more agitated and claims, “Up there, that’s Disneyland. It’s not Vietnam” (39:44), and as he stumbles to give a clearer explanation, one of the Minders

comes and tells everyone they must get on the van and “keep very organized” because they “can’t keep people waiting any longer” (39:55), reminding everyone who is really in control of the situation.

As Quinn tells me later, the counselors decided to put Wagner and Ramos together as roommates for the rest of the ride, which seemed to work well for them.²⁵ The night that they were filmed in room 318, which Wagner said felt like they had been assigned to “the back of the bus” (1:35:42). They share honesty and openness during the four-minute scene, where Jose advises Wagner to “stop looking at the war traumas” and admits that he wanted to go home to avoid feeling any more pain, commenting to Wagner that as both veterans and humans, “we don’t allow ourselves to be open because we’re afraid of pain and hurt” (1:35:50), which echoes the work of the earlier psychiatrists and the ethnographers and oral historians before them about emotions that surround survivors of tragedy.

They are clearly comfortable with each other, as Jose admits his attempt at avoiding pain, and listening as Wagner confesses that he’s afraid “of being the cripple,” because he does not want that as part of his identity, and he asserts that he can “hide” his “emotional” crippling (1:37:03). Wagner also demonstrates his awareness of others’ perception of him as he admits, “I’m trying to prove, I’m not a bad guy” (1:38:29). Both

²⁵ Nobody that I interviewed—not even Wagner—could remember when Ramos and Wagner were roomed together, so I cannot claim that their roommate status created the honest exchange between them during the second veteran meeting. I would argue it seems as though the meeting came before their rooming situation, as Ramos tells Wagner in the room that they have nine days left, so they are “going to be working real hard on what we gotta do” (1:35:55). However, the film script says this exchange takes place on Day 10, which would mean they only had six days left, another affirmation that the narrative was more important than the actual sequence of events.

men exercise their own agency in this exchange as they are actively involved in “understanding, listening, exploring, learning, sharing, and exchanging” with each other (Foss and Griffin “Metatheoretical” 64). This continues as they tease each other— “Didn’t I tell you to pay the bill?” when the lights went out (1:37:38); “Next time you get the phone, legs or no legs” because “they want to talk to a white guy” (1:38:41); “You dumb ass. We’re being paged” (1:38:59)—and then ironically, we only see them in close proximity to each other when Wagner crashes his bike at 1:42:55 and Jose is telling the doctors that Wagner was actually unconscious when he wrecked. We do not see them together until they meet again in the extras at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Wagner and Ramos represent not just examples of invitational rhetoric and *reparative reciprocity*, they also represent friendship. Wagner deflects his deeper emotions by joking around and making specific rhetorical decisions on how his prosthetics look, but he also feels safe enough to be vulnerable in Ramos’ presence without remorse or shame. Other than Blas, Wagner is the only other person that Ramos confides in during and after the trip. One very late evening, Ramos walked around town with Gilbert and Singer, sharing his story of shame and guilt, but that is edited out of the film.²⁶ If we look hard enough, we can see the same things that worried the KTQ crew when they returned to the States and started to edit the film: Ramos never stopped struggling with his pain.

²⁶ Both Singer (Interview #1) and Gilbert (Interview #2) consider this one of the more powerful veteran stories, but they also agreed that to keep it would have lengthened the film too much.

Conclusion: Can we avoid conflicts?

Pre-treatment vets tend to view themselves as part-persons--without pasts and without futures. Post-treatment vets tend to view themselves as whole persons who have survived hellish events.

