Killing in the name of …?: Conscientious Objection in the age of the “Global War on Terror”

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B.A. (Honours), Brock University, 2012

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Critical Sociology

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For Jess, Mike, Craig, and Robert
Abstract

Within the last few centuries, the global community has seen an unprecedented amount of warfare that has spanned borders, lasted decades, and created countless environmental crises. The scale of human carnage from wars between 1900 and 1990 alone tell a tale that is well beyond comprehension; the legacy of war and war making in the modern age has become vastly uneven, as the proliferation of advanced, industrial technologies has sparked new and/or exacerbated existing conflicts over dwindling natural resources. Moreover, the competitive potential of new industrial nations has challenged the control and share of world trade, finance, and global resource deposits. It should come as no surprise then that the international community has witnessed such an unprecedented growth of imperial activity expressed through warfare.

Characterized by Joseph Schumpeter (1962) as 'creative destruction' - literally meaning to destroy existing infrastructure and the like to regenerate economic growth - modern capitalism, through the technique of militarism, is reshaping the very meaning of existence against the backdrop of a “Global War on Terror.” Amidst the ongoing debates and allegations concerning the illegal invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq by a U.S.-led coalition, a select number of U.S. soldiers decided they no longer want to participate in what is often referred to as an immoral war. With this as a backdrop, this research explores the experiences of U.S. conscientious objectors who enlisted following the attacks of September 1, 2001; how these individuals came to develop their philosophies of objection; and, the sociopolitical issues surrounding objectionism. Situated within an anti-capitalist theoretical framework, this project employs semi-structured interviews to recount the life histories of four U.S. conscientious objectors. Finally, this research explicates the narratives within broader critique of efficacy and ethics of militarism in the modern age.
Acknowledgements

This work is the product of many debts. My most sincere appreciation goes out to the following individuals.

To my supervisor Dr. Tamari Kitossa, it has been many years since I first stepped into your classroom and began my academic journey. I attribute a great deal of my intellectual and personal growth from immersion in the Criminology scholarship, which you are incredibly passionate about. You embody all the qualities I value and admire in a mentor. You consistently pushed me to do better, and to be better, by facilitating a space of mutual respect, which allowed my intellectual prowess to flourish. Tamari, I cannot thank you enough for all the hard work and time that you have dedicated to me as a pupil, as a friend, and, in particular, to the success of this research project over the last three and a half years. For that, I am greatly appreciative.

To my committee members, Dr. Nancy Taber and Dr. Kevin Gosine. Nancy, we met at a time when I did not think that this project could continue. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for helping me hone this project and getting me through a difficult time in my tenure as a graduate student. You have consistently provided thoughtful and thorough comments that have helped make this project what it is today. A heartfelt appreciation for your constant encouragement, for believing in me, and in this project. Kevin, your knowledge of research methods has been invaluable as you have and continue to challenge me to sharpen my views on research methods and methodology. Thank you for acting as a committee member amidst your responsibilities as the MACS Graduate Program Director.

I have spent many years at Brock and I have been fortunate enough to spend that time with the Sociology department. I would like to acknowledge the faculty and staff for your continued support of current and incoming students, both undergraduate and graduate alike. Thanks also to Dr. Paul Robinson for acting as my external examiner.

To my parents, Tom and Nora, and my brother Kristen, thank you for your constant encouragement throughout all of this; I love you all. To my MACS cohort, it was has been a wild ride and I wish you all the best!

A huge thanks goes out to my research participants, and friends, Jess, Mike, Robert, and Craig. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and experiences, all of which are invaluable to a critical understanding of conscientious objection. Without your input, I could have not completed this project. You have my most sincere thanks.
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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Within the last few centuries, the global community has seen an unprecedented amount of warfare that has spanned borders, lasted decades, and created countless environmental crises that have left some places uninhabitable due to ecological degradation or hidden, undetonated ordinances (Ivie 2012; Hooks and Smith 2012; Coulomb and Fontanel 2012). The scale of human carnage from wars between 1900 and 1990 - 100 million directly from warring and another 100 million from the indirect effects of war - tell a tale that is well beyond comprehension (Tilly 2000). Just as well, it has hardly registered in the Western public consciousness that in 2011, the US government under Barak Obama, starved some 250,000 when, according to UK journalist Alex Perry, it withheld food aid in its effort to weaken El Shabab in Mogadishu, Somalia (CBC 2016). Moreover, the large-scale production and demands for munitions manufacturing, for example, has intensified the toxic footprint of industrial production (Hooks and Smith 64, 66). However, the legacy of war and war making in the modern age has become vastly uneven as the proliferation of advanced, industrial technologies has sparked new and/or exacerbated existing conflicts over natural resources; furthermore, these conflicts also include competition between irregular and ‘impoverished’ military forces and not just those of more technologically advanced, capitalist nations. Some, like the famed international legal scholar Marjorie Cohn, contend it seems that a state of perpetual warfare\(^1\) has come to characterize modern international relations (Cohn 2016). While similarly, Charles Tilly argues the *modus vivendi* of the liberal state is to prosecute war; so much so that living in an alternative, relatively peaceful time, is an ideal as urgent as ever (Tilly 1985).
There are many differing opinions regarding the reasons for, and the significance of, war making in the modern age. Associated with various schools of thought, they include the complex social, political, and economic changes that accompanied modern industrialization, colonialism and imperialism: all of which intensified commercial rivalries and attendant militarism (Magdoff 1978: 37). Thus, the advent of modern technology and industry signaled the end of relatively isolated economies as the emergence of newly industrialized nations lead to the maturation of new and integrated national markets on a global scale. Moreover, the competitive potential of new industrial nations challenged the control and share of world trade, finance, and global resource deposits. It should come as no surprise then that the international community has witnessed such an unprecedented growth of imperial activity. For example: oil conflicts in the Persian Gulf, energy conflicts in the Caspian Sea Basin, oil wars in the South China Sea, and water conflicts in the Nile Basin, Jordan, Golan Heights, Indus and Tigris-Euphrates River Basins (Magdoff 1978; Klare 2002). Therefore, “armed conflicts and natural resources can be directly related in two main ways: armed conflicts motivated by the control of resources, and resources integrated into the financing of armed conflicts” (LeBillon in Hooks and Smith 2012: 72). Thus, in addition to market penetration, the conflict over valuable resources, as well as the power and wealth they confer, is at the forefront of the international landscape, pioneering a new global framework of war making in the modern age.

1.2 War and war making in the modern age

Over the course of human history, particularly from the 20th century onward, war and war making has changed drastically. The modern battlefield is no longer spaces such as fields and jungles where militaries of mass conscripts line up against each other. Conflicts are now largely air campaigns, proxies of high or low intensity, urban guerilla and, just as often, mixed
with dynamic asymmetrical irregular forces sustained by international or regional powers. Characterized by advanced ballistic weaponry, drones, tactical insertions and coordinated airstrikes by advanced countries in comparison to the guerilla-style insurgency of ‘less developed’ nations modern warfare has shifted the burden of casualties onto civilians unlike never before. The advanced ballistic armaments of the Global North\(^2\), for example, animates United States military invasions, interventions, bombings and occupations of other countries where various conflicts are currently underway such as the Ukraine, Syria, Iraq and Palestine (Cohn 2016). The advent and proliferation of global telecommunications has presented the global community an unprecedented amount of knowledge which academics, journalists and political observers of war, have used to question the ethics of warring and the legitimacy of the modern nation state’s ability to monopolize the use of violence through the act of waging war (Tilly 1985: 171).

Characterized by Joseph Schumpeter (1962) as 'creative destruction' - literally meaning to destroy existing infrastructure and the like to regenerate economic growth - modern capitalism, through the technique of militarism, is reshaping the very meaning of existence. In her book The Shock Doctrine, Naomi Klein comments that the attacks of 9/11 gave the Bush administration the necessary leverage they needed to help launch the global “War on Terror” as well as establish a “for-profit, venture” and “booming new” industry identified as the radical privatization of war and disaster (2013: 14, 17). Dubbed “disaster capitalism”, this economic program is best described as a market friendly environment wherein private companies are paid with public monies to provide construction services and relief generated by the disasters capitalism itself

\(^2\)A term used to denote the geopolitical formation of Western nations, which is comprised predominantly of the twenty-eight NATO member nations and their allies. The opposite term, the Global South, denotes all nations outside of the NATO sphere of influence and formal alliances. Geographically, the Global South encompasses South America, Africa and nearly all of Asia less Japan (Hooks and Smith 2012: 67-68).
creates. During the Bush years, for example, this economic program was facilitated under the “unending mandate of protecting the United States homeland in perpetuity while eliminating ‘evil’ abroad” (ibid). Just after the occupation of Iraq began, the U.S. State Department launched a brand new governmental branch called the Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization (460); Klein further comments that the sole responsibility of this new branch of the U.S. government is to tender “disaster relief” and “construction services” to private construction firms, like the Halliburton Company or Bechtel, for “potential sites” around the world (460). This also means the employment of private “defense contractors” like Blackwater and other for-profit disaster relief and construction agencies. With resource scarcity and climate change providing the stage for the continuing emergence of ecological crises, there seems to be no shortage of emergencies for the market to respond to. Hooks and Smith attest to this by commenting that “well organized military forces are deployed by major corporations and repressive regimes to perpetuate systematic and far-reaching damage to the environment” (2012: 72). Relatedly, Klein’s assessment is important because prior to 9/11, “wars and disasters provided opportunities for a narrow sector of the economy—the maker of fighter jets, for instance, or the construction companies that rebuilt bombed out bridges. The primary economic role of wars, however, was as a means to open new markets that had been sealed off and to generate postwar peacetime booms” (15).

Professor Michel Chossudovsky (2015) writing for the Centre for Research on Globalizations writes that the conflicts of twentieth century are in fact inter-linked and inter-locked through a single-minded agenda in pursuit of global hegemony helmed by the United

States and buttressed by its allies in the West and in other regions of the world. Charles Tilly attests to this characterization by stating that,

a portrait of war makers and state makers as coercive and self-seeking entrepreneurs bears a far greater resemblance to the facts than do its chief alternatives: the idea of the social contract, the idea of an open market in which operators of armies and states offer services to willing consumers, the idea of a society whose shared norms and expectations call forth a certain kind of government. (1985: 169)

Similar to Klein and Tilley, Robert Ivie argues that, through the auspices of ‘defense contractors’, advanced modern warfare constituting “the aesthetic of militarism [has hollowed]out democracy and [institutionalized] an imperial army [that is] continuously engaged in what Secretary of State Hilary Clinton has called ‘coercive democracy’. Such is the dramatic force of the American war myth” (2012: 88)⁴. Vital to this radical transformation of war and warring are the discourses states use to justify extending the social contract to protecting corporate, which is to say 'national', interests. It is in this context that objecting to military duty represents a challenge to warring in the age of 'terror' and depleting resources.

1.3 And Then They Left…: U.S. Conscientious Objectors in Canada

"The cadences [sic] they made us sing were … 'I went to the playground where all the children play; pulled out my Uzi and I began to spray,'" (Speers as cited in CBC 2007a).

Amidst the ongoing debates and allegations concerning the illegal invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq by a U.S.-led coalition, a select number of U.S. soldiers decided they no longer wanted to participate in what was often referred to as an immoral war. Some fled to Canada, as did others before them in opposition to the US's war on Vietnam. In the

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⁴ See Lucas (2007) study which suggests that, since the World War II, the United States military has been involved in or responsible for the deaths of an estimated twenty to thirty million people during direct military conflicts and proxy wars including: Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Iraq, Afghanistan, Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, East Timor, Guatemala, Indonesia, Pakistan and Sudan.
early weeks of June 2007, nineteen-year-old Ross Speers was one of many soldiers who fled the United States for reasons of conscience; where after he arrived in Toronto, seeking asylum and refugee status. Speers enlisted when he was eighteen and “believed he had to do his part for his country against the ‘terrorists over there’” (Speers as cited in CBC 2007a). With help from a Canadian group called the War Resisters Support Campaign, he was settled in Ottawa while his lawyer prepared a refugee case. In 2004, twenty-five-year-old Jeremy Hinzman fled the United States after his application for Conscientious Objector status was denied. Fearing that he would be deployed to Iraq in what he, too, called an “immoral war”, Hinzman moved his wife Nga and their two-year-old son to Canada in hopes of seeking asylum and avoiding jail time for desertion (Hinzman as cited in CBC 2008). In 2012, Kimberly Rivera, a thirty-year-old Army private from Texas, who enlisted in 2006 and was deployed to Iraq, was deported after six years of refuge in Canada. When asked why she fled the United States, she said that she became disillusioned with the U.S. Army after her experiences in Iraq had left her emotionally scarred and unprepared for another tour of duty: "I had to decide not to be a cruel person and hurt good people and attack their families, as I was doing," said Rivera when she first came to Canada in 2007 (Rivera as cited in CBC 2009; CBC 2012).

Conscientious objectors coming to Canada is not a new phenomenon. During the U.S. war on Vietnam, tens of thousands of draft dodgers fled the United States to seek asylum in Canada. At that time, Canadian immigration policy had a loop hole that allowed people to stay ‘legally’, and even the then Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau expressed his sympathies and support for the soldiers who made the decision to reject the draft.

Under the Conservative government of Stephen Harper, however, the deportation of American war resisters marked a shift in the way Canada traditionally approached the issue of
conscientious objectors seeking asylum. Recognizing this shift in policy as a crucial moment in Canadian history, this research is an account of objectionism to military combat during the age of the “Global War on Terror” in a neoliberal and highly contested unipolar post-Cold War. It is my belief this discussion is timely and critical because 'permanent war' is the new normal that the economic and political elite wish their fellow citizens to accept; the liberties and rights of the citizenry, whose tax dollars, consciousness, patriotism, and, not least the bodies of their young, has never been more at stake in a world teetering on the brink of World War III. The phenomenon of conscientious objection shows us that citizens must play a direct role in shaping a rational policy that will stop the drumbeat toward war given the democratic deficit and irremediable environmental and social costs described above.

1.4 Research Premise and General Objectives

This thesis examines the lived experiences of conscientious objectors. It explores participant's articulations of 'events of truth' that influenced their decision to object as well as the philosophy, which undergirded their decision to resist the military. Through a series of qualitative, in-depth interviews and a direct retelling of their stories, this research critically explores how these individuals became objectors, how their experiences in the military shaped their understanding of conscientious objection and examines the formation of their philosophy to objectionism. Indeed, through in-depth interviews that are crafted and condensed as narratives, this project does what most scholarship on objectionism exclude: revelations of the conscious awakening of objectors presented through the narratives objectors themselves (see Stewart-Winter, 2007; Friedman, 2006; Ellner, Robinson, and Whetham, 2014; Clifford, 2011; Wilson, 2008).
In facilitating and privileging the narratives of conscientious objectors, the Life History research method that is employed fits within a larger body of research that explores human experience in the fullness of its complexity, which is open to contradictions, incompleteness, paradoxes and uncertainties even as there is definiteness and purpose essential which makes the living of lives possible (Goodson 2013; Cole and Knowles 2001; Dollard 1949; Bruner 2004). Moreover, my aim is not to speak for or assess the epistemological procedures by which each participant comes to give post hoc meaning to their praxis of objectionism. Instead, my research will enable readers to ‘situate’ and ‘locate’ the lived experiences of conscientious objectors as an enrichment of the existing scholarship of conscientious objection. For example, crucial issues such as citizenship and the social contract respecting moral obligations, both that of the state and citizens who enlist to fight on its behalf, are discussed. Another key issue explored, more broadly, is whether the state serves the interests of its citizens in using its authority to compel them to kill in satisfaction of commercial interests, arms makers, media ideologists and the aggrandizement of military bureaucracy itself (Fanny and Coulomb 2012; Ivie 2012; Tilly 1985). It is the experiences of objectors that provides a basis to expose larger issues surrounding the way war, warring, and conscientious objection are treated and discussed in the age of 'terrorism'. I seek to give "life" to these issues to legitimize conscientious objection here in Canada and abroad because, as a practical matter, the means to prevent war is in the hands of an informed citizenry. More to the point, conscientious objection should not be considered a crime, an error or a fault of the individual, but in my estimation among the highest expressions of the humanistic ideal.

1.5 How Did I Arrive at this Topic?
The purpose of the following section is to provide an outline of noteworthy events that influenced the formation of the project. The overall intent is to situate myself in relation to the research, as well as speak to the necessity of such research on a whole, especially considering that the US's so-called 'EurAsian Pivot' (McCoy 2015), the US's concept of Full Spectrum Dominance, ongoing proxy wars in Syria and elsewhere threaten to escalate into a major global conflagration. This is not idle hand wringing. Between 1962, including the Cuban Missile Crisis, the United States and Russia, both inadvertently and intentionally, came within a hairs-breadth of launching of all-out nuclear conflagration (Andrews 2013). That nuclear weaponry proliferates as more countries join a once elite 'club', the ultimate weapon has since the 1980's, with the innovation of greater range and more precise ICBMs, moved from MAD to tactical deployment (Filter 2015; Regehr 1980). The result is threatening to both our humanity and human existence.

Toward examining the lived experience of conscientious objectors at the level of conscious activity, it is worth mentioning how I became involved with this research topic as well as the people and events that influenced this project. I was born in the small, Canadian town of Almonte near Ottawa. When I was three years old, my parents moved to Port Colborne, Ontario, where my mother had grown up and her parents still lived. Both of my parents were entrepreneurs and had their own businesses; my grandfather, too, was an entrepreneur and started a denturist business when he immigrated to Canada. My family would be considered upper-middle class, so I grew up with certain luxuries and privileges. As a child, my parents would buy my older brother and me different actions figures that were advertised during animated and live-

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5 McCoy describes this foreign policy strategy as an effort to contain, encircle, diminish, and, if possible, to dismember China and Russia.
6 These tensions have since escalated over the fifteen years since the launching of the “Global War on Terror” and the expansion of U.S. force in the Baltics. See, for example, http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/apr/13/russian-attack-planes-buzz-uss-donald-cook-baltic-sea.
action programs that targeted the impressionable minds of children — and the wallets of parents. Some of the shows I watched included: *Transformers, GI Joe: Real American Heroes, The Mighty Morphin’ Power Rangers and the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.* I played with toy guns and would sometimes play Gun Tag\(^7\) with my neighborhood playmates. I enjoyed violent video games and [most of] my youth was spent in front of a television, where I was always on the side of ‘good’ defeating ‘evil’ in a make-believe world that was a dress rehearsal for the real thing. No one ever batted an eye at these childhood activities or the tasks I was ‘accomplishing’ in games. The complexity and depth of ideological inculcation into hegemonic masculinity and militarism escaped my adolescent imagination as it did that of my parents.