—Vitali Rozyenko, “Trauma Focus Group Therapy for Vietnam Veterans with PTSD”

There are many instances where invitational rhetoric seems to fail during this event. In one of the outtakes,²⁷ the Vietnamese team leader accosts Dud Hendrick and another WTS leader for a discussion. The Vietnamese, visibly upset, reprimand Hendrick for “not sharing information” with the Vietnamese, making all the decisions on the length of bike rides and where to rest, which is creating havoc on the schedule. The group has not reached its destination on time since arriving in Vietnam: the riders have either been too early, and the city hosts were not ready to receive them “properly,” or they have been significantly late to the point where some of the festivities had to be cancelled. Hendrick and his companion tell the Vietnamese, “Now you what we’ve been dealing with every day” as they attempt to explain how difficult it is to time bike riders, especially in the capacity of working with differently disabled and able-bodied cyclists, as well as the traffic and government itineraries. Both Hendrick and the Vietnamese spokesperson are tense, and Hendrick offers an apology and explains their plans for the next day. The Vietnamese leader nods his head, Hendrick offers his hand and apologizes again, and the Vietnamese team leader leaves; however, he is still unhappy. This could be argued as an examples of successful invitational rhetoric, as both parties felt relatively comfortable

²⁷ If you purchase the DVD, this scene is one of the three “extras” included on the disc.

enough to share their points of view with each other, and both tried to understand the other; however, in this case, understanding did not help them with the problem of how much to bike or when to get into the van in order to be “on time” for the dignitaries to be able to welcome the riders properly.

We know the ride up the Hai Van Pass was a source of contention, because “The Vietnamese officials felt the pass was too dangerous to ride” (1:05:00). Mantegna narrates that “the team fought them on this, and at the last minute the officials relented.” According to Singer, Clough, and the veterans, most of the veterans felt as though Whisnant and WTS had not fought hard enough for them to ride as they thought they should—they were not allowed to visit sites of their stations or injuries, and they were chaperoned everywhere they went. However, according to Whisnant, WTS argued for everything, and “negotiations” for the Hai Van Pass—which Whisnant was determined the team would accomplish—ended with the WTS organization threatening to leave and take everything back to America with them. Whisnant was outside the meeting room and making a phone call when the Vietnamese officials changed their minds and acquiesced to the ride up the steep summit.

For many of the veterans, Vietnam was a horror show that played repeatedly in their minds. The Vietnam Challenge gave them an opportunity to physically and emotionally, and even though this was not a “cure all” for everyone—anyone, for that matter—it allowed for the participants to gain an understanding in each other’s world. For the KTQ crew, it was an opportunity to learn what “serve your country” and “sacrifice” meant to the men whom they filmed. For some of the spouses and family

members, it was an opportunity to learn more about a world they may not have been privy to before this trip. For some of the WTS board members and volunteers—such as Nyad, LeMond, and Charlie, one of the bike technicians—it was an opportunity to share their own ordeals and be accepted into a special group of trauma survivors. In each scene, people practice the concept of invitational rhetoric as they engage or disengage from contact zones of others, during the ride and after when they have a chance to decompress from the day's events. While not perfect, these events serve to remind us that the human condition is not perfect and entering contact zones can be difficult sometimes. However, while we have a desire to explore different ideas and co-create new meaning as well as possibility in the future, we might be able to help create a better world.

CHAPTER V

THE VIETNAM CHALLENGE IS OVER. NOW WHAT?

We must put a stop to false and sanitized history; real truth and sharing of stories [are] crucial to any authentic reconciliation.
—Tom Hayden, *HELL NO*

[E]motionally we were . . . scarred. I think that every young boy who came over here for sure lost innocence, for sure lost trust.
—Armin Merkle

Like so many others, Dr. Halpern considered this trip a “personal adventure” that was “the most important moment” in his life after marriage and the birth of his child. This trip was “an emotional explosion of pieces for everybody,” and all the people I interviewed agreed, especially since it seems that everyone remembers so much of the ride and people that they bonded with or simply rode with (Halpern). As Halpern tries to explain further:

Both teams were going through their own issues, and both teams were going through their own histories. And everybody got something different out of the ride. It wasn't like you know, ok, we all just won the Super Bowl. It's just everybody got something different out of the ride depending on who they were and where they came from and what their experience was. The interactions of the veterans with the veterans, and then the interactions with the North Vietnamese and the Americans, then the bonding that was going on, and the understanding of different cultures,

and the understanding of different issues as much as we can and at the same time having the goal of moving from Point A to Point B. (Interview)

What does this mean for rhetorical studies, and what can we as rhetoricians learn from this?