My parents now like to remind me that I was an inquisitive child. My favorite question was “Why?” and my thirst for knowledge was rarely satisfied. Growing up, I read lots of youth-oriented fiction and, occasionally, read more mature novels. Michael Crichton’s *Jurassic Park* proved to be a seminal text for me and opened my imagination to environmental and social issues. While I would characterize my upbringing as one free of violence, I now recognize there was a ‘violent’ culture that I was unknowingly participating in by the very nature of capitalist consumption and socialization; after all, my favorite television shows were about the unabashed triumph of good over evil, which was, more often than not, accomplished through fantastic feats of violence. The irony is that I was always taught that violence never solves problems, it only perpetuates them. I could not make sense of this contradiction until much later in my life. As a child, my understanding of good versus evil was self-evident: there were actions and people that

\(^7\)Gun Tag was a game that my friends and I devised that combined Hide-and-Seek with the traditional game of Touch-Tag. Instead of using hand gestures to simulate a gun, we would ‘craft’ guns from LEGO. The rules of the game were simple: 1) to remove a player from the game, you would need to seek them out and proceed to ‘shoot’ them to tag them ‘out’; 2) when you were tagged out, you would go to a neutral spot; 3) the game ended when one player was left standing.
were ‘good’ and there were actions and people that were ‘bad’. It was just that simple. The power of such, and of all binaries, is that they are ideologies that become deeply ingrained in consciousness, making them nearly immune to complication, contextualization and transformation. It would be a few short years into my middle adolescence that a cataclysmic moment would transform the world.

I was sitting in ninth-grade science class when I first heard about the attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001. News of the incident spread across my high school and there was chatter amongst the student body, but everything that happened seemed so alien. Who would want to do such a thing? We were the good guys after all. Admittedly, I was young and impressionable and the events of the day had left me with feelings of uncertainty, which began to percolate into questions about good and evil in the real world. Our extended family lives in the Pittsburgh area and, at the time, we lived only a short drive from the border, so going across for visits was a common activity. The United States felt like a second home to me, so when the events of that September happened, their pain felt like my pain. After all, such things never happened in North America; at least that is what I had thought. We were the good guys and the subtle differences between the United States and Canada had never really dawned on me. In the days that followed, information was released regarding the identities of the attackers, the attack on the Pentagon, and the additional airliner that crashed in rural Pennsylvania. Then, the answers came flooding like a tsunami washing over an unsuspecting coastal populace. ‘Terrorists’ had attacked the United States! Everything had been orchestrated by ‘terrorists who hated the West’. It was not until 2002, however, that the Canadian military would join the so-called global

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8Incidentally, one of my favorite movies, True Lies (1994), was based on the premise of West Asian (Middle East) terrorists planning a nuclear attack on American soil. This simple narrative stuck with me and unconsciously helped me contextualize what was happening, that is to say, in a desensationalizing manner.
initiative in combating terrorism and, in the process change, bring me full circle to the 'war games' of my youth.

In 2004, I was in the twelfth grade; Iraq had been invaded and, in light of what was happening abroad, I considered joining the military when I graduated. Something, however, just did not feel right. Looking back now, there were many things that fascinated me about the military: the weapons, the uniform, national pride, a sense of duty, power, and, of course, the nostalgia of childhood play and militarized programming. Despite all of this I felt that I was not quite ready to make such a commitment, especially given my limited education. I thought the best way I could be of use to the military was to first further my education, so I chose to pursue a university degree. At the end, if I still really wanted to, then I would enlist after completing my undergraduate education. This also would afford me the added benefit of being eligible for Officer training, which made it a win-win situation. This was a feeling that stuck with me for several years as I pursued my undergraduate degree, initially in English literature, before switching over to Sociology.

But something else happened. During my tenure as an undergraduate student, the now infamous, WikiLeaks cables emerged and suddenly I was inundated with information regarding what had and was happening in Afghanistan and Iraq. I recall working on an assignment one afternoon when I came upon a video released by WikiLeaks: it was video footage from a US Apache helicopter firing on supposed and unsuspecting ‘insurgents’, in the process killing a small group of unarmed civilians. The video also included audio of the conversation between the pilots and the command prior to, during and after the attack. I could not fathom what compelled these pilots and the command, given the ‘unknowns’ about the circumstances, to do what they

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9The clip entitled “Collateral Murder” can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rXPrfnU3G0
did and to be so jocular about what, under any other circumstance, would be called murder. It did not take long for me to abandon thoughts of joining the military as I confronted the stark realities of what could actually be demanded of me. I had never considered myself a violent person. I actually abhorred violence, but I understood there were times when violence may be required, even though I never personally had to apply that understanding. I came to the realization that I could not accept being in a position to end lives or command others to kill. Despite my attempts, I could not justify why joining the military would be a good idea for me. I guess you could say that I had ‘conscientiously objected’ out of joining the military. My closest friends had always supported me when I said I wanted to join the military; however, their discourse changed when I told them it was no longer something I wanted to do. Though they have, to some extent, now come around to understanding my viewpoint, the characterization of my being “soft” remains in the background. It would not be until I started my graduate program that I revisited my fascination with the military when I began talking to my grandfather about my graduate research. But something more personal than a video of Iraqi's being callously killed as 'insurgents' was to animate my intention to study conscientious objection.

In a series of conversations about religion, history and politics, I began talking to my grandfather about my research interests. It was not, however, until my maternal grandfather opened up about his time in the Second World War that this project took on a life of its own. When I was growing up, I had a very close connection with both my maternal grandparents, especially my grandfather. His name was Felix Geiger. He had a calm and stoic demeanor and he was always very cordial. He also had great standing in the local German community where we lived, and he was involved in several community-based initiatives. His considerable adoration for his family was nearly matched by his love of vigorous debate about all things relating to
history and politics. His love of family and thirst for knowledge were traits that I admired, yet I knew very little about the origins of the political fire that burned within him. Growing up, I gathered bits and pieces of his life story, which is somewhat typical: he was born into a German family and grew up in a small town that bordered Hungary and Romania; he was drafted into the German military, where he served for several years until the war ended and he was put into a prisoner-of-war camp; after he got out, he left the ‘old country’, married my grandmother and immigrated to Canada.

In the fall of 2012, when I began my graduate studies, my grandfather had become ill with heart complications and was hospitalized. During my visits, I began to divulge my interest in what compels people to kill during war. This was when he fully opened up to me about his experiences in the German military. His stories would inspire the formulation of this thesis. This became more apparent, for example, when he articulated his struggle with religion — redemption, specifically. During his tenure in the military, my grandfather had been all over Europe; he had been in Stalingrad and St. Petersburg, the Western Front, and even Normandy when the Allied forces landed on the shores of northern Europe. The story of his individual surrender stayed with me the most and inspired me to consider my research. He told me that he was forced to fight in the war and it weighed heavily on his conscience — lasting until the day he finally passed away. Having been forced into fighting, he finally found an opportunity to stop by surrendering himself to the advancing Allied forces. He told me that when he surrendered he had brokered a deal with the Allied command: in exchange for his discharge papers, he would act as a driver and clerk. For over a year he worked very closely with the U.S. forces, doing work that ranged from driving military personnel around the country to translating documents. In the meantime, Berlin had since fallen and the Axis forces were defeated; the war in Europe had
finally come to a close and my grandfather’s services were no longer required. When he inquired about the timeline for receiving his discharge papers, the American military thanked my grandfather by tossing him into a prisoner-of-war camp, where he stayed for close to three years. He never did tell me about those three years but I could see the pain in his eyes. His silence said more than words possibly could. His stories were a bit scattered and I had to piece a lot of it together to create a coherent chronology, but he always emphasized certain details and lessons that he learned. A lesson he quickly learned was that war is ugly, brutal and terrifying; no one should ever want such things to happen nor want to participate in it. He expressed great remorse for having capitulated by joining the German military and by the things he was forced to do. After all, he, like so many others, had endured the most difficult of hardships after being pulled into a fight that did not concern him. What was hardest for him? It was not the friends or comrades he had lost, nor the death and destruction that he had seen, all while he was fighting on the German side who were considered the enemy; or, the sense of hopelessness and despair that he felt. It was ending someone else’s life — killing — that was the hardest thing he had ever done, and it haunted him. This lead to the second and most important thing he ever told me: always strive to be a good person, stay true to the person he knows me to be, and to always follow my conscience. My grandfather was a very kind and loving man, but those years of his life hung over him like a dark cloud and it followed him everywhere. It was during these chats that I started to see a lot of him in me; more than I ever had before.

As I entered the second semester of my program, I began to formulate my research more thoroughly. My supervisor, Dr. Tamari Kitossa, recommended a book by David Grossman called *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*\(^\text{10}\). After reading the

\(^{10}\)See Grossman (1996).
account provided by Grossman, a retired U.S. Colonel, it became increasingly clear that military training was designed to undo the moral conditioning that makes us not want to kill; a fact that runs contrary to the notion that militaries preserve and defend life. I knew then where my research was heading. I started reading about the U.S. war on Vietnam, where roughly thirty to forty thousand American ‘draft dodgers’, and an additional one thousand ‘deserters’, fled to Canada.\(^{11}\) As fraudulent as the justification for the invasion of Iraq, that quagmire saw the killing of some 3.5 million Vietnamese and 58,000 dead or missing US soldiers. I also watched several video clips provided to me by Tamari, which detailed the experience of former Israeli Defense Forces soldiers who had served in the Second Intifada and later became members of the anti-war group Breaking the Silence.\(^{12}\) One account of post hoc objectionism that really resonated with me and reminded me of my conversations with my grandfather was an open letter written by an Iraq War veteran named Tomas Young.\(^{13}\) The open letter detailing his trauma resonated with me as I remembered the stories that my grandfather conveyed during our conversations. With every video I watched, every article and book I read, my research began to take on more definite form. Everything my grandfather had told me echoed in the stories I reading and watched.

In April 2013, the Department of Sociology hosted their annual Graduate Symposium where all students present on their research. I anxiously waited all morning to conduct my presentation because I intended on visiting my grandfather afterward to tell him about the exciting direction of my project. I was one of the last students in my cohort to present and within minutes of finishing my presentation, I jumped in my car and drove off to the hospital. While

\(^{11}\)See “Trudeau opens the door to draft dodgers” available at http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/trudeau-opens-the-door-to-draft-dodgers

\(^{12}\)See “Burning Conscience: Israeli Soldiers Speak Out” available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37MFa7ZKQWo

\(^{13}\)See the initial article here https://ca.news.yahoo.com/blogs/lookout/iraq-war-vet-letter-bush-cheney-tomas-young-154541674.html
enroute I received a phone call from my mother. Something in her tone told me that it had happened: “Are you close? Opa has passed.” This was truly one of the hardest experiences of my life. I never had the chance to say goodbye or tell him how our conversations had been so incredibly instructive on what I was going to research. It was not until several months later, well after I had buried both my maternal grandparents, that I revisited my research with a renewed sense of clarity and purpose; I truly began my journey into exploring conscientious objection.

Chapter 2
Why Look at Conscientious Objection? A Rationale

We must face the truth that the people have not been horrified by war to a sufficient extent to force them to go any extent rather than have another war. … War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today. (John F. Kennedy in Foster 2009: 390)

Few conceptions seem more obvious and taken-for-granted than conscientious objection. When a concept is taken for granted, however, it means that it is in the blind spot of critical inquiry; effectively limiting the concept at the level of ideology. To move beyond the commonsensical, this chapter aims to provide an outline of the project as a whole by clarifying the meaning of ‘conscientious objection’. The intent here is to contextualize and speak to the necessity of the research as a whole by unpacking the meaning of conscientious objection and its relationship to the idea of ‘just’14 warring.

2.1. What is ‘Just’ Warring, Conscientious Objection and Selective Conscientious Objection?

The Just War tradition is a set of theoretical, legal and ‘moral’ stipulations that can be used as a benchmark to determine if a given war is being waged ‘ethically’ (Johnson 2006). The Just War theory is comprised of two central tenets: *jus ad bellum* (justice of waging a war) and *jus in bello* (justice in conduct during war). Historically, the Just War tradition contends that the *ad bellum* tenet resides solely in the hands of the state’s political leaders and soldiers are made to be responsible for their own conduct15 during war time (*in bello*); the separation of responsibilities between those who authorize action and those compelled to obey is often reduced to, or discussed in the relation to, the principle of ‘invincible ignorance’ and the ‘moral equality

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14 As will be discussed below, ‘just’ refers to that which is based on or behaving according to what is ‘morally right’ and ‘fair.’
15 Many Just War critics have noted that *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* cannot be separated from one another as the *in bello* portion is heavily reliant on sound reasoning from the leaders waging any war.
of combatants’. These two principles are of utmost importance under the normative framing of Just War theory because all combatants are considered ‘moral equals’ should they follow and obey the laws that govern warfare during a given conflict; effectively, this theory grants all soldiers a justified ignorance of the reasons for and fighting in a given war. However, this right of equality (to be ignorant of causes, interests and motivations) is forfeit should a soldier engage in behavior that contravenes ‘ethical’ decorum during wartime — this includes: harming civilians, destroying or damaging vital civilian infrastructure, abusing and executing captives, etc. Fundamentally, the Just War tradition rests on the assumption that judgments about the “justness” and morality of a particular war can be made but only by those responsible for declaring an act of war: the state or ruling authority. Moreover, the Just War tradition seems to occupy the ‘moral’ middle ground between bellicism (that which always justifies war or willingness to fight) and pacifism (that which never justifies war).

Relatedly, conscientious objection, in its most basic form, is the “refusal to participate in the military based upon [a total] opposition to war” (Marcus in Friedman 2006:83; Cohen 1968; May 2012; Levi and DeTray 1993). This is the only form of objectionism that is currently recognized in militaries that allow for conscientious objection to military duty; including, but not limited to, conscript militaries (e.g., Israel Defense Forces) and all-volunteer force militaries like those of the United States and the United Kingdom. Historically, conscientious objection has been conceptualized as a form of ‘religious’ objectionism derived from the teachings of certain ‘religious’ groups, or traditions, which categorically eschew military duty, violence and war (ibid). Often equated with conscientious objection, but erroneously so, pacifism entails an ethical

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16 This is expanded upon in the literature review.
17 Conscientious objection is often equated with the notion of pacifism, however, it is my opinion that this conflation is an error arising from common sense understandings of pacifism and objectionism respectively.
and practical commitment, of any and all kinds, to non-violence. While conscientious objection in the form of pacifism is common among many religions, it also exists in secular forms.

Within the contemporary scholarship on objectionism, academics have noticed in the past few decades that there has been an increase in soldiers who come to oppose only certain wars or campaigns and not military duty, war, or violence altogether. This form of objectionism has come to be designated as selective conscientious objection. Unlike conscientious objectors, ‘selective’ conscientious objectors are individuals whose application of non-violence is a position that does not necessarily reject or forbid violence altogether (May 2012: 5). Instead, a selective objector’s claim can, for instance, be based on their conscience, ‘religion’, or ‘education’, but her/his objection extends only to wars they deem unconscionable. In other words, the selective objector seeks an exemption from particular wars because they hold an alternative set of moral values but which does not, on its own, disavow the putative necessity of military engagement. Paul Robinson (2009) proposes that selective objectors articulate an alternative view of duty, democracy, obligation, rights and rule of law they believe must be weighed against commands by military authority to engage in campaigns whose methods and outcomes they hold to be unconscionable. Selective objection, then, is thus argued to be formulated on the basis of soldier's awareness and understanding of “violations of standards of national or international law and bolstered by the inherent definition of a conscientious objection: the appeal to individual conscience” (Marcus 542). What separates selective objection

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18 Ironically, not all religions are compatible with pacifism because they allow violence when ‘necessary.’ The Old Testament, for example, admonishes there is ‘a time for peace and a time for war’.


20 Carl Cohen likens selective objectionism to a form of ‘civil disobedience’ (1968: 272).
from conscientious objection within the literature is that it is based on the distinction of those who would evade military duty on ‘legitimate’, ‘religious’ grounds from those who would evade military duty on perceived ‘illegitimate’, ‘non-religious’ or unjustified ‘political’ grounds. To authors like Robinson and Capizzi, selective objection refers only to a narrow set of cases where the parameters for objection appear to be independent and distinct from a commitment to non-violence, or anti-war sentiments, in general. Joseph Capizzi maintains “selective conscientious objection is thus the necessary partner of the just war position” (1996: 353). Be that as it may, if a war is deemed just, regardless of how controversial its justness may be to the individual ‘selective objector’, then to object on grounds of method and objectives, results in objectionism that will likely not be regarded as ‘legitimate.’

Because this research is focused on U.S. objectors, it is useful to provide a brief case analysis of the current state of objectionism in the U.S. military before moving onto the research goals and objectives of the thesis.

2.2 The Case for Objection: The United States

Joseph Capizzi (1996) opens his article “Selective Conscientious Objection in the United States” by stating that “[h]istorically, the United States government has treated selective conscientious objection as merely politically informed opinion, subject to vacillation on political grounds alone. It may be legitimate to equate conscience with political opinion, but neither has this been established, nor is there historical support for doing so” (339). Capizzi, moreover, contends that ‘general’ conscientious objection has also suffered from problematic articulations.