Invitational rhetoric has limits, because as Foss and Griffin concede and Bone, Griffin, and Scholz repeat, it is not always the best form of rhetoric in certain situations (Bone et al. 440). However, as Richard Enos contends, rhetoric has “thrived” because its “heuristics” or canons have “adapted to” our society’s ever-changing conditions (338). Rhetoric, like humans in contact zones, is fluid, as rhetors and audiences move in and out of specific contact zones. Like persuasion, the appeals of logos, ethos, and pathos, and the three branches of rhetoric—epideictic, forensic, and deliberative—invitational rhetoric is but a tool that we should use appropriately, in such a way that gives us an opportunity to have a dialogue and create a “wider world” for ourselves and for others as we learn about other perspectives (Egendorf *Healing* 61).

Critics such as Lozano-Reich and Cloud, Murray, and Loyd have criticized Foss and Griffin for their attempt to romanticize invitational rhetoric as a less violent way of discussing differences than persuasion. According to Lozano-Reich and Cloud, “there is nothing invitational about purposeful public disruption” such as sit-ins “when previous invitations are ignored,” and citing other examples— “to come to the principal’s office, or to make overdue credit card payments”—as “coercive” and therefore “uncivil” (221). In this interpretation, it is considered uncivil to “invite” someone down to the principal’s office, because we all know that this means the student is in some kind of trouble and

would rather avoid the meeting, and due to the power dynamics the student has no choice to attend. In reality, this is not an example of invitational rhetoric, because it is not a meeting where the intent is to gain understanding between two different ideologies.

Lozano-Reich and Cloud argue that invitational rhetoric cannot be given the status of equality, especially since the invitation is never issued by the oppressed, arguing that we should study more the “criteria by which we might judge one situation as invitational and another more appropriately antagonistic” (223). Murray contends that invitational rhetoric is not even a form of rhetoric but should be counted instead as “a description of ethical dialogue” (340). Loyd, for his part, supports the “strongest” arguments in feminist rhetoric, but he also agrees that with the “male and female socially constructed modes of communication,” invitational rhetoric is still limited because it deals with feminist and “diversity-friendly” words such as “shared,” “various,” “multiple,” which are more *perceptual metaphors* males may seem to avoid (31).

However, one needs to remember, in 1997, a group of American Vietnam War veterans met with a couple of American and Vietnamese world-class athletes, some wealthy people who believed whole-heartedly in creating a world where differently abled people could work together to accomplish one goal, and some Vietnamese Vietnam War veterans, and they participated in both the Vietnam Challenge and invitational rhetoric throughout the sixteen-day challenge. Their interactions, their ability to be vulnerable and offer each other different perspectives of war and memories and how to heal, was no less manly or more womanly throughout the film. Historically, invitational rhetoric may have been seen as for only those who deal with sensitive people and topics, but as I have

shown in this dissertation, invitational rhetoric can also be used to analyze even a hyper masculine space as war and this trip (even though women were involved, this trip was set in a masculine setting).

While critics of invitational rhetoric may be correct in issuing a call to clearly define the moment when invitational rhetoric becomes something else such as antagonistic or persuasive, this argument has already been addressed by the acknowledgement that rhetoric in general is fluid, and persuasion cannot exist without invitation, and vice versa. There must be an opening—a moment of invitation where there is an opportunity to learn different perspectives—before there can be any persuasion or chance for change. Also, we must remember that the goal of invitational rhetoric is not to change another person; it simply offers a chance for people to decide to enter a specific contact zone with the intent of understanding.