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21 Again, a more nuanced analysis of this point is elaborated later in the literature view. At this point, I seek only to offer a more general explanation of the technical distinction between conscientious objectionism and selective conscientious objection. It is worth noting, however, that the difference between conscientious objection — as a religious or faith based devotion to pacifism — and selective conscientious objection — as a secular, moral, religious, or ‘philosophical’ objection to war — is where contemporary objectionism scholarship is now delineated.
since U.S. military jurisprudence gave it recognition (ibid). It is from this acknowledgement of the confused state of the theory that Capizzi argues that selective conscientious objection has been inadequately conceptualized and continues to be disregarded in the U.S. military. For many countries, conscription had been a routine practice and, as Capizzi notes, conscientious objection to war has been a central part of U.S. culture since the country was first involved in warfare. No less than George Washington who warned against foreign entanglements, but not internal wars of pacification, was a forerunner of this proposition. Following the creation of the United States in 1776, it was recognized on the state level that there would be exemption from the draft for Quakers, Mennonites and Brethren (340). However, these exemptions for conscientious objection would never be constitutionally guaranteed; instead, they would be granted by the newly formed Congress (e.g., the federal legislature). It would not be until the First World War that the U.S. government created their first formal exemptions for conscientious objection in the Selective Defense Act of 1917 (Ibid). The Selective Defense Act permitted conscientious objection for members of “any well recognized religious sect or organization at present organized and existing whose existing creed or principles forbid its member to participate in war in any form” (341). In 1940 the language of the Selective Defense Act was changed to reflect the difficulties surrounding the phrasing of ‘religious exemptions’ by creating more inclusive language that allowed soldiers to object “by reason of religious training and belief, [that they are] conscientiously opposed to war in any form” (Ibid). Ironically, the ill-defined terminology of ‘religious training’ prompted the U.S. government to change the Act yet again to reflect only “religious organizations” who believed in a “Supreme being”22 which excludes all forms of objectionism based on “political, sociological or philosophical views or merely a personal code”

22“Supreme being” is meant to denote the Christian God.
(Ibid). This clarification made the case for qualification as a conscientious objector much more discernible, especially for draft boards, as well as giving clear priority to conscientious objectors and denying the possibility of selective objection. The challenge of obedience to a “Supreme being” would be the chief issue for future selective objectors who came to challenge the existing legislation during the U.S. war on Vietnam. Citing that these cases emerged primarily during the war on Vietnam, Capizzi suggests that soldiers began to question the states authority to determine the “justness” of a given war. The selective refusal of draft dodgers during the Vietnam War only helped to solidify the case for the U.S. government to remain unwavering in its position that the “political” motivation of objectors during that conflict constituted a form of opposition to the government and U.S. national interests. With this resistance in mind, Capizzi asks a central question that lies at the heart of the debates surrounding selective objectionism as opposition to the state:

Is this logical? Does opposition to a particular war equal opposition to the government? In other words, is conscientious objection, the same as civil disobedience? Following the lead of Michael Walzer, we would deny that equation. There is a difference between objecting to a war and engaging in civil disobedience. Conscientious objection does not involve a renunciation of the individual’s subjection to the government. As the exemption of general objectors makes clear, the obligation of a citizen to obey the state is not absolute. At best we could grant it prima facie status. That is, it is an obligation that in certain circumstances can be overridden given proper justifications. Indeed, the exemption extended to pacifists proves that the government admits there are times when membership in a church or other community entails moral obligations that can supersede one’s duty to the state. In the words of James Madison, the religious duty towards the Creator is precedent, both in order of time and in degree of obligation, to the claims of Civil Society. (353)

Capizzi makes a false equivalence to both civil disobedience and selective objection and opposition to the government. After all, in liberal democracies, especially one such as the United

23 See the celebrated U.S. v Seeger, U.S. v Sisson, U.S. v Gillette, and Negre v. Larsen which challenged, however unsuccessfully, the constitutionality of the “religious training and belief” clauses in the Selective Defense Act (Capizzi 346-352). These cases include objections ranging from the 1940s up to the 1970s and serve as the formative basis for scholars that advocate for the acceptance of selective objection.

24 One of the better known Just War theorists of the twentieth century.
States where Thomas Jefferson stated the necessity of opposing despotic governments, it is a right to oppose government where the laws have become expressly ‘destructive’25. Capizzi, however, raises the central concern of selective objectionism: the exercise of moral conscience when it is believed that a particular war is unjust; not a particular law, per say.

### 2.3 Reconciling The Goals and Objectives Of This Research

Having contextualized the research in the previous pages, the remainder of this chapter lays out the primary objectives, arguments and questions. Further, I provide an introduction to some of the problematics that this project examines within the literature as well as those that manifested in the ‘research findings’.

Conscientious Objection is a social phenomenon that has a deeply informative history on the human condition. In fact, it might be safe to assume that for as long as there have been ‘state’ organized militaries,26 there have been objectors existing in tandem. While there has been much work in more recent decades expressing concern for the ethical and equitable treatment of objectors27, the aim of this research is two-fold.

On one hand, it is to explicate the narratives of objectors themselves. In short, the aim is to hear and listen to the voices that have been largely absent from the scholarship that seeks to find remedies to the problems that objectors face. In the overwhelming body of literature, objectors stories are frequently reduced to abstract and theoretical debates or academic jargon.

Therefore, this project intends to (1) to amplify the voices of objectors who inform the current

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26 I loosely use the phrase ‘state organized militaries’ to denote any group of armed forces in a given epoch.
27 In addition to the existing scholarship presented in the literature review, organizations like the “War Resisters Support Campaign” in Toronto, Canada, “The Centre on Conscience and War”, “Courage to Resist”, and “Iraq Veterans Against War” in the United States, and “Breaking the Silence” in Israel, have all prompted considerable support and awareness of objectors in their respective militaries and communities.
debates and scholarship, and (2) to contribute to future scholarship that explores the 'personal troubles' and lived experiences of soldiers and the influences that prompted their contextually specific objection to the military. With this in mind, I explore the lived experience and the ideological orientations of U.S. objectors to the invasions and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is also important to address here that these particular objectors do not constitute a unified perspective or approach to objectionism. Through an examination of their lived experiences and the conditions which prompted their objection, I hope to more thoroughly understand their respective rationale and ideological motivations for objection. On the other hand, this project uses the participant’s narratives as the substance to contextualize the debate about objectionism against the backdrop of the hegemonic jingoism that characterizes U.S. foreign policy during the ‘Global War on Terror’. My aim is to expand the existing scholarship and explicate a larger discussion on the state of objectionism in modern militaries given that political elites continue to obfuscate the justification for wars that send tens of thousands of soldiers to die and in turn kill hundreds of thousands of soldiers and millions of civilians.

It is incumbent on me as a researcher to first question the interests and purposes that compel the nation-state to propagate ideals of nationalism and patriotism; and, second, to question the moral foundation of the nation-state that actively manipulates the morality of its citizens to defend corporate rather than truly collective interests. To accomplish this goal, it is essential for this thesis to inject the experiences of objectors onto the scholarship of objectionism to explicate a discussion of how the 'personal troubles' of objectors speak to the 'social issue' of war and militarism in the age of the ‘Global War on Terror’. To fully contextualize the multi-

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faceted debates found in the scholarship, I provide substantive space for the retelling of the lived experiences of the four objectors who are my research participants. Though each participant is committed to non-violence, and in varying ways in some shape or another, the road that each travelled to arrive at her or his destination is unique. This thesis is then, in part, the story of how soldiers narrate their journey into awakening, and, their practice of and journey into discovering objectionism. Those narratives, I believe, can contribute to a broader public conversation of the moral and philosophical issues inherent to objectionism. Bearing in mind that warring (unless for defensive purposes) is a practical waste of lives and resources, it is imperative that we understand what compels people to become an objector and engage with the historical context in which those lived experiences are situated. Given the increasing frequency of global conflicts, and growing competition for and acquisition of natural resources, it should come as no surprise that inquiry into objectionism has seen a resurgence in the social sciences. It is precisely the continued salience of war, its normalization, and the reinvigorated demand to inquire into its continuity in the 'age of terrorism' that prompts this project. Objectors, themselves, stand as a unique source of information that will add breadth and understanding to an issue that can no longer be solely debated among scholars, politicians, lawyers and military brass.29 Warring, indeed, is too important to any longer be left politicians, corporate leaders, generals and soldiers alike.

29 The broader implications of this project suggest that modern militaries would rather recruit people who will not question the reason for their training, their mission objectives, and so on. To be clear, I believe this inquiry is in the public interest given the democratic deficit, corporate profiteering and defense of corporate interests inherent to states that continually wage war.
2.4 CO Scholarship: What Does It Look Like?

Much of the contemporary academic discussions about objectionism have been a series of smaller, fragmented conversations that branch off of or feed into two thematically interconnected debates. The first debate generally rejects conscientious objection (Walzer 2002; Murphy 2015; McMahan 2005a). The focus is twofold: 1) that conscientious objection forces us to look back at the problems which prompted a conflict and not solutions for the future; and 2) that conscientious objection will jeopardize the overall tactical and strategic functioning of the military, whose sole purpose is the preservation of the ‘state’: its’ security, the security of its citizenry, and the preservation of ‘national’ interests. Often times the objectionist perspective is rooted in simplistic reactions to objectionism that, in general, carry heavy, nationalist overtones and assumptions about the military and military duty. For example, should conscientious objectors be considered brave or cowardly? Do objectors lack integrity for violating their military contracts and sworn oaths and can they be considered true citizens if they reject a call to arms in ‘service’ of their country? Do objectors violate the military values they are supposed to uphold? Should objectors be considered enemies or upholders of the Constitution? How do we make sense of objectors who only object to one war but not all wars? While it may be considered ‘courteous’ to give this line of questioning consideration, I refer to them as simplistic because the rhetorical elements of such sentiments ignore the greater complexity of objectionism and humanity as well as the nature and history of any given war. This research, instead, focuses on the experiences of U.S. objectors who voluntarily enlisted subsequent to September 11, 2001; objectionism in this militarized climate demands a serious re-qualification given contemporary and historical evidence that governments mislead the public about the justifications for war.

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30The United States mantra of “Salute your veterans” at most major sporting events is one example of this.
have the example of the faked 1964 'Gulf of Tonkin' attack on a US carrier that instigated the Johnson administration's justification for the war on Vietnam and Colin Powell's embarrassing cartoonish presentation at the UN to justify George W. Bush 2003 invasion of Iraq. All of this to say that both objectors and the populace alike are justified to question their government’s decisions to send citizens into harms way. The second side of the debate, generally argued by those in favor or support of objection, tackles the phenomena of objectionism head on. Those scholars who are in favor of objection—Capizzi (1996), Clifford (2011), Cohen (1968), Deakin (2014), Foster (2009), Friedman (2006), Marcus (1998), Robinson (2009) et al.— commonly react or challenge the assertions of anti-objection theorists. Pro-objectors argue that all objectors should be considered brave given that they are, by and large, challenging the authority of the state and hegemonically constituted public morality; objectors do not lack integrity for choosing their conscience over obedience to authority. It is argued, to the contrary, that objectors actually embody honor and courage by challenging the authority of the state, which commands them to kill. It is argued, moreover, that objectors are not enemies of the Constitution, but are its most ardent defenders through the exercise of democratic and civil engagement. There are, however, two issues with these debates that I wish to review briefly.

First, the contemporary scholarship that is pro-objectionism (Capizzi 1996; Friedman 2006; Robinson 2009b; Rohrs 1971; Walter 1973; Wilson 2008; Zupan 2014) argues there are two kinds of objections: conscientious objection and selective conscientious objection. This debate is centered around a priori assumptions of what conscientious objection has traditionally been conflated with — religious commitments to non-violence or the ‘justified’ use of self-

31 Although I detail a brief overview of that conversation here, I explore this issue more thoroughly within the literature review.
defense only — and the emergent selective objector who takes issue with a particular military campaign. There is, however, a glaring problematic in this debate that I wish to review here. First, the grammatical composition of the term ‘selective conscientious objection’ undermines its own credibility because its organization erroneously implies that objectors will selectively employ their conscience\textsuperscript{32}. Perhaps a more accurate designation would be ‘conscientious selective objection’. This grammatical repositioning broadens the spectrum under which conscientious objection can be analyzed and realized given all forms of objectionism are, by definition, ‘selective’ to each individual objector. Furthermore, in the process of conscientizing, objectors do not reject the nature of citizenship by disagreeing with the goals of state authority. Objectors actually deepen their commitment to the nature of citizenship under the social contract, as well as their civic duty, by engaging in discourse and dialogues that help to situate themselves as informed, conscientious members of society, which is guaranteed as a fundamental right under the First Amendment in the U.S. Constitution\textsuperscript{33}. Let us recall here that no less than Thomas Jefferson, with all his faults as a slave owner and conqueror of Indigenous Americans, stated in the Declaration of Independence:

\begin{quote}
...whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{32} This is precisely why many militaries have capitulated in only recognizing conscientious objection as ‘a rejection of all war’ and nothing else because it is much easier to refute and challenge the position of those who would ‘selectively object’ for various reasons than individuals who come to reject war and violence categorically.

\textsuperscript{33} The First Amendment states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances” Retrieved on December 18, 2015 from https://www.aclu.org/united-states-bill-rights-first-10-amendments-constitution

\textsuperscript{34} See https://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson/transcript-declaration-independence-final
Much the same point was rearticulated by Martin Luther King, who in his Letter from Birmingham Prison, drawing on St. Augustine among others, stated: "Any law that degrades human personality is unjust."\(^{35}\)

Normative assumptions about objectionism made in relation to Just War theory, frame the phenomena so that all objectors are pacifists with exception to those objectors who recognize the use of violence *only* in situations of justified self-defense: conscientious selective objectors. Conscientious selective objectors supposedly differ from the conscientious objector on the grounds that their objection to the military, or violence, is in the form of a specific campaign and not military duty or violence in its totality. Scholars of objectionism concede that there will be variances in what compels people to become an objector as not all objectors consider themselves to be pacifists (Capizzi 1996; Zupan 2014; Friedman 2006). I believe that this assumption is the result of an over-simplification and reduction of the components of objectionism, in general, for two reasons. First, the scope of objectionism is conceptually limited and, therefore, its complexity becomes obfuscated in the face of a compulsion to wage war and commit acts of violence. Secondly, assuming that there are two forms of objectionism implies that no further demarcations can be made; however, as Randy Friedman (2006: 86) argues, there may be four kinds of objectors: religious conscientious objectors, religious selective conscientious objectors, secular conscientious objectors and secular selective conscientious objectors. Without eschewing Friedman's typology, we might also consider that, rather than concretely imposing identities on objecting soldiers, that objectors express their normative ideals along a spectrum where the meaning they give to their actions evolves and is not fixed.

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\(^{35}\)See http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html
Before moving on, I wish to conclude the discussion above that explores the linguistic and conceptual limitations of ‘selective conscientious objection’. As discussed above, scholars like Robinson (2009) et al., have postulated that there is firm, conceptual demarcation between those who object to violence in its totality and those who decide that there acceptable times when violence can be used; such a typification lead suggests that there are only two kinds of objectionism. However, I posit, like Nehustan (2014), that these distinctions are the result of a linguistic fallacy. For example, we do not claim that there are two kinds of breathing: non-water breathing and water breathing; the latter obviously refers to the act of drowning. Much like a distinction made between ‘swallowing up/down’ or ‘throwing up/down’, the point is that both directional specificity as well as the meaning ascribed to phenomena are culturally and historically bound. Accordingly, objections are objections are objections regardless if they are expansive as in ‘selective’ or limited as in strict technical terms as 'conscientious'. Because conscience is always ‘selective’, which is the essence of a moral foundation and its ongoing assessment by individuals, the distinction between CO and CSO might be fruitful for scholarly debates, but it is in a practical sense conceptually unsustainable. It is, therefore, imperative to reject this dualism and its linguistic complications and move to establish a singular, comprehensive definition of objectionism that considers the varying motivations, fluidity and nuances of why some object to the military altogether, a particular campaign, or why some will only fight when it is in the absolute necessity of self-defense.

2.5 Research Questions

The overall intent of this research project is to understand the nature of objection to war through an analysis of objectors lived experiences. In doing so, the task is to broaden and deepen
both scholarship and civil society's conversation about the costs and meaning of war in modern society. Toward meeting these objectives, five questions undergird my inquiry and analysis:

1. How do the lived experiences of conscientious objectors broaden and deepen the scholarship of, and civil society's conversation about, the costs and meaning of war in modern society?

2. What ideas and experiences led each participant to become an objector?

3. What discursive practices in the popular culture and the personal experience of the participants influenced their decision to join the military?

4. What can the narratives of conscientious objectors tell us about social contract theory, citizenship and the moral imperatives of modern militaries?

5. How well do the participants' philosophies of objection mesh with current scholarly debates about conscientious objection?

In situating the lived experiences of objectors at the forefront of this thesis, this project is but one of many contributions that scholarship can make toward explicating the complex and multi-layered issues surrounding conscientious objection, war and war making. With the emergence of new objector/veteran support groups like the War Resisters Support Campaign in Canada as well as Iraq Veterans Against War and Courage to Resist in the U.S., the pursuit of social justice for objectors is a growing concern within society; however, it is troubling that the current debate between Western scholars have not included the lived experiences of objectors — at least not since the draft dodgers of the Korean and Vietnam war — and has been strictly confined to abstract debates of political and social theory.

Within the experiences provided in the analysis section, we can see an actual lived narration of how the struggles of objectors play out. From the level of consciousness and conscious activity, I am interested in better understanding the complexities and nuances in the narratives of conscientious objectors as articulated by the objectors themselves. Appreciation of
their narratives is vital for an informed public conversation about the appropriation of the wealth of nations for the creative destruction of infrastructure (Ivie 2012), environmental degradation (Hooks and Smith 2012), the deficit of democracy (Ivie 2012; Fanny and Coulomb 2012), and, of course, the reckless killing of civilians and combatants caused by war (Butler 1936; 2003). If war is the scourge it has long been known to be, the voices of warriors who have come to reject combat, whether absolutely, or in the case of this project ‘selectively’, must be heeded.
Chapter 3

Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the scholarly literature on objectionism. While constituting neither a comprehensive nor rigid schematic of the entirety of the scholarship, I have identified four recurring themes in the literature. These are: just warring and conscientious objection, citizenship and conscientious objection, the social contract and objectionism, and, finally, exploring the conceptual difference between conscientious objection and selective conscientious objection\(^{36}\) or more correctly, conscientious selective objection.

The first section of the literature review discusses the modern nation states’ use of the Just War theory, which it uses as a benchmark to judge the conditions under which war can be legitimately declared and conducted.\(^37\) This particular discussion of objectionism explores contemporary assumptions regarding Just War theory with respect to how it is invoked to articulate the normative parameters for validating the moral framework to judge the necessity and prosecution of any given war. Moreover, by injecting objectionism onto the Just War landscape it catalyzes a shift away from how a war should be waged toward questioning the nature of a given conflict. In the subsequent chapter on my theoretical framework, this move will

\(^{36}\)The sequence of these thematic discussions is arbitrary, but they relate to and contextualize the pro/anti objection debates that are presented in the second chapter of this thesis.

\(^{37}\)I realize that there are some underlying assumptions with this statement; for instance, it does not contextualize how the modern nation state emerged. If we look at the Medieval-Renaissance period, what emerged over those few centuries was a feudal and bourgeoning conquistador culture and political economy that really had no room for contemplations and theories of objectionism. The expulsion of the Moors and Jews from Spain, the search for a route to the silk trade in the ‘East’ (India and China, most notably), the internal pacification and unification of the cultural construct called ‘Europa’ (MacPherson 1964) and colonialism and the slave trade in the Americas, left Europe in a mood to contemplate nothing but aggression (Magdoff 1978). It is in this context that that the social contractarian bourgeois state was nurtured. It is precisely in that context that the citizen as subject was born – a person, which is to say, ideally, a White man of ‘property’, of free will, who exercised his intelligence to make decisions affecting the body politic.
open space to elaborate syntactical implications of 'conscious selective objection' over 'selective conscientious objection'. The second section discusses the connection between objectionism and citizenship. Because military duty is often imagined as the highest service that any citizen can aspire to, objectionism represents questions about the assumptions of military duty for a higher order of citizenship and its relationship to civil society. In expanding on the discussion of citizenship, the third section explores the contentious relationship between objectionism and the social contract. Within social contract theory, it is argued that in order to ensure the continuation of civil society, citizens are required to abdicate certain rights and liberties and to submit their lives in defense of the state when ‘national interests’ are threatened. Therefore, objectionism, of whatever sort, challenges the states’ ability to exercise authority over its citizenry and is therefore paramount to a discussion on objectionism and warring. Finally, the last section of the literature review discusses the conceptual and theoretical discrepancies between conscientious objection and selective conscientious objection.

3.2 Conscientious Objection and Just War Theory

At its core, Just War theory is a set of theoretical, legal and moral propositions governing the conduct of a sovereign authority to declare war, as well as the conduct of the soldiers fighting in a given war. As noted in chapter 2, the justifications from which Just War theory has been cultivated over the centuries\(^{38}\) is comprised of two central tenets: *jus ad bellum* (justice of waging a war) and *jus in bello* (justice in conduct during war). Historically, the Just War

\(^{38}\) Just War theory can be traced back as far as Plato (c. 428-347BCE), St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430CE), Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274CE), and Francisco De Vitoria (1492-1546CE). Despite this historical and religious lineage, the Just War theory was not produced as abstractions ready-made to be appropriated by future generations. In fact, they were articulated to legitimate their own regime’s justification for the dispossession of others. Antony Anghie (2006), in his book *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the making of international law*, criticizes Vitoria, for example, for being an apologist and rationalist of Spanish imperialism into, what is now, Central and South America.
tradition contends that the *ad bellum* portion of Just War resides solely in the hands of the state’s political leadership while soldiers are responsible for their conduct\(^{39}\) during war (*in bello*); the separation of responsibilities between those who authorize action and those compelled to obey is often reduced to, or discussed in relation to, the principle of ‘invincible ignorance’ and the ‘moral equality of combatants.’ Andrew Fiala (2008) neatly summarizes the generally agreed upon principles that comprise the framing of Just War theory. The tenet of *jus ad bellum* is characterized by six parts: (1) *Just cause*: A war must have a just cause. Just causes can include: to resist aggression, to defend sovereignty, or to protect human rights; (2) *Right intention*: Just wars should be fought for just intentions. They should not be fought in order to expand power or expropriate land or resources;\(^{40}\) (3) *Proper or legitimate authority*: Wars can be waged only by a legitimate governing power; (4) *Last resort*: War is to be used only after making reasonable attempts to use nonviolent means to resolve conflict; (5) *Probable success*: Wars should be engaged only when there is some probability of success; futile wars should not be waged; (6) Proportionality: The total benefits of the war must overweigh the harms.

The second tenet, *jus in bello*, has three parts: (1) *Discrimination*: a good-faith effort must be made to avoid harming non-combatants. As in the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, The Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War,\(^{41}\) this is the idea of noncombatant immunity. Combatant killings, however, can be justified by the principle

\(^{39}\) Many Just War critics have noted that the *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* cannot be separated from one another as the *in bello* portion is heavily reliant on sound reasoning from the leaders waging any war. See Zupan (2014).

\(^{40}\) In principle, such a proposition enables powerful states to wage war against less powerful states, especially those fractured by illegal wars in the first instance, such as the invasions of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria, on grounds of ‘degrading and destroying’ asymmetrical actors such as ISIS. Obviously the prospect of a terminus in such wars is virtual nil, as grievances from initial invasions that destroyed existing states metastasizes the deepening and widening of asymmetrical warring opponents.

\(^{41}\) See the International Committee for the Red Cross: https://www.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/380
of double effect\textsuperscript{42} (e.g., these deaths which are collateral or not directly intended); (2)

\textit{Proportionality}: the reasonable and balanced use of force to achieve strategic and tactical goals;

(3) \textit{No intrinsically bad means}: certain actions are wrong in and of themselves, for example rape, torture, poisoning of water, and so on. (Fiala 38-39; McKenna in Ruesga 1995: 72-73). These principles, upheld by Just War theorists, argue that to the extent soldiers uphold these ‘on the ground rules’, they cannot be held accountable for judging the justness of war. As a result, soldiers are absolved of all moral accountability\textsuperscript{43} and responsibility for fighting in a war (Skerker in Ellner, Robinson and Whetham 2014: 96,97). Fundamentally, the Just War tradition rests on the assumption that the “justness” and morality of a particular war can and should be made but judgments are reserved for those responsible for declaring an act of war: the sovereign authority. Historically, Just War theory maintained that the only reasonable cause to justify warring would be to counter an immediate threat or a wrong incurred. Gary Wilson (2008) notes that in recent conscientious objection scholarship, there has been a substantial decline in the use of Just War theory within international law.

In his article “Selective Conscientious Objection in the Aftermath of Iraq: Reconsidering Objection to a Specific War”, Wilson argues that one notable problem between objectionism and the Just War tradition is that there is no universal agreement on what constitutes a “just war” (679). He writes, “[a]lthough different theories of ‘just war’ often present similar criteria against which the moral validity of a war ought to be justified, they can be interpreted and applied in a variety of ways. There is clearly a scope for political arguments to be shrouded in ‘just war’


\textsuperscript{43}Under Just War theory, the concept of ‘moral equality of combatants’ implies that all combatants are considered ‘moral equals’ should they follow and obey the laws that govern warfare. Opposing soldiers, therefore, are granted justified ignorance of the basis for and in fighting a given war. However, this right of equality becomes forfeited should a soldier engage in behavior that contravenes ‘ethical’ decorum during wartime.
language” (Ibid). Wilson maintains that the Just War tradition is not without its merit as a means to assess a given conflict; however, its importance has waned as society becomes more secular. Here he writes:

Today, much opposition to war is based on grounds that rest less on a religious imperative than more secular standards of morality. In discourse on war, the ‘just war’ tradition has been largely superseded by standards found in international law. Given the problems of using ‘just war’ beliefs as a grounds on which military personnel might legitimately object to participation in a specific military campaign, it will be helpful to consider whether recognition of selective [forms of] objection based upon the assessment of military actions against norms of international law would be a more suitable approach to respond to opposition to specific military actions. (680)

As a means to remedy the current debates surrounding recognizing ‘selective’ forms of objectionism, Wilson argues for the merits of recognizing objections on the grounds of violations of international law, as opposed to moral or religious grounds. He remarks that this framework could accomplish two things: 1) it could expose the international war/crime, which lead to an objector’s initial opposition; and 2) limit the scope for objectionism to be abused. Recognizing objectionism within the confines of international law brings a given war into the realm of legal discourse and away from the murky waters of “subjective debates of moral rights and wrongs of a particular conflict” (Ibid). Certainly, the legalities of a military engagement come under scrutiny for the individual objector. While ‘crimes of aggression’, with respect to warring, can only be committed at the level of the state,

members of the armed forces are entitled to expect that they will only be asked to serve in lawful military actions. Military personnel take on a huge responsibility when joining the armed forces. It is no exaggeration to say that their job is genuinely one involving matters of life and death. If they are expected to lay their lives on the line, it is not too much to allow them to question the legal basis on which they are deployed. The increased importance attached to international law should warrant their entitlement to question whether they are being deployed in actions, which are consistent with it. (Wilson 682)

Despite such an ideal positioning of objectionism, Wilson does conclude that such a development is unlikely to materialize because it is doubtful that any government would
willingly allow a charge from their citizenry alleging that the state’s actions in prosecuting war are unlawful, let alone criminal. Wilson does, however, contend that an important aspect of a democratic society is the freedom to question the actions and decisions of the government, as this is fundamental to the ideas of liberty and democracy. He writes:

> to permit members of the armed forces to disobey orders at will [is] damaging to the efficiency and discipline of the forces. However, it is not too much to expect that the orders given to those members of the forces are ones [that] they can comply with on a moral level and are exercised in accordance with the highest of legal standards” (684).

Offering a rereading of his own articulations of Just War theory within the context of Vietnam and the era of global military intervention, Michael Walzer (2002) suggests that in the past:

> The princes of the world continued to defend their wars, using [now] the language of international law, which was also, at least in part, the language of just war … States claimed a right to fight whenever their rulers deemed it necessary, and the rulers took sovereignty to mean that no one could judge their decisions. They not only fought when they wanted; they fought how they wanted, returning to the old Roman maxim that held war to be a lawless activity; inter arma silent leges — which, again, was taken to mean that there was no law above or beyond the decrees of the state; conventional restraints on the conduct of war could always be overridden for the sake of victory. Arguments about justice were treated as a kind of moralizing, inappropriate to the anarchic conditions of international society. For this world, just war was not worldly enough. (927)

However, Just War theory witnessed a revival during the U.S. war on Vietnam in which, Walzer notes that Just War theory could be a “manual for wartime criticism” (930. Walzer maintains that the success of Just War theory is that it will prevent events like the My Lai massacre from happening in future wars (931). Moreover, Just War theory provides the impetus for militaries, and professional soldiers everywhere, “to distinguish their profession from mere butchery” (Ibid). Notwithstanding relevant criticisms of a given war, according to Walzer Just War theory

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44 German jurist and political theorist Carl Schmitt pointed out that Just War theory, in an ideal form, is meant to be the middle ground between bellicism (that which always justifies violence) and pacifism (that which never justifies violence) (Slomp 2006: 435).

45 Walzer is heavily cited as one of, if not, the most prominent and pragmatic Just War theorist of the last century.
is a necessity for those who wage war and those who act on behalf of the political leadership.

What is striking about Walzer’s affirmation of just warring is that he articulates the conceptual basis that constitutes the contemporary debates about objectionism: a politicization of the language of warring, a contextualization of the socio-political conditions that characterize war, and a rejection of idealism that legitimizes the ‘unlawful’ killing of other people. Carl Schmitt emphatically challenges the Just War tradition, and by extension the assertions of Just War theorists like Walzer, by claiming that killing, despite its ‘necessity’ in self-defence or otherwise, can never be morally justified. Schmitt writes:

No program, no ideal, no norm, no expediency confers a right to dispose of the physical life of other human beings. There exists no rational purpose, no norm no matter how true, no program no matter how exemplary, no social ideal no matter how beautiful, no legitimacy nor legality which could justify men in killing each other for this reason … The justification of war does not reside in its being fought for ideals or norms of justice, but in its being fought against a real enemy. (Schmitt in Slomp 436)

Schmitt’s argument here suggests that Just War theory is an ideal that fits within the confines of abstract conceptualizations of state formations and relations where there could be grounds on which a war could be waged with the right intentions: assuming, of course, warring meets the right criteria (jus ad bellum and jus in bello). The caveat is, of course, the involvement of a real enemy. Under such essential and instrumental conceptualizations, it seems entirely unreasonable for an individual to object to a war that is waged within some form of ‘acceptable’ moral boundaries that has decisively balanced ‘good’ intentions and ‘bad’ outcomes against a tangible threat. The strength of the Just War tradition is that it provides ‘objective means’ by which to assess the legitimacy of participation in a particular war, yet it only retains its critical edge when the necessary factual information is in the possession of the citizen-soldier. More importantly, we cannot ignore the sociopolitical context in which austere deliberations of morality and politics are claimed to apply or not. Schmitt’s criticism suggests that the Just War tradition can
be more accurately described as a politicized instrument which masquerades warring as a legitimate, perennial necessity of ‘good’ statecraft as opposed to the real politik of the vested self, national or corporate interest in colonial and imperial expansion that has been characterized, for example, by post-monarchial warfare. Gregory Foster (2009) attests to this point as he outlines one of two key features of the contemporary political environment of warfare. “First” he says, “the wars of today and tomorrow are no longer wars of necessity (national self-defense); they are unequivocally and without exception wars of choice (the preference of those in power for use of force to attain momentary political ends)” (391). Foster goes on to say that:

conscientious objection is predicated on the unexamined notion that the wars we fight in are, ipso facto, wars of necessity, which involves a one-way relationship of government rights and individual obligations: the government’s right to establish requirements and command resources (including human resources), to impose its authority and expand is prerogatives; and the individual’s obligation to serve or defer to such authority. When wars of choice are the norm, however, as they now are, when survival is not at stake and emergency conditions do not prevail, the reverse of this relationship is in order: one in which the government bears the obligation to act responsibly and perform competently, while individuals in uniform necessarily retain the right not to serve (or fulfill their commitment) when government fails to fulfill its obligation (Ibid).

According to Foster, wars of ‘necessity’ do not exist in the context of modern warfare and globalization. Foster’s second criticism of contemporary warring underscores the need for objectionism because, taken to its radical conclusion, if war is no longer necessary, then there should be no need to object since all militaries must be disbanded. The second feature deals

40Robert Ivie comments: “The fight in Afghanistan was a ‘war of necessity,’ President Obama allowed. It was required by the very nature of the enemy America faced in that far-off place. The U.S. was ‘compelled’ to fight against an enemy that perpetrated the ‘slaughter of innocents’ on 9/11 by attacking America’s ‘military and economic nerve centers’ and attempting to destroy the Capitol building in Washington, DC, ‘one of the greatest symbols of our democracy’” (2012: 91). Tilly (1985) and Butler (1936;2003) dismantle Foster’s limited conception of ‘wars of necessity’ by arguing that war is indeed necessary to the maintenance of a military industrial complex which derives its profits from the state’s ability to wage war, using taxation as a means to appropriate wealth to fund said military incursions, and thus opening up the opportunity for ‘reconstruction’ in war torn countries which, again, is financed through government grants and contracts subsidized by the citizenry. For weaker states facing aggression, intimidation and invasion, resistance is a necessity, which in the case of Vietnam's victory, is not always futile, even it is supremely costly.

41Given the imperialist context for modern warfare discussed in Chapter 1, the great irony is that wars of choice in fact imperil human survival through legitimating a ‘negative feedback loop’ that justifies appeals for further warfare.
specifically with a principled tolerance of objectionism in relation to conscription where there are grounds for the acceptance of selective objection due to forced inclusion of military action. An acceptance of objectionism towards military duty becomes ‘complicated’ within those military forces that rely on volunteers or have abandoned the use of conscription. Historically, objectionism has emerged in response to mass conscription; however, when individuals who volunteer to join the military are “coerced into possibly giving their lives at the behest of the state, [they] deserve an available avenue for opting out of life-threatening, involuntary servitude, provided they can make a compelling case for rejecting duty that others must bear” (Ibid).

3.3 Conscientious Objection and Citizenship

A man [sic] must judge for himself what is right, what is wrong ... The man of honour ... is true to himself ... he clings to what he knows is right with all his strength”
(United States Corps of Cadets in Robinson 2009: 36)

Within the debates on objectionism, opponents of conscientious objection argue that objectors do not exemplify what it means to be a ‘citizen’ and thus a ‘real soldier’ (Burk 1995; Stewart-Winter 2007). Like the theoretical contributions of Just War theory, which influenced the ways that war is waged and judged, the warrior trope emanating from classical Western mythology has contributed to a hegemonic ethos that influences the ways in which the prototypical soldier is expected to act.48 Furthermore, those who refuse to fight or do not live up to this stereotype of soldiering are seen as “deficient in character” (Robinson 2009b: 34). This is reflected in the fact that objectors in the military are, more often than not, punished for their disobedience by means of a dishonorable discharge (ibid). It should be noted that the chief implications of an dishonorable discharge are: (1) the spoiling of the ex-soldiers identity (e.g.,

burdening them with the stigma of cowardice or disobedience), and (2) a time discount or an incapacity to account for time in a society where time has concrete and metaphysical implications in terms of education, labour and training (i.e., the ex-soldier cannot account for or draw on their time they spent in the military for future employment). The adherence to such normative expectations of soldiering can be traced to the philosophical, and likewise ‘moral’, elements of warring that are instilled during training. The goal of which is to produce soldiers who will come to exemplify certain core values: integrity, obedience, loyalty, and courage (Robinson 2009b). ‘Obedience’ to authority, a concept attributed to Stanley Milgram (1974), is integral for a soldier to perform their job well and its corresponding opposite would be ‘disobedience’ which would result in the soldier ‘failing’ in her or his duty. Although the particular function of each military unit varies, all are subsumed under the primary function of providing ‘defense’.49 For this defensive function to be performed well, and for the military to function well, Jeff Montrose tells us that the obligations of duty must be put before the needs of those who serve (2013: 193). After the Second World War, British Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery summarized that many people believed (that obedience is the key duty of a soldier):

> It must be made clear that an army is not a collection of individuals, but a fighting weapon, shaped by discipline and controlled by leaders. The essence of democracy is freedom, the essence of the army—discipline! It has nothing to say about how intelligent the soldier [is]. The army would let the nation down, if it were not accustomed to obeying orders instantly. It is the duty of the soldier to obey all commands without question that the Army, that means the nation, gives him! (Montrose 327)

To Montgomery, obedience is a fundamental necessity of the military profession and, arguably, an army without obedience is worse than ‘useless’. All things being equal then, in order for a military to perform its function, every stage of the chain of command must expect and demand

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49 Keep in mind that this is a reductive explanation and does not account for socio-political context during which a particular war is waged and what may or may not be required of a soldier to ensure success in the campaign.
obedience to orders. The crux of this odd conflation between obedience and ‘democracy,’ is that blind compliance to orders fall within the *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* guidelines. Therefore, obedience, and by logical extension loyalty, are to be regarded as the most important values of the military profession. The equivalence between the duty to obey orders and abdication of conscience valorizes the soldier as an automaton-citizen rather than sentient-soldier-citizen, thereby erasing the very prospect objectionism. As evidenced in other debates surrounding objection, can there be a limit to a soldier’s obedience when confronted with *jus in bello* conflict of obligations that evacuates the very meaning of what constitutes citizenship: conscious discharge of one's obligations, rights and responsibilities?\(^{50}\) Sara Helman tells us that:

> citizenship establishes 'who is considered a member of society', the meanings that imbue and constitute such criteria are central to the understanding of how the community of citizens is imagined and constructed, the institutions through which citizenship is implemented and concretized and the ways in which social categories are defined in terms of their participation in or exclusion from the institutions of citizenship. (1999: 46)

A related question raised by the analysis of conscientious objection is how modes of inclusion (full, partial, differential, or exclusionary) are constitutive of political identities and how the kinds of contestations or claims of individuals and groups vis-à-vis the state's agents are to be framed. As the prefatory statement to this section suggests, the ‘man’ of honor is true to ‘himself’ and the values, which ‘he’ holds dearest. Perhaps those values are service and duty before one’s self but, as argued by Foster (2009), the opposite should not be ignored nor invalidated because it does not fit normative military guidelines or a particular national narrative of citizenship.