Invitational rhetoric is more complicated than rhetoricians think, and rhetoricians need to study it more. It is neither limited by gender, nor is it static. As Bone et al. contend and as we have seen in *VLTC*, all manner of people—men, women, feminists, non-feminists—use invitational rhetoric as a means of “articulating perspectives” as “fully as possible” to “give voice” to a point of view rather than “imposing a point of view” on the audience (442). Freedom of choice is available to both rhetor and audience, and that role changes in the interaction as perspectives and ideologies are shared. In the case of rap groups and meetings, invitational rhetoric becomes fluid as dialogue and understanding are created. While the argument has been made that agency cannot be determined because there is “no agency when no effort to change others exists”

(Fulkerson), agency has been established by the fact that participants have decided beforehand that they will have a meeting “built upon the principles of safety . . . value . . . and freedom,” and agency is “grounded” in the interaction of people who engage here.

As Ratcliffe points out, persuasive agency is what we *do to* another; invitational agency is what we *do with* one another (*Rhetorical Listening* 446). Although Lazano-Reich sarcastically agree that “dialogue and mutual respect are excellent goals inside class rooms” and may do well to “operate at country clubs and in boardrooms,” they attack invitational rhetoric and claim it “can be tragically disarming” when acted upon “in relation to antagonisms between unequal parties” (223), Daughton and Buzzanell remind us that “persuasion [is] now . . . a part of rhetoric” and no longer “the whole of it” (xiii). With invitational rhetoric, if looked at in the way Foss and Griffin have explained, the whole challenge is to learn and understand another point of view. Invitational rhetoric is about opportunity, about the *suggestion* that speakers “*might* listen without rushing to judgment,” or have the chance to “*share* perspective without . . . seeking to persuade” (emphasis added xiv).

While this entire situation would make an excellent study for Jen Edenbauer’s rhetorical ecologies, especially as the events and people discussed in this dissertation could be characterized by “the interactions” between “those elements” which make up communities through “shifting and moving, grafted onto and connected with other events” (10). However, I leave that to future scholars, because rhetorical ecology does not study how entities enter into contact zones as much as it studies the aftereffects of those meetings. Invitational rhetoric allows for civil disagreements, such as we saw in veterans’

meetings and certain exchanges between Jose Ramos and Duane Wagner. When watching the interactions between Jensen and Don Son, one might say that they were more successful than Ramos and Wagner in building a relationship; however, because invitational rhetoric is “part of a desire to understand and be heard,” and all four men actively engage in this ideology, I argue that in terms of invitational rhetoric one relationship is not necessarily more successful nor better than the other. They are both examples of what aspects of invitational rhetoric can give us when we choose to explore it with the conditions that we create and attempt to maintain an environment for communication that feels safe, where all the participants feel equal in value, and everyone has the freedom of choice whether to continue or disengage as well as change perspectives. It is the nuances of difference that make invitational rhetoric a “part of the multilogue” (Bone et al. 436) that give us an opportunity to study its “dynamic fullness within a rhetorical context” (Swiencicki 154). As I stated earlier, invitational rhetoric is not static; it changes with the situation, with the perspectives that people choose to share with each other, and as people respond to each other. It is not confrontational, as some suggest, but cooperative because everyone is free to choose how to live her life during and after this interaction.

What does this dissertation mean for invitational rhetoric?

As Jennifer Emerling Bone et al. contend, invitational rhetoric is a “communicative option” that is available and “rhetorical scholars” could “benefit” from learning “how this option . . . works” (Bone et al. 441). Even critics Fulkerson and Loyd agree. Foss and Griffin have responded to criticism that claims that they think invitational

rhetoric should always be used, explaining that there are situations—such as someone talking about committing suicide or doing harm to another—where invitational rhetoric is highly inappropriate, let alone ineffective. Words have meanings, and if we follow the beginning argument that persuasion is about power, we should also be able to follow Foss and Griffin’s argument that invitational rhetoric specifically works to “include efforts to understand” complex situations, and the understanding of ideologies can be more beneficial than “changing them” (443), especially since invitational rhetoric allows agency to all participants because it is built on safety, equality, and freedom of choice. Even the “effort to understand” is considered “interactive,” because “to understand is to act,” and choosing what to agree with, what views to change or keep, and when or if to leave are all individual decisions (Ryan and Natalie 79). The only way we can truly understand one another is if we “suspend” our “assumptions” so that we may have a chance of reconciling our belief systems with another person’s.