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\(^{50}\) I think the primary question is: If soldiers are obligated to follow their conscience and disobey unlawful orders in the conduct of actual warfare, should they not likewise be obligated to disobey illegal commands sending them to war? (Montrose 329)
In their article “From ‘Obligatory Militarism’ to ‘Contractual Militarism’ — Competing Models of Citizenship”, Levy, Lomsky-Feder and Hartel (2007) argue that the current conceptualizations of citizenship in Israel, for example, have allowed a new hegemonic military ethos to emerge that conflates citizenship, material gain and, and military duty: it is called ‘materialist militarism’ (129). It is here that both Levy and others and Helman encounter ‘institutionalized scripts’ that contain understandings and practices that maintain a political reality that equates citizenship with a right to bear arms in defense of their nation in exchange for material and social gain. However, Helman asserts that these 'scripts and understandings' contain cultural assumptions that “shape the boundaries of the citizens' community, the different positions within it, and the ways in which access to citizenship is conceived” (Ibid). These cultural assumptions may be conceptualized as national projects that attempt to re-shape the narratives and discourses that underpin the state's interests in the area of citizenship. As such, historical forces and structural constraints shape national projects by granting special status and special exemptions to soldiers who represent the highest ideal of the citizen. Negotiations over citizenship are not only related to who gets what, but also who is what. Therefore, dominant forces and constraints explain the type of pro-military national projects that will ultimately promote and strengthen the ‘necessary’ bond between citizenship and national identity. From the vantage point of 'materialist militarism', objection to military duty can then be seen, to some extent, as violating the foundations of citizenship. Therefore, objection to military duty becomes no less than a violation of the social and structural contract between the state and its agents (Levy, Lomsky-Feder and Hartel 130).

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51 One could argue that the U.S. military’s use of nationalist and civic rhetoric in their recruitment advertising suggests a similar aim is attempted under the guise of “volunteerism”. Moreover, with the blandishments and incentives made available as the only source of public funding training and skills development for those routinely deprived of them by poverty, ‘volunteerism' is given a dubious ring when poverty is considered a form of a draft.
3.4 Conscientious Objection and the Social Contract

Implicit in the literature on objection, whether pro or con, objectionism fundamentally rests on the written and unwritten contractarian relationships between military members, civil society and the state. While the formal written contract governs a members’ oath to their office, duty and country, the unwritten contract of mutual rights and obligations is undergirded by the metaphysics of Classical social contract theory. As postulated by philosophers like Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704) and Jean-Jacque Rousseau (1712-88), social contract theory presumes that humans, as social beings, will come together to form a compact based on mutual interests of self-preservation and ‘mutual’ harmony. This social compact, thus, presumes an organized division of authority whereby a sovereign authority is established by mutual consent to execute the tasks and responsibilities of maintaining the formation of civil society. In such an arrangement, the citizenry are obliged to provide the means by which a sovereign can carry its cohesive and prophylactic tasks, framed as the ‘general will’ of the people.\(^5^2\)

Military personnel occupy a unique space in the formation and preservation of the social contract, as the military exists because of ‘threats’ to the state’s security (Hunting in Montrose 2013: 334) and to legitimate the state's existence, which needs to be securitized. The military is imagined to exist as a servant to the will of its creator: the state, which is borne of the will of the people. We might alternatively conceive of the state as being created to serve the military. For the military to properly serve the state, and the citizenry, it must exist to preserve the social order and institutional relationships of civil society. However, not all moral imperatives can be served

\(^5^2\) This statement does not speak to the coercive nature of authority, nor the coercive nature of the binding force of the social contract.
by the military, since “there must be a connection between society as a whole and the military which is tasked to defend it” (Montrose 334). Military members then are tasked with an abdication of their own individual rights in exchange for an ethic of obedience, which trusts the state that will command them to act in the ‘national’ interests. If the government — including the military chain of command — fails in this task, then like dominos the contract will dissolve, thereby breaking the reciprocal obligation for obedience and relinquishment of individual rights by citizens. Writing in defense of ‘selective’ forms of objection, Daniel Zupan reveals that many of the legitimate concerns regarding conscientious objection have to do with deeply entrenched ideas about the social contract, and subsequent considerations about the distinction between *jus in bello* (primarily a soldier’s responsibility) and *jus ad bellum* (primarily a political responsibility) (Zupan in Ellner, Robinson and Whetham 2014: 109). Explicating his own experience in the U.S. military, he contends that, “[T]he United States Armed Forces are subservient to our elected officials. Soldiers are expected to fight when officers swear to support and defend the Constitution. Their commitment to the Constitution binds them to obedience to their civilian leaders. It binds them to honor and obey the *jus ad bellum* decisions of the Republic” (Zupan 109-110).

In upholding the expected functions of a soldier, however, Zupan highlights an important distinction that obedience is virtuous in so far as it does not regress into submissiveness and obsequiousness. Conversely, Melissa Bergeron contends, “the very act of entering into service [military duty] in the first place requires that one’s considered moral judgment allows for the use of violence in the service of the state” (Bergeron in Ellner, Robinson and Whetham 2014: 68). She continues to say, “it is the responsibility of the individual combatant to ensure that [they are] not subordinating [their] moral agency to an institution not suited or willing to justify that faith
and allegiance. Once [they] enter into that agreement, it is legally binding” (Ibid). What is more is that “…the fact is, and should remain, that she [or he] is bound by the law; the terms of [their] contract were perfectly clear at the outset, ‘obey all lawful orders’. Under no reasonable construal is the law perfectly coextensive with morality under the best of circumstances, let alone in the context of war” (Bergeron 70). However, unlike Levy et al and Robinson (2014a) who are all concerned with the individual objector within the military, Bergeron takes issue in a lacking of self-determination by “people sufficient to make the use of social contract theory apt and serviceable” to produce sensible reasons for objectionism (70). Echoing the claims of the Just War tradition and Helman’s understanding of citizenship, Bergeron maintains that “soldiering is unique among vocations, the only one, for instance, in which the foreseeable deaths of innocent people do not necessitate that one desist” (71). She goes on to remark that,

A private citizen has the obligation to consider the confidence she might reasonably place in her sovereign’s ad bellum behaviour; for once she enters service, her legal power to act on her individual moral sensibilities (in this matter) is greatly attenuated, and rightly so. An individual should refuse to participate in anything that she judges immoral, anything that undermines her integrity as a moral agent; but it is also her obligation as a member of a polity that she obey the laws democratically ratified or suffer the penalty for noncompliance. This is not an inconsistent claim, though it might be a tragic state of affairs. (75).

Clearly, Bergeron equivocates on competing models of citizenship as her statement also glosses over the tension between hegemonic expectations of citizenship and those citizens that would resist the claims made upon them by the sovereign political authorities that would otherwise jeopardize their own well being. Moreover, in an effort to secure the peace, a citizen may claim that the sovereign authority is actively abdicating its moral due diligence by condemning its own nation, and its people, to commit egregious acts that contravene the peace and violates the very precepts on which the social contract was theoretically founded. This leaves the military institution in a quandary for it is obvious that ‘selective’ objectors reject such a position by
refusing to participate in orders that they deem “illegal” (or are considered as such by international and domestic law)\(^{53}\).

### 3.5 Conscientious Objection and Conscientious ‘Selective’ Objection

The last point I wish to address in the literature review are the kinds of objectionism and distinctions between them. The two kinds of objectionism are: conscientious objection and selective conscientious objection. Before contrasting and comparing the two kinds of objection, however, I will briefly explain how each is currently defined in the literature.

Traditional conscientious objection ‘normally’ appeals to religious principles that forbid the use of violence or some other activity that rules out participation in war (May 2012: 5). Nehustan expands on this definition: a conscientious objector will refuse to join the military or heed a call for conscription for reasons of conscience, that is to say, according to religious beliefs or educational training that prohibits participating in war and enlisting in the army (in Ellner, Whetham and Robinson 2014: 156,157). This rejection of violence and military duty is often framed as ‘absolute’.

In contrast to the foregoing, conscientious selective objection\(^{54}\) is “characterized by the unwillingness of some individuals, based on decisions stemming from a perceived unjustness of a particular war, to serve in that war” (Capizzi 1996: 339). This form of objectionism is commonly delineated along secular lines and where it radically differs from absolute objection is that selective objectors do not categorically object to military duty, enlisting or state-sponsored

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\(^{53}\) Accordingly, punishing objectors for their actions, specifically ‘failing’ to act as one *ought* to act (i.e., obedience to authority), means punishing them for following the institution’s own moral teachings.

\(^{54}\) Herein referred to as selective objection.
armed violence. Their refusal may be based on either the aim of a given war, a particular policy or the manner in which a war or policy is being carried out (Nehustan 158). The key difference is that the objection is perceived as selective because “it results from the objector’s assessment of the morality of certain wars, operations or policies, as opposed to [their] assessment of the overall morality of military [duty] as such” (Ibid).

In building upon the discussion provided above, proponents of selective objection face a ‘moral’ question on the grounds that selective objectionism is purely ‘politically motivated dissent’ and/or ‘civil disobedience’ (Capizzi 1995; Friedman 2006; Wilson 2008; Clifford 2011; Cohen 1968). Opponents of conscientious objection and selective objection maintain that each form of objection is a highly individualized decision, whereas civil disobedience and political dissent are essentially public actions that aim to change a particular policy or law; or express an opinion that is at odds with orthodox views (Nehustan 157; Epstein 308). The central point in the distinction is that civil disobedience is a civically functional activity intended to stimulate social discourse and change, whereas conscientious objection is seen as a breach of a law that the objector feels he or she is morally prohibited from obeying. This gives expression to an excessively narrow conception of what can be qualified as dissent/civil disobedience and, likewise, imagined as conscientious objection. To Capizzi, differentiating between conscientious objection, selective objection, and civil disobedience by way of referencing a system of beliefs that is either religiously motivated or ‘politically charged’, assumes that morality and politics are disparate. Epstein challenges this distinction when he states that:

There is no justification either for this conception, or for the conclusion following from it that conscientious objection is not political. It is difficult to see why acts of disobedience, which are likely to affect the realization of the principles and goals served or expressed by the laws being disobeyed, shouldn’t count as political even if they aren’t intended to achieve these effects. This is especially true with reference to conscientious objection based on an
objection which is conceived of by the objector as applying to humanity in general or at least to his fellow society members (Gains in Epstein 2002: 308).

For Epstein, civil disobedience requires the purpose or pursuit of some change in policy or moral opinion to legitimize itself: the exercise of civil liberties and civic engagement in a democratic society. If we are to assume that objectionism, in general, is not a form of civic engagement, this denies conscientious objection its moral and political significance as well as its socio-historical relevance. Moreover, civil disobedience, which is constitutive of objection to military duty, is innately political even if it does not, or is unlikely to, have any actual effect on the realization of the goals of the law being disobeyed. Civil disobedience and objection to military duty are political as it is, by definition, “based on an objection of universal validity, and thus its performer cannot lack an interest in affecting the realization of the goals of the law in question” (Ibid).

Many acts of conscientious objection, at least the ones placed at the center of public attention in the course of the last two decades – for example, the selective objection against wars such as that waged by the USA in Vietnam (1955-1975) and Iraq and Afghanistan (2000 to present) and that waged by Israel in Lebanon – were acts of disobedience based on objections that were, by their very logic, of universal or general social utility. While Epstein ultimately reconciles his position that civil disobedience is political and objection is moral, the dichotomy of disobedience and conscientious objection is a position that is important for policy and lawmakers.

Building upon the previous discussion, Nehustan suggests that the differing categories of conscientious objection interact and overlap with civil disobedience in two ways. First, a specific act of objection can be both conscientiously motivated and civically disobedient; for example, when the conscientious objector also wishes that their refusal to serve in the military would promote a change in the law (i.e., draft laws during Vietnam). Second, there can be two or more different acts involved such as “a private refusal to serve, complemented by additional
public acts of a political nature that the objector himself takes on, which might be unlawful but do not necessarily have to be” (158). This suggests that dissent and objection can only be differentiated by the milieu in which they express themselves. Meaning that by virtue of being in the military, dissent takes the form of objectionism. Therefore, part of the duty of an objector is to recognize the scope of her or his own objection; however, within most cases of ‘selective’ objection, the objector carries an indictment of a particular policy or engagement. In other words, a refusal to fight in a war should not be interpreted necessarily by either the government or the objector as a refusal to submit to the concerns of society at large (Capizzi 354). This would suggest that a conscientious objector's decision to object is at once both matters of civil disobedience as well as moral repugnance, no matter how provisional the latter may be.

In addition to the debate about the non/relationality between objectionism and civil disobedience, there is also the methodological distinction between an objector’s ‘sincerity’ and the ‘accuracy’ of the basis for declining duty (Navin 2013; Clifford 2011; Cohen 1968; May 2012). Sincerity refers to the conviction of one’s beliefs and accuracy refers to the ‘evidence,’ which prompts an objector’s inaction. Navin writes that, “[s]incerity and accuracy are conceptually distinct. Each warrants assent to a different proposition about the morality of an objector’s participation in a particular war” (112). He demonstrates this distinction through two propositions: (1) “It is immoral for objector X to fight in war Y”, where a selective objector’s objection is considered accurate if it communicates ‘good reasons’; (2) “Objector X believes it is immoral for objector X to fight in war Y” implies that a sincere objector communicates his or her own belief systems as the basis for their objection (112). Navin also notes that within U.S. jurisprudence, “sincerity of an objection has been the primary moral consideration in favour of legal right to exemptions” (113). In the ruling of Seeger v. United States, this landmark case
created a legal precedent that marked a shift from a strictly religious understanding of conscience to an understanding that can also be based upon sincerity (i.e., absoluteness of individual conviction). Although this Supreme Court ruling was later overturned, in the case of *United States v. Sisson*, Sisson asserted that his basis for objection was “comprised of a long history or moral development, educational training and specific investigation into the situation in Vietnam” (Capizzi 346). The courts ruled that Sisson’s act of objection “were not acts of cowardice or evasion. These acts were assumptions of social obligations” (Ibid). This particular argument was relevant because of the dominant opinion that objectors refused to serve out of fear or due to a lack of social responsibility, or perhaps a combination of both. Navin notes that the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service (NACSS 1967) echoed the Sisson verdict when they ruled that “selective [objection] is essentially a political question of support or non-support of a war and cannot be judged in terms of special moral imperatives” (114).

Relevant to the debate about the types of objection, we can glean that perhaps the distinction between objection and disobedience are not so cut and dry. Perhaps, as Nehustan suggests, the distinctions between the two forms of objection may not be as absolute as either opinion on objection assumes given objectionism and civil disobedience are closely related in theory and practice. Nehustan challenges the position that the ‘meaningful differences’ between conscientious objection, selective objection and civil disobedience are sustainable. He argues that all forms of objection and disobedience are ‘conscientious’ in nature. In fact, selective objection may be a misnomer because, conceptually, the grammatical formation implies that one is selectively choosing what they object to yet the conscientious objector does not and cannot
select the scope of their objection (161). Nehustan suggests that “if by ‘selective’ we do not refer to the scope of the objection but rather to the reason for the objection, and by that we are in fact equating ‘selective’ with ‘specific’ or ‘conditional’, then yet again, almost all objections can be perceived as ‘selective’” (162). Furthermore:

A conscientious objector can refuse to enlist in the army altogether. They can do so for various conscientious reasons that may be selective or specific to varying degrees. They can refuse to join the army because the army was responsible for their parents’ death but never agreed to be held accountable; because the army is currently involved in an unjust war; because the army constantly assists the government in persecuting political minorities; because he or she is a pacifist or an anarchist. All these conscientious reasons, apart from the latter, are selective or specific. They all lead to an absolute refusal to join the army. This example shows that from the conceptual point of view, there is little point in distinguishing between kinds of objection and classifying them as selective and non-selective. Once the conceptual distinction fails, it becomes hard to comprehend how the selective, specific, or conditional nature of a conscientious objection can bear any [substantive] moral importance or moral implications. (2014: 162)

It would appear that an exploration of sincerity and accuracy, for this project in particular, is crucial because many advocates and critics of objectionism have demonstrated a deficiency in the debate by not fully addressing the complexities of what constitutes sincerity and accuracy; or, comprehensively challenging the distinction between the formation of religious and/or secular philosophies that may directly speak to the basis of an objectors philosophy of objectionism. Furthermore, it creates a disturbing gap between the views of expert scholars in the field on the one hand and administrative policy and court decisions on the other.

3.6 Contributions to the Literature

My contributions to the scholarly debates on conscientious objectionism are constitutive of an ethical and socio-cultural understanding of the lived experiences of conscientious

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55 An individual conscience has its own will and its own boundaries which may be broad or narrow; conditional, or unconditional.
objectors. In the context of a “global war on terror”, warring in twenty-first century has prompted unique questions about the nature of objectionism and the place it has in our military formations. Given the history and legitimation of warring throughout the centuries\(^5\), there is a need for an injection of the narratives of the people who are most affected by policies that criminalize and dehumanize objectionism. To do so requires a radical reimagining of a debate so bound up in theory that it neglects the concrete experience and lived reality of objectors and objectionism. But this cannot be merely accomplished by interviewing the objectors about their act of objection in a conceptual vacuum. If we recall the discussion on sincerity and accuracy, both the scope and motivations for objectionism seem to be what is scrutinized most intensely. Therefore my research calls for an autobiographic explication of the motivations and experiences that have compelled those soldiers to conscientiously object to a war within the context of continued wars of aggression and imperial expansion in the age of 'terror' and global capitalism.

\(^5\)For example, the Eurocentric focused Just War theory.
Chapter 4

Conceptual Framework

“Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand.” – Marx (1983), Grundrisse

4.1 Introduction

The role of this chapter is to develop a theoretical approach that sets the narratives of the interview participants against the backdrop of a radical moral philosophy that seeks a just and fair world. It is my contention that conscientious objection can be understood as a conscious awakening or a reaffirmation of consciously held beliefs. I suggest this occurs when an objector is compelled to consider their place in the military in relation to rights and obligations as an informed and conscientious citizen. Given this project centers on the role of language and metaphor as expressive modes that account for the social and psychological process of conscientious awakening in soldiers, I draw on a range of scholarly traditions to account for what amounts to a ‘conversion’ of sorts. My work is broadly centered, therefore, within a dialectical social ontology that draws from the disciplines of sociology and sociolinguistics. Specifically, I draw on the works of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault as well as Stuart Hall, Basil Bernstein and George Lakoff. Collectively these theorists center a materialist understanding of individuals’ engagement with discourse as a political matter. The frameworks provided herein are helpful in understanding the moral and philosophical components of language that are evidenced in the contradistinction between what Gramsci coins ‘common sense’ vs 'good sense'. Indeed, as will be shown, at the heart of conscientizing, or the making of ‘good sense’, is precisely a radical critique of ‘commonsense’ structurations such as ‘duty’ and ‘service’ as discourses that conceal dominant class and imperialist interests. In developing an appropriate radical framework for this project, the theoretical perspectives provided below offer an account
for how an objector’s epiphany, conscious awakening or ‘conversion’ (Snow and Machalek 1984) is dependent on metaphors as framing devices (Lakoff 1980; Bernstein 1971); these linguistic devices help to express and frame the ‘deeper structures’ of beliefs and values that constitute meaning which, in their ongoing development, enable objectors to develop their unique moral and social philosophy to objection for guiding their political action. The primary vehicle through which this occurs is oral or written language, which constitutes the basis for discourse\textsuperscript{57}.

While this project draws upon multiple theoretical traditions, most of them Leftist, its conceptual center most clearly indebted to the work of Antonio Gramsci. In my estimation it is a Gramscian discursive frame that is vital to reveal the forms of human consciousness and conscious activity articulated in conscientious objection. Vital to a Gramscian concept of discourse is that words, a system of signs and symbols to connote meaning, are political objects. The words we use to speak and write have been constructed by social interactions rooted in class formations throughout history and are thus shaped by the dominant ideologies of the times. Therefore, in societies founded on what Stuart Hall calls relations ‘structured in dominance’ (1980), language becomes loaded with cultural, moral and political meanings that condition individuals to think in ways that are conducive to dominant hegemony and that structurally exclude, or inhibit, thinking in oppositional ways. In liberal societies, one may not, therefore, question the parameters of regular civil conduct which, in many ways, mimic the mantras

\textsuperscript{57} This will find its practical continuity in the chapter related to Research Methodology.
organized by the state, or religion, where living by the expected guidelines of an authority are
demanded and enforced through various institutional and social vehicles.\textsuperscript{58}

As Gramsci poignantly articulates in the \textit{Prison Notebooks}, "to criticize one's own
conception of the world means to make it a coherent unity" (1992: 324). To this end, “[t]he
starting-point of critical elaboration is the product of the historical process to date which has
deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory” (1992: 324). This is,
however, a project of conscientizing, not only for individuals, but as individuals who are social
beings in the context of their location vis-à-vis class relations (and other ruling relations) and the
state. It is a way, as Gramsci writes, of “‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical process
to date, which has deposited in you in an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory” \textsuperscript{59} (in
Said 1979: 25). For Gramsci, then, a critical elaboration of one’s existence, and hence that of
classes subject to ruling class hegemony, is to criticize taken-for-granted conceptions that
constitute us as social actors. This is a counter-hegemonic political project, however, that is
resolved in an ongoing way by the imperative of compiling an inventory of those historic traces
that constitute us (Said 1979: 25). It is an understanding of the theory of how individuals are
constituted by discourse, which is in itself a material force given its dialectical relationship to
class formation that makes it possible to critically analyze ‘talk’ as both text and materiality.

\textsuperscript{58} I argue that the means through which ideological control is accomplished by organized religion, specifically over
its congregation, is not unique as many of the moral and civil guidelines of any religion are proliferated in the same
ways that secular governments dictate conduct to their citizenry: codified laws embedded in language that are
recognized by all followers and balanced through corresponding disciplinary measures for those who said violate
said codes of conduct. Thus, the concept of religion must be broadened beyond the \textit{sacred}, which is but one form, to
those that which are is secular.

\textsuperscript{59} Edward Said (1979) provided the remarkable observation that Gramsci’s text in the Italian version makes the
logical extension of appreciating that one is constituted by an infinity of historical traces to the necessity of
\textit{compiling} an inventory of these historical traces.
4.2 Marx, Gramsci, ideology and consciousness

Marx emphasizes that relations of production and the perpetuation of class interest are expressed and sustained through ideological domination. In what is in essence a treatise on the ‘manufacturing of consent’, Marx (1845) asserts in *The German Ideology* that “[T]he production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life” (Part 1: Section 4). Marx’s monist ontology asserts that the material conditions of thought and consciousness are directly linked, reproduced and conceived through material social structures (e.g. institutions that administer and regulate various social, political and economic formations). From this perspective, ruling ideologies, which are hegemonic, are not the product of divine interpretation of the metaphysical but rather are intimately tied to the prevailing modes and systems of production. In effect, as Gramsci later observed, ideology is itself a social force (Karabel, 1976). Marx, however, goes on to write that “consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process (Part 1: Section 4).” Furthermore,

The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. (Part 1: Section 4)

60 This is taken from an electronic version of the entire text; this particular quote, as well as the two that follow, can be found here https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm under the subheading of “4. The Essence of the Materialist Conception of History, Social Being and Social Consciousness”
With this observation, Marx insists we see consciousness and ideology as more than a chimera, or the mirage-like effect of the material (natural) world. Rather, consciousness and its various manifestations are concrete and, along with the mode of production, co-determine a unified reality. Likewise, he invites us to see “the social” as mediating between the natural and material conditions of conscious activity. Therefore, in order for the ruling bodies to maintain their position within society and to prevent the transformation\textsuperscript{62} of the social-structural contradictions of conscious activity under capitalism, Marx concludes that the ruling class will engage, first, in discursive processes that use linguistic codes, metaphors, and representations so that ruling class ideas take on the cast of common goals of all members of society.

Marx concludes that, under capitalism, ruling class interests will embody an ideal form: ideology. Arguably, this ideology will emerge as a universal system corresponding to deeply felt social needs that are based upon the interests of the whole 'society', being devoid of any specific class content or conflicts of interest. Furthermore, the maintenance of this new ideology requires that it is reproduced by various means so that it can provide a solid foundation for the construction of knowledge that allows its proliferation into the interstices of working class consciousness and life. This is accomplished primarily through specific speech codes and linguistic modes of conceiving reality, but which in fact co-construct that reality: for example, national anthems and conceptions such as the 'national interest'. This is not to suggest that the working class is tabula rasa or that they are indoctrinated. Such conceptions are contrary to Marx's conception that social being determines social consciousness. Since, for example, the

\textsuperscript{62} I have opted for transformation of contradiction rather than transcendence. From the vantage of orthodox Marxism, however, such a perspective is inconsistent with monism as political practice rather than epistemology. Yet, to the extent Marx and Marxism assume contradiction is a law (Woods and Grant 2002) but that it can be transcended in social relations under dictatorship of the masses is in fact a violation of that law. Thus contradictions cannot be transcended, but they can be transformed where the equilibrium shifts towards hegemony of the working classes over the state, society, and productive relations.
very existence of production and social reproduction of the capitalist mode generates its own rhythms toward ruling class ideology, the working class literally *live* capitalist ideology. This is in fact contrary to their interests as workers who are compelled to sell their labour-power where private ownership of productive means is constituted by exclusions protected by repressive means and sanctified by the bourgeois ideology of law. For example, hard work, merit, and other such fictions are central values to which the working class are themselves committed; yet, ironically this idea was a shift in the consciousness of the ruling class, which, until they too were carried along by the force of capitalism, had long valued leisure as the hallmark of (their) productivity (Davis 2006). Marx concluded that over time, bourgeois ideology itself and the members of the exploitative class will eventually become entangled in their own contradictions and capitalism would become exposed as a class-motivated system of deception and exploitation. Thus while 'ruling ideas of any age are always those of the ruling class', drawing the ruling the class into history along as much as any other, this does not preclude the ruling class, irrespective of their internal conflicts, from themselves being active agents in history who propagate ideologies calculated to persuade working class acceptance of capitalist social relations of production (Mepham 1979): hence why discourse is central to the proliferation of ruling ideologies that originate in socio-productive relations and at the level of the state\(^ {63} \) where it is maintained and reproduced, but also modified and resisted in the lived experiences of people. Critically, the foregoing ideas are useful to make explicit the conflict between the political

\(^{63}\text{My conception of the state follows that of Ralph Miliband (1987): a contiguous space constituted by a nation with a government that includes parties and an executive, civil service bureaucracy that maintains the status quo, military apparatus for the projection of ruling class power, coercive apparatus for domestic control, and an ‘independent’ judiciary (1987). The nation is a central animating idea that is dialectically twinned connected with the state, insofar as the Westphalian conception of the nation-state goes. To this end, whereas the state constitutes structures that direct productive forces through legitimacy-power, the nation is an idea. As Benedict Anderson suggests, the nation is an imagined community that is ever and always worked on through the production of discourse that seeks, ironically, to naturalize that which is socially constructed (1983)
authority of command institutions and the question of whose interests are served by, what

I now turn to Gramsci’s (1992; 1999) conception of hegemony as the specification for
how ruling ideas and capitalist propagation of ideology reinforce the taken-for-granted
structuration of ideology reproduced in life itself under capitalism. This is the classic formulation
of the balance of the force of persuasion and the persuasion of force that enables the working
class to internalize as their own, the ideology of their antagonists.

Pursuant to the work of Karl Marx, Gramsci employs the concept of “hegemony", which
is most simply explained as the balance between consent and coercion to achieve ideological
domination, thus obviating the use of force unless absolutely essential (Gramsci §88 in Buttigieg
2011, Vol. 3: 75; Karabel 1976: 157). Where force is used, it explicitly signals that, to some
extent, consent has failed. But to the extent force is used against factions that can be demonized
and labeled as enemies and threats to the totality of a purportedly facially neutral social order,
the state, because of its preeminence as 'bio-power' hegemon which grants it a "hierarchy of
credibility" (Becker 1967) without peer, is able to reconstitute consent even as it uses force
(Spitzer 1975). The central point is that dominant ideology or worldview, being buttressed by so
many institutions and being so deeply embedded in the very structure of existence, has
significant power to suppress counter-narratives or any other way of explaining reality. However,
the concept of hegemony denotes more than a superficial influence on the political views of the
subordinate classes. In fact, Gramsci maintains that, under capitalist relations, hegemonic forces
come to encompass and circumscribe the subordinate class’s entire way of conceiving the world
and of interpreting everyday experience. As such, Gramsci maintains that hegemony, as
embodied in particular ideological, institutional and structural forces, becomes expressive of
concrete historical forces as they manifest in response “to the demands of a complex organic period of history” (Gramsci in Karabel: 158). Therefore, experiences and meaning are constituted through a matrix of social systems, constantly ‘evolving’ through time, which in turn influence both individuals' and groups' ways of believing, knowing and ‘seeing’ the world around them (i.e., discourse). It is through institutions of mediation — religion, education, family, schooling, the state, media and other institutions — that dominant discourse is upheld. The hegemonic social order, thus, endorses the ethical beliefs and manners that "the powers that be" normalize as universal logic, morals, rights and truths. As Gramsci asserts in Notebook 6,

“[I]n the theory of state — regulated society (from a phase in which the state equals government to a phase in which the state is identified with civil society), there must be a transition phase of the state as night watchman, that is, of a coercive organization that will protect the development of those elements of regulated society that are continually on the rise and, precisely because they are on the rise, will gradually reduce the state’s authoritarian and coercive interventions” (Buttigieg 2011, Vol. 3: 75-76).

Therefore, hegemony will find a balance point where force is not required, since the discourse of the ruling class and dominant elite is accepted as a universal view; the ideological enterprise no longer requires the use of force to sustain it as it will become maintained through the consent of the citizenry. For Gramsci, then, language becomes an important nexus through which hegemony and common sense are introduced, constructed, and normalized in seeking to maintain bourgeois order.

According to Gramsci, consent embodies the “peaceful” inculcation of the general populace into either submitting or adhering to the interests of the ruling class. Under Gramsci’s analysis, the relationship between consent (force of persuasion) and force (persuasion of force) — in terms of consciousness (as action) and practices that challenge the legitimacy of the ruling class ideology — is articulated within the capitalist mode of production as a universal norm.
Since power is never total, ruling class ideology can fail to persuade (consent), precisely because opposing class elements recognize dominant ideologies as specific interest(s) that oppose their own (critical consciousness). The working class, then, or its ‘organic intellectuals’ called forth by the movement of its conscientizing, will move to expose this contradiction and change the material conditions under which it is subordinate (praxis). What we can glean from Gramsci’s observations is that citizens,\textsuperscript{64} which includes the working and oppressed classes, should be seen as historical agents even if they are not fully cognizant of how existence structures the way they make decisions, whether apparent or excluded from their consciousness\textsuperscript{65}.

Notwithstanding how manufactured consent complicates the emergence of deceptive tactics by the state and corporatocracy, the important point here is that ideological domination, though \textit{normal} under the logic of capitalism and intensified state bureaucracy, should be more accurately conceptualized as \textit{normative}; however, Marx notes that the exercise of power is relational in so far as it requires the recognition and validation (tacit consent) of the oppressed classes’ own subjugation. Gramsci’s discussion of “common sense” and “good sense” sheds

\textsuperscript{64} Under strict legal terms, the working and oppressed classes could be considered citizens assuming they are afforded the legal rights that allow them to be qualified as such. I mention all three to avoid conceptual confusion.

\textsuperscript{65} Beyond the scope of this thesis is how the transformation of working class consciousness can be achieved when this class does not appreciate its historical role as a class. Such a conscientizing project requires organic intellectuals who emerge from that class to articulate that consciousness. But the problem, as noted by Gramsci, is precisely that the working class does not control the means of production to generate intellectuals who will act on behalf of, in and through the working classes themselves. Both Marx and Gramsci recognized that class here does not specifically equate with or mean the same as one’s social positioning within productive relations. Rather, as Marx notes, in \textit{Preface to The Critique of Political Economy}: “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, it is their social being \textit{(gesellschaftlichessein)} that determines their consciousness”. Shlomo Avineri perceptively observes that Marx regards \textit{being} as subordinate and dependent to \textit{social being} (1967). Relatedly then, upon achieving a unified working class consciousness, the question then becomes: what kind of political action does a fully conscious working class, along with its organic intellectuals, then set out to do relative to the oppressive state apparatus? The Leninist option is to take the state by force of arms through its vanguard. Yet, as is clearly the case, in Marxist parlance, with deformed states such as that under Josef Stalin, the vanguard state easily slides toward dictatorship in the name of the masses rather than as the representative of the masses. Thus, both Marx and Gramsci eschewed spontaneous and vanguardist revolutionary action precisely because the working classes have not developed revolutionary theory, that which is the product of a deeply cultural cultivation through workers, soviets, and the like (Avineri 1967; Karabel 1976).
some conceptual clarity on how the working and oppressed class would ‘willingly’ submit to
domination by an authoritative entity or ruling body. To Gramsci, common sense is a way of
thinking about the world that is grounded in material realities that encompass what he calls
“spontaneous philosophy” (1999: 625). Common sense is therefore comprised largely of the
unconscious and uncritical way of perceiving and understanding the world that has become
‘common’ in any given epoch (Gramsci 1999: 625). ‘Common sense’, Gramsci asserts, is
composed of “superstition, folklore, simple religious beliefs and the deposits of previous
philosophy” (Gramsci 1999: 627, 628). ‘Good sense’, on the other hand, is the product of critical
examination of ‘common sense’, which, Gramsci maintains, exposes the ‘historical inventory’
that traces and identifies what makes us who we are. In identifying common sense as being
subject to material social and historical processes, this also means that common sense manifests
dominant ideals and ruling relations:

Creating a new culture does not only mean one’s own individual “original” discoveries.
It also, and most particularly, means the diffusion in a critical form of truths already
discovered, their “socialisation” as it were, and even making them the basis of vital action,
an element of coordination and intellectual and moral order. For a mass of people to be
led to think coherently and in the same coherent fashion about the real present world, is a
“philosophical” event far more important and “original” than the discovery by some
philosophical “genius” of a truth, which remains the property of small groups of intellectuals.
(Gramsci in Ives 2004: 63)

Within these passages, Gramsci, like Marx, is explicit that a process of manufactured consent
and ‘socialisation’ into ruling class attitudes and interests establishes ‘common sense’. During
this process of ‘socialisation,’ something that was specific or unique in the general sense, like
knowledge or culture, will become universal and natural and thereby accepted by society at large
to the point of being taken for granted in a view of the world as simply 'the way things are'. In
response, Gramsci writes “[I]t is the task of intellectuals to criticize the 'chaotic aggregate of
disparate conceptions' comprising common sense and so instill 'new popular beliefs” which
create “a new common sense and with it a new culture and a new philosophy” (1999: 422, 424). To do so, Gramsci maintains, requires conscious political work and education to engender criticism of established ‘common sense’ and language, as a social and political construct, so that society can develop alternative hegemonic discourse(s). And, in this context, we arrive at a consciousness to determine what sort of ‘person in the mass we are’: subordinate to calcified and received wisdom or those who challenge common sense to arrive at good sense and to practice it thereafter (Gramsci 1999). This is in effect what Gramsci termed a philosophy of praxis: the project of self-emancipation from ‘common Language is of the utmost importance to Gramsci, because it is through language and metaphor that individuals articulate the history and ‘inventory of events’ that come to reaffirm the meaning and perceptions of their discovery of ‘good sense’.

Ryan Kemp (2009) describes this process, or ‘event of truth’, as “hitting rock-bottom”. For epistemological and pedagogical purposes, Kemp frames the concept of “hitting rock bottom” as an abstract state of human consciousness; this categorization allows his analysis to transcend the simplified limitations of lived experience to a quasi-metaphysical process of becoming and being (106; 107; 108). Building upon the work of Heidegger and Derrida, Kemp describes an existential ‘event of truth’, or becoming, as a thing “[that] has the characteristics of an event” but also “[of] a crisis, but more than this, [because] it opens up the subject for the possibility of change” (111). Kemp calls this a “dwelling in untruth”, which he describes as a “lived aspect of being”; as such, ‘crises of being’ often exist beyond awareness and therefore require a process of discovery and ‘unconcealment’ (108; 109). Kemp contends that this discovery of truth occurs more in the ‘heart’ of being than the ‘head’ of being (108), stressing a connection to the metaphysical nature of being. Indeed, the ‘event of truth’ is fundamental in consolidating the

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66 Accomplishing this feat is one of the goals of this project.
chronology of an individuals’ personal change; however, Kemp argues that this event will also, paradoxically, redefine the present and future of the individuals' lived experience as the event which begins a new chapter in their life:

> It is as if the event burns a hole in the temporality of being. Always in the past, the event is also always in the now, while shaping the movement of the future. Thus it has nothing to do with clock time for the event is more of a pivot in time, which sets time back to a new start. It is a new birth, the point of the advent. (111)

For a conscious (re)awakening to occur, an objector, in this case, must realize that “untruth is not moral, but is the quality of the relation to experience itself. Recovery requires, amongst other things, a new relation to truth” (108), and, to experience. Furthermore, this process of uncovering truth goes on infinitely and can never be completed. It opens the future and the past in new ways and is a discursive shift from which truth emerges. This does not mean that the discovery process is poetic; indeed, it can be brutal, unexpected, harsh, and even destructive to the subject. Yet this truth is also liberating and some may even find comfort in the realization, because the discovery of truth can transform the relationship that the individual has with their own subjectivity.