Each participant involved in invitational rhetoric has the power to become listener/audience and speaker/rhetor, where everyone is focused on “creating” invitational “environments” through “exploring other points of view” and also sharing one’s own view “with respect and care for the positions” of others (Bone et al. 446). As Ratcliffe explains how listening with “intent” gives agency to both rhetor and audience, Bone et al. claim that invitational rhetoric is quite similar, especially if one concedes that there really is more than one correct point of view on different topics.

We also need to understand that rhetoric is fluid and changes as we communicate with others, depending on reactions and goals. An “invitational approach” may — Bone

et al. claim it does— “occur in a variety of communicate interactions,” and is neither “exclusively persuasive nor exclusively informative,” but can usually be found within those two aspects as public argument tends to contain “moments of informing, persuading, and inviting” (449). As invitational rhetoric favors the goal of understanding more than changing, it may look different in different situations.

In Chapter Three, I observed visible examples of successful invitational rhetoric within the interactions of the veterans. We examined the first American veteran-only meeting after learning that they were visiting the Vietnam Tomb of the Unknown Soldier; the exchange between Jerry Stadtmiller and the Vietnamese teenager after he confesses to killing boys that were younger than the young women in his audience; and the friendship created through humor and goodwill between similarly disabled veterans Dan Jensen and Son Don. Through KTQ’s camera lenses, we could witness a person’s vulnerability as an offering and invitation for trusting that the desire to understand one another outweighed the desire to change each other. Evans’ identity as veteran and disabled in some way helped her connect with the other American veterans who shared this identity and shared a moment of respect for the fallen soldiers who were once their enemies. Stadtmiller’s confession and the teenager’s ability to empathize and forgive him allowed both of them, as well as some of the witnesses, to expand their understanding through sharing an experience: Stadtmiller’s previous understanding of Vietnam as “the enemy” opened to a country that once housed his enemies, and the teenage girl now understood that some of the Americans felt guilty for what they had done to Vietnam and its people at one time. Jensen and Don’s vulnerability came in the form of their shared physical disability and

their inability to speak the other's language. However, through gestures and intermittent translators, they communicated enough to become friends and qualified to run—and did indeed run—the New York Marathon together . . . three years in a row.

The members in these meetings had enough strength to maintain their ethos, yet also had enough compassion for others that they were willing to listen without prejudice. In the scene with the veterans in the van, pain and anger were aimed at both governments, which also created an emotional opening to interact with the Vietnamese cyclists. Stadtmiller chose not to wear his eye patch for a significant amount of time after the encounter and his absolution; it took the understanding and compassion from a complete stranger—an innocent who did not know his previous ethos and genuinely wanted to understand him—for him to connect with emotions other than guilt, allowing him to show his face without adornment. Jensen, who went to Vietnam to connect with veterans and face his true fears, ended up befriending someone who also felt like him and had learned that the Americans “were human” just as Jensen accepted the fact that he had been one of those “humans” men who had participated in that war.

In Chapter Four, I examined interactions that had tension and disagreement and questioned if they still had aspects of invitational rhetoric. At the My Lai Memorial site, we watched the veterans empower themselves by creating a space in the parking lot where they would quietly wait for those who wanted to pay their respects to the Vietnamese and their dead. While Mantegna claims that this is a moment where the team is “temporarily divided,” it is more of a moment where they give each other the chance to explain their choice and acknowledge those who choose differently. Wayne Smith, who

did not engage in the massacre but went in to pay respects, explains that he is doing this very thing; Ed Weihenmayer feels that to go in would dishonor his personal sacrifice and service. Both men have valid arguments, and because both men are genuine in their actions and desire to explain, they are offering vulnerability as well as a desire to connect with others. This is the essence of what Foss and Griffin deem the most important aspect of invitational rhetoric.