Relatedly, as a reaction to the hegemonic discourses that comprise their being and as the subject of an awakening or conversion, the inclusion of Marx and Gramsci’s insights suggests that objectors will come to experience and articulate their selves as more than stereotypes and move toward a state of *being* that not only transforms or reaffirms their own subjectivity and spirituality, but also forms critical consciousness.

### 4.3 Foucault and Military organization

In building upon the theory of ideology and hegemony offered by Marx and Gramsci, I round out my theoretical framework by incorporating Michel Foucault’s work on how the body, especially those worked on to be ‘docile’ through military discipline. This a concrete site at which the struggle for ideology, and hence consciousness, takes place. In *Discipline and Punish*
(1977; 1995), Foucault offers unique conceptual insights relevant to conscientious objection. This relevance is manifested in his formulation of (a) ‘docile bodies’ and disciplinary techniques, (b) military drilling and (c) the diffusion of power.

In delineating the limits of economic determinism and the rigidity of instrumental Marxism, Foucault approaches the construction and maintenance of relations of power through the idea of manufactured docility. To Foucault, the exercise of power (e.g. ‘discipline’), domination and appropriation of the human body could be traced back to slavery, vassalage, and other forms of ‘service’ that were common practices within European society up until the early eighteenth century (1995: 74, 75). However, Foucault argues that the centuries of physical and ideological domination and the ascetic tendencies of organized religion gave way with the emergence of the modern state to the radical reformation of new methods of control over civil society and its membership. He calls this a new “political anatomy” and “mechanics of power” (138) through which the state articulated its power. It lead to controlling the means of life rather than through its capacity to dispense death (i.e., bio-power). The dissection of society and the diffusion of power within it become paramount to Foucault’s speculations on the production of docility. To Foucault, the flow of power is rooted in the culture and political economy and dispersed through institutions and in the interstices of life where docility is supposedly realized as the product of a “multiplicity of often minor [or major] processes” (ibid). The ‘processes’ under which docility is produced are often “scattered”, “overlap”, enforced or reinforced through “repetition” until a form of social and political behavior can emerge (ibid). For Foucault, docility is the result of constant and repetitive conditioning. Furthermore, the ‘processes’ that create docility vary between those that are intentionally unobtrusive for everyday lives (e.g., forms of social reproduction that are considered benign) and those that could be considered insidious (e.g.,
formal and informal punishment). While there is a vast body of literature concerning the ‘utility’ and ‘rationalization’ of punishment, physical or otherwise, Foucault’s analysis of the military as a coercive institution, and its connection to discipline and power over soldiers, prompts interesting insights concerning the creation of docile subjects (bodies) (135). Therefore, Foucault sees hegemony and docility as ideological projects wherein the military establishes the ‘body’ as a concrete site at which the struggle for ideology, and hence consciousness takes place.

During the dawn of the eighteenth century, Foucault notes a pivotal shift in the academic pursuits of ‘intellectuals’ who focused on “correcting the operations of the body” (136). While some pursued a study of the mechanical or “usefulness” of the body, e.g. physical manipulation of the human form, others like Descartes focused their work on the making of an “intelligible body” which includes exercises that can reeducate the mind (ibid). The latter began to find more emphasis as intellectuals began to examine, more closely, the relationship between punitive action, in a corrective sense, and the human response. Rather than looking at bodies ‘en masse’, the focus shifted to examining how individuals’ “movements, gestures, and attitudes” could be molded through a “subtle exercise of coercion” (137). Foucault thus recognizes that ‘discipline’ was no longer an isolated exercise upon the individual but was now becoming a formula of domination that could be distributed through various mechanisms that interacted with society in varying ways. Identifying the military as a coercive, and at times a punitive, institution, Foucault tells us that the average soldier comes to be conditioned and identified within the confines of specific linguistic codes that are embodied in ideals and phrases like duty, strength, courage, patriotism, pride, valor, and honor. Such speech codes, however, are articulated in both regimes of discipline and training of the body.
Foucault argues that due to the rigidity instilled in modern military training techniques, “the soldier, has become something that can be made; out of formless clay ... making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit” (Ibid). While it remains to be seen that, despite the expectation, every soldier will exemplify such virtues to the letter, military leaders and state agents are compelled to create new forms of training and disciplinary measures to ensure the continuation and increase of a single goal: the mastery of an individual body (137). We take as a central exhibit of this instance the development of the emergence of military psychological research that specializes in training soldiers to kill. David Grossman, shows that since the First World War, Western militaries have honed disciplinary processes and strategies to both select killers as well as train those not so inclined to be disinhibited toward battlefield killing (1995). To this end, soldiers, military personnel, as well as non-military personnel, may not only embody those traits but also diffuse such ideals throughout the corps of state-produced killers. With emphasis on the military of the eighteenth century, Foucault details a palatable fiction wherein a “policy of coercions” (136) begins to be enacted upon the body causing individual bodies (in this context, the average front-line combat personnel) to enter into a “machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down, and rearranges it” (136). The intent of which would be to produce groups of individuals that not only act as one wishes but think as one wishes, as if it is occurring almost instinctively or mechanically. As it relates to soldiers, the purpose of this particular ‘policy of coercions’ is the intent of producing docility and obedience to authority by the rank and file military members67. Foucault further examines how military training becomes diffused into society when he says that “disciplinary space tends to be divided

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67 These ‘policies of coercion,’ in turn, create the conditions under which the state and the military authority can deepen their hegemonic control of the ranks. The end goal of which would, ideally be, that all soldiers will ‘willingly’ abdicate their own consciousness, thus deadening it, from their body however conscientious objection is a partial resistance to such tactics of ‘education.’
into as many sections as there are bodies or elements to be distributed” and that “one must eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation, their unusable and dangerous coagulation” (143). One manifest form of control that is exercised over deserters, for example, is demonstrated in the language surrounding objection to the military (e.g., ‘coward’, ‘traitor’, etc.) and the disciplinary measures used against deserters themselves. Such disciplinary measures can involve formal punitive actions like a “Dishonorable Discharge” or informal actions like alienation from peers, derogatory language, threats, or even violence. Therefore, the linguistic codes that critique, explain, and analyze objection to soldiering and duty, in this regard, become useful to explore the development and connection of power over others by the military, state agents and ruling bodies. To Foucault, “discipline is no longer simply an art of distributing bodies, of extracting time from them and accumulating it, but of composing forces in order to obtain an efficient machine” (1995: 164).

While Foucault recuperates the body as a site in, on, and through which hegemony is articulated, there is one crucial limitation to how he conceives of ‘docile bodies’ as the artifact of disciplinary power. Ironically, the idea that subjects are, through the art of ‘governance’, made and are not already constituted as ‘docile’ but must be produced as such is violated by the end of history conception inherent in the theory of ‘docile bodies’. The limitation here is that Foucault does little to theorize the ways that the art of discipline is routinely challenged and resisted because he stages his analytics of power in terms of a ‘struggle’ with government and state relations rather than a ‘struggle’ between groups in general. Foucault himself recommended that intellectuals produce an abundance of ‘grey, meticulous, and patiently documentary’ investigations (in Allen and Goddard 2014: 29). “These investigations,” Allen and Goddard note, “would not consider society as a whole and then recommend universal solutions, for ‘the whole
of society’ is precisely that which should not be considered except as something to be destroyed” (ibid). In other words, Foucault’s abstraction generates a form of political blindness that allows existing, or old, power dynamics, such as the idea that society can be ordered according to a single, unifying law; these would also be present in the new forms that would then govern society. Allen and Godard summarize the analytic consequences of such a position:

(1) when power is seen as widely dispersed rather than located in one particularly powerful and coercive institution, this diminishes the importance of the question of legitimacy in analyses of power since no one agent or group of agents can be held accountable; (2) once power is believed to be operating throughout society rather than emanating from the center, this acts to disarm any theory of politics and power based on opposition to the state; (3) although this approach bears some similarities to critical theory, according to which ‘instrumental rationality’ has spread throughout western societies killing off ethical rationalities, Foucault does not see a single, uniform strain of this rationality. Instead, he identifies a range of local and contingent rationalities. This theoretical switch changes the perceived role of the intellectual or critic. Without reference to a dominant principle or underlying rationale, critique can no longer adopt the ‘premise of a deduction that concludes, ‘‘this, then, is what needs to be done’’. To make such recommendations would demand precisely the sort of global and unitary view that is no longer deemed possible. (29)

Though Foucault develops and builds upon the idea of power as circulatory and that its exercise can become multidirectional, like in Power/ Knowledge(1980), he misarticulates the flow of power and the sources from which it is derived. Social power, or energy, is always derived from a primary source and cannot manifest simply on its own. That means for power to be transferred and diffused, for example, requires that it must first be generated before traversing to its destination.

Using the language of physics, this is not to say that power cannot be “resisted” or “redirected”, Foucault obviates this point by capitulating to non-causal “multi-directionality.” Therefore a limitation of Foucault’s yielding to multi-directionality is that though power micro-manifests and is exhibited by varying individuals, and, in different forms, ignores that all things are not created equal nor can all individuals exhibit or manifest the same degrees of power over one another. For example, a colonized person cannot claim more power than a colonizer; a slave
cannot claim to be more powerful than a slave owner; an employee and employer; or a child, their parents. Therefore, the diffusion of power, and likewise discipline, is always secondary to the primary, coercive authority from which power manifests. Rather than discipline leading to an end-point (e.g. the ‘docile body/subject’), my concern is imagining how discipline is part of a continuous arc of meaning-making by those who, paradoxically, willingly submit themselves to an institution that requires its volunteers to be molded into an ideal that is produced by ‘common sense’ and that they already exemplify (e.g. hetero-masculinity, patriotism, etc.).

In short, and in practical terms, the theory of docile bodies produced through regimes of training and discipline, requires those very docile bodies to commit themselves to the presumption that the totality of their being can be 'rewritten' before this process actually occurs.

This research seeks to elaborate how and through conscientious objection that both docility and ‘common sense’ are resisted in the making of a self-conscious historical agent. Therefore, Foucault’s analysis is crucially limited by his preoccupation with a one-way flow of power, which, in the final analysis, disavows the ‘docile’ the any possibility of historical agency. It is precisely agency, though missing from Foucault’s conception of ‘docile bodies’, which demonstrates itself through soldiers taking back their bodies from the state and its matrix of discipline that is at the core of interpreting objectors’ narratives. The body as an object of 'sacrifice' for the state, framed innocuously as ‘service’, is in effect re-appropriated by those whose life it is. But, to recognize the body as being reanimated with meaning given by historical agents who determine to make meaning for themselves, in the Gramscian conception of that

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68 This claim may be over reaching given that military members all join for different reasons; however, I believe this statement leaves open an interpretation to the seductive elements that may have influenced different people to join while maintaining the integrity of the original statement.
process, one must be sensitive to experiencing the ‘aliveness’ of one’s body and consciousness through a radical reinterpretation of the concept of ‘awakening’.

4.4 George Lakoff and Sociolinguistics

Building upon various theories in the conflict tradition, critical sociolinguists and social theorists like George Lakoff, Basil Bernstein, and Stuart Hall assert that language, meaning and representation are sites at which conflict is articulated. In the Gramscian sense, conflict manifests when individuals attempt to articulate their own consciousness and/or conscious activity in contrast to hegemonic ideas structured in relations of dominance. Resistance becomes evident when the production and maintenance of power conflicts with the creation of new and critical meanings and representation, which occur through such discursive practices as counter-hegemonic language and, thus, discourse.

In his analysis of linguistics in education, for example, Basil Bernstein tells us that the form, function, and structure of language mediates expressions of power evident within symbols and symbolism that in turn modifies perception (22). As a result, Bernstein posits that a form of linguistic homogeneity, which is to say hegemony, emerges within social formations predicated on domination and power. He calls it “public language” (ibid). Relatedly, George Lakoff’s work on language and cognitive linguistics is crucial to understanding how linguistic devices, specifically metaphors and masked meaning, in turn influence the world views (frames of reference) of individuals. Metaphors, Lakoff explains, are a fundamental mechanism of the mind.

69 While I do not explicitly compare Bernstein’s articulation of “public language” to what Gramsci calls “common sense”, I do see the two concepts as synonymous with one another. I argue that hegemonic discourses, dialectically produced and structured in relations of domination, influence both consciousness and language and vice versa.

70 Cognitive Linguistics, as a discipline, examines how language affects the neural processes within the brain and also conscious activity.
that permit us to use what we know about our physical and social experience to provide an understanding of other subjects; Lakoff introduces this as “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (1980: 5). Here, Lakoff argues that metaphorical concepts structure our most basic understandings of our experience, as they are "metaphors we live by" — metaphors that shape our perceptions and actions without our ever noticing them (Lakoff 1980). Here metaphor is realized as a matter of thought, not just an expression of language, therefore it highlights the process of meaning-making as something that is perhaps never ending or, more specifically, constantly evolving. In similar fashion, Stuart Hall suggests that language acts as a metaphorical bridge between meaning, representation and context, particularly where conflicting ideas about what can be considered truth or false comes to be mediated. Linguistic codes, in this context, 'come to life'. The assertions by Lakoff (1980), Bernstein (1971), and Hall (1997) are that different conceptual metaphors are used to characterize, and categorize, perceptions of the world around us. Lakoff provides a familiar example: ‘It’s all downhill from here’ can mean either one of two things: the first being that things will get progressively worse, based on the ‘Good Is Up, Bad Is Down’ metaphor; or things will be easier from now on, based on the metaphor that action is understood as motion (as in ‘things are moving right along’) and easy action is understood in terms of easy (that is, downhill) motion. That is why framing ideas and language to reveal ‘truths’ is so important; given that the mind works by frames and metaphors, the challenge then is to use those same frames and metaphors to more accurately depict how the world works. Since it is assumed that the meaning of social existence is not transparent and must be ever worked on to produce truthful perceptions, this is an ongoing process with deep political implications. Within this context, Lakoff employs ‘reframing’, which he describes as ‘correcting frames’ that distort truths and/or ‘finding frames’ that expose falsehoods.
4.5 War and Markets

Because this project is rooted heavily in the Marxist tradition, it is imperative to elaborate how 'war' and 'markets' are in their restricted terms defined by the state and capital obfuscations of coercive authority and the dominance of hegemonic interests. It is fruitful, therefore, to briefly examine where the Marxist tradition has taken questions about the causes of war and its necessity in the capitalist system. While pluralist theory invokes Durkheimian conceptions of consensus derived from the 'conscience collective', thereby legitimating ideas such as 'nationalism' and assorted discourses relevant to crafting an 'imagined community, I will forego a critique of such superstructural metaphysics. My concern is instead to explicate how, more concretely within Western scholarship on the political economy of war, the Marxist tradition is contrasted with liberalism (Fanny Coulomb and Jacques Fontanel2012: 173). As will be seen from the narratives of conscientious objectors, awareness of ruling class commercial interests nested in distortions of the US Constitution and discourses legitimating self-sacrifice are a crucial site around which objectionism articulates itself. Though it will be clear that in the narratives of objectors, such awareness need not lead to Marxist an orientation since this is only one political allegiance available to objectors to explain their 'awakening'.

The liberal perspective on the relationship between war and capitalism argues that through equal market access, complete economic liberalization for any and all international players, will inexorably move society towards total economic prosperity and peace; which, historically, remains yet to be seen (ibid). Conversely, the Marxist perspective contends that

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71This relates to the idea of ‘paxdemocratia’ in which it is believed liberal democratic systems are inherently peaceful and do not make war between themselves (Coulomb and Fontanel 176). Vital to the conception of liberal democracy is the formal (legal) as opposed to the substantive (economic) nature of equality.
capitalism will inevitably lead to various forms of imperialism — both soft and hard — and numerous economic crises — both foreign and domestic (ibid). Relatedly, the Marxist tradition talks poignantly about the theme of war in relation to its economic impact while liberal discussions on the utility of the military become fragmented, often stand alone, talking points such as: democracy, freedom, national sovereignty, “protection from” or “self-defense against” a “discernible enemy”, state making/building, market relations or resource protection (extraction) (Tilly 1985: 181; Klein 2001; Ivie 2012). It is integral, therefore, to bear in mind the role of any state government at any given time in its formation, its leadership and the role of the military under a given type of capitalism (Tilly 1985). Furthermore, the issue of representation — specifically who’s interests are being served during any given conflict — then remains central to any debate on militarism and war in, or between, capitalist and non-capitalist countries; this is especially true when considering the question of whether or not capitalism creates the conditions for environmental, humanitarian or wartime crisis to the benefit of corporate interests72 (Magdoff 1978; Hooks and Smith 2012; Ivie 2012; Coulomb and Fontanel 2012; Tilly 1985; Klein 2001; Gordon 2010; Butler 1936; 2003; MacPherson 1964). What’s more, is that the question of representation, in particular, seems to be of increasing concern for geopolitics given the ‘shortages’ of natural resources, which aggravate existing international tensions (Klace 2001). Therefore, the issue of “state protection” (Tilly 1985) comes to the forefront of conversations regarding market relations.

72 Former U.S. General Smedley Butler writes in his War is Racket, “Listen to Senate Document No. 259. The Sixty-Fifth Congress, reporting on corporate earnings and government revenues. Considering the profits of 122 meat packers, 153 cotton manufacturers, 299 garment makers, 49 steel plants, and 340 coal producers during [World War One]. Profits under 25 percent were exceptional. For instance, coal companies made between 100 percent and 7,856 percent on their capital stock during the war. The Chicago packers doubled or triple their earnings”while the U.S. national debt “jumped to over $25,000,000,000”(1936;2003: 29; 26). Relatedly, the day following the November 2015 bombings in Paris, reporter Glen Greenwald (2015) notes that stock prices for weapon and defence contractors, like Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, and Booz Allen Hamilton Holding Corp., soared upwards of one to three percent each respectively.
Relatedly, Charles Tilly (1985) observes that during the historical formation of the state as a legitimate authority, governments strategically organized, and wherever possible, monopolized the exercise of violence. Indeed, war making, resource extraction, and capital accumulation have come to constitute the condition of modern nation building. This condition, as C. B. MacPherson (1964) points out, was fulfilled during the emergence of a possessive market society and internal pacification of bourgeois society during the seventeenth to nineteenth century (272). MacPherson remarks that as long as everyone is subject and subordinate to market forces, “there [is] a sufficient basis for rational obligation of all men to a political authority which could maintain and enforce orderly human relations, namely, market relations (272-273). As was seen in the early stages of the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, and Iraq soon after, ‘just’ warring has been used as a means to produce national cohesion: ie., rallying behind a ‘common cause’ and a ‘common enemy’; battling global terrorism to protect ‘national interests’73. Indeed, MacPherson suggests, the societal cohesion espoused by social contract theorists like Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau has been undermined by the very creation and emergence of global market relations. Peaceful cohesion is, MacPherson notes, the conundrum of market relations, thus a state’s use of violence as a means of maintaining order ends in the conclusion that “war is an impossible source of internal cohesion” (276). Tilly complements this idea when he states that,

It matters little whether we take violence in a narrow sense […] or a broad sense[…] by either criterion, governments stand out from other organizations by their tendency to monopolize the concentrated means of violence. The distinction between ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ force, furthermore, makes no difference to the fact. If we take legitimacy to depend on the conformity to an abstract principle or on the assent of the governed (or both at once), these conditions may serve to justify, perhaps even to explain, the tendency to monopolize force; they do not contradict the fact. (171)

73 Or ‘to protect freedom,’ ‘to protect liberty,’ ‘to protect democracy,’ etc.
It would seem then that the modern states proclivity to use war making as nation building, instead of “defense,” is becoming “tragically apt” (186).