The relationship that Duane Wagner and Jose Ramos build together is nothing like the relationship that Dan Jensen and Son Don build. While Jensen and Don build a friendship on mutual respect and kindness, Wagner and Ramos find friendship in what could only be called the stereotypical macho manly friendship. Combat veterans and male athletes have one thing in common: through battle, true character is revealed. As Seraph says in *The Matrix Reloaded*, “You do not truly know someone until you fight them,” or in true battle, with them.

In the case of Jensen and Son, the men were literally at war with each other due to government demand. As they find each other in the Vietnam Challenge, the goal becomes healing and creating a bond to change their past perspectives. This is an extremely interesting choice, because we have seen Son Don become re-traumatized upon the visit to My Lai, as he tells the camera (which Tran is holding) after hearing about this event, “Our hatred for the enemy boiled over at the news,” (1:21:56), and now this memory is “right before my eyes once again,” reminding him not only of the horror, but also of the “terrible resentment” he felt at the time (1:22:00). It is nothing short of amazing that

through his own grief and emotional distress, Son still engages with Jensen in a joyful and open way, encouraging a totally different awareness and possible future.

Jensen and Son choose to “know someone” by learning about each other, despite the language barrier and even the physical barrier of different countries, as they agree to see each other again. Jensen helps Son obtain a better prosthetic here in America, and they run with each other in the New York City Marathon three years in a row. To understand the significance of this, one must realize that there are only three ways to qualify for the race: 1) through a drawing; 2) by running on behalf of an eligible charity; or 3) through “guaranteed entry rules” (criteria here includes running in a certain time, running a specific number of marathons during the year, or qualifying and running the year before). For these men to have the opportunity to run together three years in a row, they had to train and organize their workouts in order to qualify. Such dedication shows a sincerity and commitment that embodies Foss and Griffin’s hope of what invitational rhetoric can accomplish when fully accepted and embraced.

Invitational rhetoric has no strict formula, and this should encourage us to look at the many ways it exists in different realms. While Jensen and Son navigate logistics of time zones, language, and government rules, Wagner and Ramos navigate logistics of ego and ethos in their shared country. In the Western culture, “macho” men show affection for each other by what outsiders see as insulting each other. However, as Wagner and Ramos trade “insults” in the hotel scene, they are really acknowledging each other’s identity. When, for instance, Wagner calls Ramos a “Mexican” and Ramos orders him to answer the phone, “legs or no legs,” they are pointedly creating an environment where

each other is valued for his difference. The act of voicing that difference is a form of creating equality, as privilege will not be granted because of said difference, and the fact that they can speak honestly with each other— “How fast did you get there? Pretty damn fast” (Ramos) — also gives us hope that spaces for understanding and accepting different points of view as well as trust can be created through the many ways invitational rhetoric might occur.

What worked for these people? Is navigating that which makes us uncomfortable something that makes us better as people or a society in some way?

There are still more scenes to discuss in this film. For instance, the young Vietnamese single woman Nguyen Thi Nguyet Anh talks to the KTQ in an interview during the event, and explains how at first, she wore long pants “because I was embarrassed about my artificial leg” (1:15:41), admitting that after seeing everyone else on the “team” wearing shorts as well, “I started wearing shorts too,” smiling and adding, “Maybe in the future I will let my artificial leg show for all to see” (1:15:50). Later, in one of the meetings with both Americans and Vietnamese, she also admits that she lost her boyfriend because she lost her leg (1:28:49). As Gordon Quinn explains, this is extremely important because this is “an intimate conversation” between strangers, which “it’s not Vietnamese to . . . have shared that in the way she did,” emphasizing that, “There was a great deal of trust suddenly that was there” (Quinn). To add to the extraordinary moment, notice that there is only one American (a woman, single) in the group, and the champion wheelchair Vietnamese (now hand) cyclist, Truong Cong Hung, acts as the translator for this impromptu yet relaxed conversation. Invitational rhetoric

does not have to be organized or forced: it can be manifested into existence when people desire understanding among each other. The possibilities exponentially expand once we allow ourselves to see the potential in this form of rhetoric.

When we are civil, we are willing to listen to others and we actively “consider the possibilities that might encompass our political, social, cultural, and linguistic differences” (Ratcliffe *Rhetorical Listening* 67). Everyone in Western culture is faced with dilemmas on how to respond to others as both part of “members of a larger social scale” and our own, smaller individual communities, several times each day. This gives us the opportunity to practice civility, which “requires us to sacrifice” the chance “to display” our anger, even if we have the right to be angry, with the other person’s ideology (Bone et al.448). Like watching Ramos and Wagner batting back jokes, or Merkle promising Weihenmayer respect, or even a vet injured during combat versus another veteran who became paralyzed after his tour as a civilian, invitational rhetoric assumes that “we listen and communicate” with individuals whom we would ordinarily not “listen to or communicate at all” (448). When entering contact zones, we have an occasion to learn from non-like-minded people, and we also have a chance to discuss these different views. It is through this process of questioning, contesting, and continually engaging that leads “to a series of truths . . . necessary for . . . the subjective world of individuals” and “the objective world of social relationships” (Ryan and Natalie 84).

As the Vietnam Challenge participants rode through Vietnam and challenged their physical endurance, their mental capacities, and even a language barrier, they found more ways to communicate with each other and create brave spaces so they could realize the

possibilities that opened so they could work together. In the outtakes and during his interviews, Wayne Smith befriended one of the older Vietnamese gentlemen, Bao, who was the only Vietnam War Vietnamese veteran on the ride. Through improvised sign language, some help with interpretation, and multiple exchanges, they realized that they served during the same time and were even in the same area at the time of Smith's deployment (Smith Interview #3). They rode together often, and in the evenings, Smith and Bao ate dinner together. They tried to maneuver into the same groups, especially when translators were available. As Gearhart tells us, the "field of rhetoric . . . has broadened into the field of *communication*" (original emphasis 7), and it is only fitting that we examine invitational rhetoric, especially since as rhetoricians, we are "trained to pay careful attention" to audiences and how our use of language and "the presence of invitational rhetoric" helps in the "building and maintaining a civil and democratic society" (Bone et al. 448).

While invitational rhetoric may appear imperfect, it is important to realize as a rhetorical tool that depends upon both rhetor and audience to engage meaningfully and respectfully with each other, which will look different in each rhetorical situation, as humans are inherently different from each other. Even when other veterans did not engage with Sanders during the second veterans meeting, or when the veterans "divided" at My Lai, we can see the veterans maintain their agency as they make sure "their identities are not forced upon or chosen for them" by government officials, the KTQ crew that films them, or even the WTS organization. And by allowing the veterans to maintain this position, their "freedom of choice" as they choose "not to accept the vision

articulated” by others, invitational rhetoric, no matter how small it may look or how short it may be, is successful. The very components that make invitational rhetoric—empathy, choice, equality of value and position—are necessary for our culture, especially with so many different ideologies vying for believers today.

What future implications does this have pedagogically?

When rhetoricians are concerned with “relationships among diverse individuals and perspectives.” they may have more success understanding those differences through the lens of invitational rhetoric (Bone et al. 447). As educators, we have more opportunities than most to create Mary Louise Pratt’s contact zones and allow our students to examine these zones through invitational rhetoric; however, we need to be aware of our own power dynamics as well as curbing our voices so that we do not constrict the voices of students. For veterans returning to higher education, their “lament” is the “difficulty facing [others] whose experiences” diverge from theirs on such a huge scale (Egendorf *Healing* 151). While they have resources to help them deal with their stress levels, we are expected to maintain a level of respectful interaction in our classrooms, which will serve to encourage others to speak. We cannot speak for others, for we have only our own experiences and knowledge, and this is not the same as someone else’s. The world becomes much more diverse, complex, and expanded as we share and create a “mutual enlargement of horizons, which still remain different” (Foss and Griffin “Metatheoretical” 61).

Veteran and composition instructor Corley Liam warns that tropes and stereotypes can create “reticence, failures, and disassociation” with veteran students who sometimes

feel that it is easier to “surrender individuality for the easy eloquence . . . that the trope enables” (“Trope of Veteran” 74). I argue this can be said of our non-veteran students, as well, who have either been labeled, stereotyped, or “reduced” to a cultural memory or an appropriated and weaker version of identity. As Rozytko, Egendorf, Shatan and other scholars have campaigned, we need to find ways of making our classrooms “feel” safe as we advocate that our students become “willing to engage in interaction” in order to explore ideas, perspectives, and “attempt to exchange meanings” as they realize their differences “provide them with new information about the world” (Foss and Griffin “Metatheoretical” 61).

In invitational rhetoric, a person’s agency involves “the choice of the very active, dynamic” and “difficult act” of allowing time for “a different perspective” to have “its impact” (Foss and Griffin “Metatheoretical” 64). If we actively and consciously listen to others when they speak, then we must agree that their words hold as much value as ours. Truth is subjective, and it becomes fluid as our perspectives are challenged and we decide if we want to “retain or alter” our “original ideas and beliefs” (64.) As individuals, we must see the “uniqueness” of others and the “importance of their contributions to a conversation or. . . exchange” (65). We are all unique. Audre Lorde reminds us, “Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged” (Lorde “The Master’s Tools” 111), and it is this power that allows us to question each other respectfully as we maintain our own identity; our strength lies in the fact that we can own both our differences and our desire to learn about those whose paths we cross.

Swiencicki advocates that we study “gestures of refusal” as well as the invitation because both decisions have significance, and both need to be studied as we examine relationships with ourselves, our peers, our students, our mentors, and strangers. As Foss and Griffin defend their original claim that invitational rhetoric is a less invasive form of rhetoric than Burke’s persuasion, I agree with their contention and strong “continue[d]” belief that “invitational rhetoric has the potential to provide sorely needed skills” for assisting us examine and exchange ideologies in “today’s agonistic and contentious rhetorical environment” (“Metatheoretical” 63). If we can exercise this in our classrooms, help students engage with each other as they attempt to “express their ideas as fully and as carefully as possible,” and constantly remind everyone involved that we are “committed to understand the perspective of others,” no matter how “unfamiliar or uncomfortable,” we can help our communities—this includes ourselves, no matter how we are situated—better discuss issues “without attacking or demonizing others” (65).

Studying invitational rhetoric as an interdisciplinary subject can also be beneficial for us. As discussed throughout this dissertation, invitational rhetoric crosses boundaries of study: ethnographers, psychiatrists, historians, and rhetoricians alike have studied the many ways that this rhetoric informs and increases interactions within communities as well as people with different ideologies. Even now, I am working with two other colleagues to present on the different ways that we engaged with invitational rhetoric and disparate communities for our dissertations. All three of us took different approaches, followed different guidelines, and organized our findings differently; however, we all started with the basic understanding that in order to understand each other and different

communities, we had to engage in openness and a willingness to listen without judgment or fear of reprisal. In my case, I found Vietnam War veterans, film producers and editors, and even people involved in the logistics of the Vietnam Challenge who were willing to share their experience and possibilities that became open to them because of the Vietnam Challenge and their engagement with others. Openness creates vulnerability, it is true; however, I argue that it is this very act of becoming vulnerable in front of someone that creates the offer to connect as human beings first and foremost, and other identities may emerge thereafter. As Foust et al. notice, “Marginalized identities unite discursively through identity,” which overlaps and intersects in multiple ways, and vulnerability allows a beginning of equal footing for everyone involved in the rhetorical situation (203).

We do not have to be perfect. We do not have to know the answers. However, we must remain diligent and remember that the “objective” of our interaction is most important. We engage because we want to learn—we want to understand how the world works in different contexts, with different socially constructed cues, and different ideologies. If we can remember this instead of simply how to disagree with someone, we have room for possibility, which also gives us room to hope that a better future is possible.

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