4.6 Concluding Thoughts

Because this thesis is dealing with issues of morals and values on one hand and state, corporate and private interests on the other, then the issue of conscientizing and conscious awakening becomes dialectical. An objector’s conscientious awakening thus becomes a radical reaffirmation on the side of applying both morals and values to the question of submitting one’s mind and body to obedience to authority, thereby raising the ethical question of 'in whose interest'. Building upon the various theories of social conflict contained herein, language, meaning and representation become sites of mediated social conflict at which individuals attempt to articulate their own consciousness and/or conscious activity in contrast to hegemonic ideas. So how then does meaning come to be created and what is its relationship to consciousness? This theoretical framework suggests one way to view the issue is to imagine conscientious objection is at once a crisis of faith as much as an affirmation of the principles and values that originally attracted individuals to the military. In short, objectors come to an awakening that rests on a critical re-interpretation of hegemonic discourse, often through radical libertarianism, that defines who they are in the masses. The creation of 'good sense' is then understood as vital to the maintenance of economic and political hegemony, and, for my inquiry into conscientious objection — a critically informed consciousness. Moreover, examining objectionism and its existence from the vantage points of moral philosophy and socio-political theory opens space to both listen to and witness the praxis of objectors. While, therefore, Marxist insights constitute

74“Marxist insights” refers to the theoretical tradition not Marx himself.
the explanatory framework for conscious awakening, enabling us to be sensitive to the interplay between cultural, economic and psychological dynamics in the lives of individual objectors, this project does not impose such an orientation on objectors themselves.
Chapter 5

Methods and Methodology

5.1 Research Design: Life History

Within this thesis project, I employed the Life History research methodology. I chose this particular methodology because it complements the in-depth interview method given its preoccupation with ‘lives in context’. What this means is that Life History research “goes beyond the individual” to make sense of their life experiences within the broader outline of what Foucault calls 'a genealogy of the present' (see Garland 2014). In many cases, the stories and personal narratives provided through Life History analysis reveal epiphanic events — critical incidents, turning points, or milestones—within the participant’s life. In short, those cathartic incidents that brought them to profound realizations about the meaning of their experiences and how they might traverse their future. More broadly, Life History research is predicated upon the fundamental assumption about the relationship of the general to the particular and that the general can be best understood through an analysis of the particular (Cole & Knowles: 13). As Cole and Knowles note, these conditions elevate research into relational and meaningful texts (2001: 26). However, Life History research is not about developing reductionist notions of lived experience in order to convey a particular meaning or “truth” (Cole & Knowles 2001: 11). Rather, Life History research is about an in-depth exploration of an individual life-in-context: it is a way of enabling research participants to experience their own life experience through, for example, coming to terms with an 'event of truth'. Both the researcher and certainly for the reader invited into a narration co-created between researcher and participant, a closer understanding of

75Emphasis added.
the complexities of a particular social phenomenon emerge. By looking in to the lived experiences of others, one can see how a phenomenon is defined as well as how it is shaped by the institutional and structural expressions of a given community and society. This means that we must move from life stories to life histories that embrace "stories of action within theories of context" (Good 2013: 5). By doing this, “stories can be located”\(^7\) and categorized as the social constructions they are in “time, space, social history and geography” (Goodson 5,6). As Farraday and Plummer note, “[W]hen one conducts life history interviews the findings become alive in terms of historical processes and structural constraints” (Goodson 33; Faraday and Plummer 1979: 779; Plummer 1990). Leaning on C. Wright Mills' conception of the 'sociological imagination' (2000), to make sense of how conscientious objectors came to develop their philosophies of objection is to see, feel and understand the lived experiences of the objectors themselves as they are defined and situated within particular historical trends and phenomena.\(^7\)

Therefore, Life History research is well-suited for this thesis because its methodological considerations are imbued with a consistency and authenticity that reflects, and speaks to, the truthfulness and sincerity of participant's self-discovery and the relationship between the researcher and the participants, the researcher and the research and the process of inquiry and its representational forms.

### 5.2 Semi-Structured, in-depth interviews

To facilitate the collection of data, I employed semi-structured, in-depth interviews. In broad strokes, in-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting

\(^7\)Consistent with Gramsci's conception of 'spontaneous philosophy, Jerome Bruner adds that “there is no greater psychological research project than one that addresses itself to the 'development of autobiography’”(2004: 694).

\(^7\)Mills (1959) articulates that to make sense of the world requires that we understand ourselves, our own biography, in the context of greater historical trends that exist around us and constitute our being.
intensive, individual interviews with a small number of participants to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation (Boyce and Neale 2006; Patton 2002). In-depth interviews, as opposed to conducting focus groups for instance, are an ideal fit for this project because the interviews provide the opportunity to talk directly to the participants about their perspectives, experiences, and stories regarding their military career. As I indicated above, Life History Research does not aim to universalize or generalize the experiences of the participants as “[t]he life historian is initially only concerned with grasping personal truth: on the (more important) issue of attaining universal truth he or she remains mute” (Farraday and Plummer 779; Coles and Knowles 11). The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the ability to create a chronology of important life events were negotiated and influenced their lived realities (Boyce and Neale 3). Faraday and Plummer add,

“The life history technique documents the inner experiences of individuals, how they interpret, understand and define the world around them. Most notably it comes to lay bare the ‘world-taken-for-granted’ of people—their assumptions and what it is they find problematic about life and their lives in particular.” (776)

Also, in-depth interviews allowed me the opportunity to open a channel of communication to see into the participant’s past, their family life, their educational background and other important events that helped to illuminate the epistemological elements of this study. Therefore, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were both theoretically and methodologically consistent with the Life History research method as it is oriented towards an in-depth exploration of an individual life-in-context. While the methodological rationale for semi-structured interviews fulfilled the objectives of this approach, there were minor difficulties with respect to participant recruitment.
5.3 Sampling Strategy and Methodological/Conceptual Obstacles

In formulating this project, I garnered a sample of four conscientious objectors to the US' confected retaliatory expeditions, which later morphed into 'regime change', later a war on 'terror' and other justifications. To produce this sample group, I employed a non-probability sampling strategy. Non-probability sampling was ideal for this research because it is designed with the intent of gaining more detailed knowledge and insight into a particular group of individuals rather than to be concerned with generalizing findings to the larger population. Furthermore, participants found by way of a non-probability strategy ensure that they will be directly related to the objectives and goals of the research. Farraday and Plummer note that, “most social science in its quest for generalizability imposes order and rationality upon experiences and worlds that are more ambiguous, more problematic, and more chaotic in reality” (777). As such, this project is focused at the level of the individual experience therefore I am not focused on generalizing the results from the narratives themselves, though I am interested in making claims about the value of those narratives for an informed public debate about war. It is the dynamic elements provided within the narratives that will assist me with explicating a discussion on the varying moral and political dimensions of objectionism. To ensure that I accomplished this task, I used a purposive sampling technique.

Purposive sampling can be defined as “a series of strategic choices about with whom, where, and how to do your research” (Palys 2008: 697). What is most important with respect to the research and the participants is that I am not trying to make my sample representative or typical because this research is not for the intent of generalizing the findings for two main reasons: (1) from a methodological angle, I am looking to maximize the range of information that can be uncovered; this is aided by forms of purposive sampling. While the varying
biographical details of each participant highlights the difference in their experiences each person decided to object for reasons unique to their own experiences; (2) from a conceptual standpoint, this interview study is focused on the individual narratives of each objector because it will help to illuminate the social and moral dimensions of their conscientious objection as well the lived context in which they exist.

As the project developed, I encountered an issue with how I was going to recruit participants for this study. In the early stages of the project's development, I came upon a Toronto-based objector support group called the War Resisters Support Campaign (WRSC). I selected this organization because, at the time, there were many US soldiers who sought asylum, specifically in Toronto; I also selected WRSC because it was within a close proximity to my residence in St. Catharines. However, as the thesis reached the data collection portion, I learned from an organizer at the WRSC that many of the US soldiers, and their families, were facing deportation orders or were engaged in refugee hearings. Despite having sent out Letters of Invitation\textsuperscript{78} I believe that the impending legal conflicts prompted some, if not many, to not participate in this study; this forced me to contact other organizations. After initial investigation, I came upon the Centre on Conscience and War, Courage to Resist, and Iraq Veterans Against War. Within these organizations, I found a particularly passionate group of former military and non-military members who were ecstatic about my research project and could connect me with currently serving and ex-military members. Acting as access partners, individuals within these organizations helped me garner research participants by sending out my Letters of Invitation via email lists. Should a recipient choose to participate in this study, interested parties had the necessary contact information. For those that contacted me, I engaged in a four step process:

\textsuperscript{78}See Appendix D.
1) was a Q&A introduction to myself, the goals and orientation of the research as well as an elaboration of what would be requested of them as participants in terms of setting up interview times, etc.; step 2) was the first of two, interviews, that were one and half hours in length each, which included a written transcript of the interview sent to them for their review; step 3) was the second interview which afforded me the opportunity to ask any additional questions, request elaboration of responses in the first interview, update them on the status of the project, and, lastly, to assuage any concerns about exactly how the interviews would fit into the project; step 4) would be a release of the completed thesis document for their review.

As an introductory assessment of the current landscape of objectionism and war, this thesis is a valuable tool; however, the reader should recognize some points for consideration. These points include: the translation of the research methodology to the final product, the interviews and the nature of the questions. Life History research generally produces large amounts of data that is collected over a series of interviews that may span a protracted period of time (Cole and Knowles 2001: 78). Due to time constraints of being in a Masters program, I only conducted two interviews with each participant in which I tried to cover a vast chronological time frame that was ultimately condensed due in part to the framing of the interview questionnaire. Relatedly, a key consideration in life history construction concerns whether the questions are focused and selective or open and permitting the subject to talk freely of his or her own life (Farraday and Plummer 783). There is no way around this problem: either a) the questions are focused on pre-selected issues — in which case the role of the subject will become much clearer than it possibly is; or b) one allows the subject to talk freely over a long period of time and to display the diversity and flux of their lives (784). The type of questioning that is adopted will determine this outcome. To address the concerns presented by Farraday and
Plummer, I employed open-ended questions within the first interview to allow the participants' narratives to flourish organically. During the second, follow-up interview, I asked directed questions that focused on particular issues or segments of their narrative that I felt were underdeveloped or unclear in the initial interview.

5.4 Data Collection

After having been in contact with the Centre on Conscience and War, Courage to Resist, and Iraq Veterans Against War, I began to organize and schedule the interview portion of my project. Due to the logistical and geographical limitations between myself and the four individuals who agreed to participate, I chose to conduct all interviews using Skype\textsuperscript{79}. My sample group included one female and three males of varying ages, experiences, and positions within the military: the first two participants were a married couple who were both Air Force pilots that had done multiple, active-combat tours abroad; the third was a Logistics Officer stationed in South Pacific and; the last was a Combat Medic. Prior to the interviews, participants were all given a formal research invitation letter as well as a consent form outlining the particulars of what would be required of them for participation in the study, the overall trajectory\textsuperscript{80} of the questions, and lastly, their rights as a participant.

In accordance with the guidelines of semi-structured interviews, I developed a set of primary questions that would cover the conceptual elements of the study; within each question, I had a subset of prompts or follow-up questions that I would ask to help clarify and guide the discussions. This was an interesting and simultaneously unnerving feeling to be mindful of as the

\textsuperscript{79}For those unfamiliar with Skype, it is web-based communication software that provides video and voice call services. In addition, users can also exchange text and video messages, files and images, as well as create conference calls.

\textsuperscript{80}Here I am referring to the nature of the questions themselves. Specifically, that I am not isolating their experiences as objectors but embracing and examining the spectrum of experiences over the course of their life which helped to influence and inform their conscientious objection.
core of any interview is to create a safe place for the participants to share their experiences but also balancing the mechanical need, on my end, to gather pertinent and useful information for the purpose of my study. At times, that meant redirecting the conversation or changing the order of questions to ensure the interview flowed from topic to topic.

5.5 Analytic Method

When it came time to analyze and code the in-depth interviews, I had originally presumed that I would adapt the *grounded theory* method into my analytical practice. Grounded theory is a general methodology for developing theory from data—not prior knowledge (Strauss & Corbin, 1991). While primarily an inductive method, grounded theory oscillates between an inductive and deductive approach to decipher theoretical insights from the data. Farraday and Plummer (1979), as well Cole and Knowles (2001), note that the process of interpreting and analyzing Life History data is one in which the researcher “broods” and “reflects” upon mounds of data until it “makes sense” and “feels right”, and key ideas and themes flow from it (2001: 99). Cole and Knowles contend that there is no formulaic method to coding and analyzing Life History interview data, a standard technique is to read and make notes, reflect, reread without notes, reread and make new notes, etc.; this is perhaps more accurately described as a “thematic notebook” (Goodson 2013: 40). This means that the role of the researcher is instrumental, in the literal sense, to “understand and accept the complexity of the task” and “the creative nature of the [coding] process” (2001: 99). As theory evolves and new themes, images, codes, sub-codes, or issues emerge during the research and coding process, Grounded Theory complements this iterative coding formula as a process where theory is generated and social research is done simultaneously (Strauss & Corbin, 1991). In keeping the continuity between theory and practice, I was actively coding throughout the research process in order to identify emergent themes,
points of interest, or conceptual divergences, and to garner insights on how to effectively articulate and truthfully represent the knowledge that was shared during the interviews. Although this approach to data analysis contrasts the “constant comparative method” originally employed by Glaser and Strauss, the process of reflection, as highlighted by Cole and Knowles, is consistent, to some degree, with the Grounded Theory approach of Strauss and Corbin (2001: 98). What remained important to me throughout this entire process was that I was keeping to and engaging with the theoretical and conceptual particulars of the project as well as the nuances and limitations of the existing scholarship. The goal of which was so that I could, in turn, with the research participants co-produce new and substantive knowledge in relation to existing research rather than reproduce vague insights on conscientious objection in general. Some of the reoccurring themes that appeared in the interviews were: the ‘contradictory’ expectations of duty, ‘national defense’, job satisfaction, their understanding of conscientious objection/ism, ‘strategy’ versus ‘tactics,’ and, lastly, as an objector, their relationship with others. These thematic passages were then organized in relation to emergent codes like: patriotism, duty, service, isolation, morality, and self-worth.

In remaining true to the epistemological intent of the research, I chose to maintain a narrative/autobiographical method of writing to the tell stories of the participants and to connect them to the shared themes, ideas and insights to one another (Goodman 2013; Taber 2013). In Chapter 6, I present the participants narratives in a series of individual monologues in which the participants are seen to 'story' their experiences prior, during and post-discharge. I thereby engaged in a form of narrative construction (Barone in Taber 2013; Goodson 2013) to create the individual narratives from the interview transcripts of each participant’s own words, which were edited for readability. This included deleting “ums” and repeated words/phrases, adding in minor
linking sentences or words, removing/changing identifying details so that the presentation and analysis of the narratives could stay true to each participant's distinct experience and 'voice'. The “storied format” helps to inform a different understanding of the participants' experiences which proved to be integral to ensuring that this project did not succumb to a strict, mechanical, and rigid scientific dissection of the participants narratives by lessening their experiences to a sole discussion of codes, categories and themes (Barone in Taber 19). Goodson adds to this: “Our stories and story lines need to be understood, not just as personal constructions but as expressions of particular historical and cultural opportunities” (2013: 6). Therefore in this thesis, I am engaging in a narrative analysis (Taber 2011), which is a thematic exploration of commonalities in participant stories and analysis as narrative that focuses on participant stories themselves (Polkinghorne in Taber 2013: 18; Goodson 2013). I, therefore, endeavored to bring the participant voices to the forefront of the analysis objectionism while maintaining an analysis of war making in the modern age as techniques seek to explore and present the participants’ narratives in their socio-historical, lived context.

As I reflected on and re-read the interview transcripts, I wrote notes that became more and more comprehensive; the interviews themselves were particularly rich with data. To help make sense of the transcripts, I undertook a slow and gradual process of reading each question and response over, transcribing each section, and reflecting on what was said in the audio recording to ensure that the tone of the conversation was conveyed on paper. When it came time to begin my data analysis, I re-read each interview and then re-read the series of notes that I had made for each transcript. I, then, referred to my central research questions and the interview questions to get a sense of the story that I would be presenting within the Analysis chapter. Once the plot line was set, I coded and mapped the narratives that I developed into a narrative driven,
re-telling of the lived experiences of each participant that took on the form of individual narratives. At the end of each narrative, I explore the salient and saturated themes, insights and issues as well as the implications of these themes as they relate to the literature about objectionism (Cole and Knowles 2001; Goodson 2013: 40). Using the idea of a thematic notebook (Goodson 40), I created a separate document where I could identify and organize ‘codable moments’ from each interview. These ‘codable moments’ included passages that shared similar insights or feelings that connect the interview transcripts with the literature that was presented in Chapter 5. This iterative process of reading and re-reading the interview transcripts assisted me with organizing, labeling and typifying my existing codes and themes to ensure that they were cogently categorized. Although I did employ a coding process to help me categorize and make sense of and analyze the narratives that I was reading, the goal of such organization was to create a cohesive and cogent narrative driven analysis. Before proceeding to my research findings, I outline some final methodological considerations to ensure the ‘scientific rigor’ of the research.

5.6 Ensuring Trustworthiness in Life History Research

It was very important to me that trust and rapport was established with my participants early on. One particularly salient issue in social science research is the inherently one-sided power dynamic, whereby both parties are uncomfortably aware of the hierarchy between interviewer and interviewee is omnipresent. Furthermore, the interviewer (researcher) has the ‘final say’ in interpretation and dissemination no matter how democratic the interview process may be. Therefore, it was always my intention with the first interview, with each participant, to be as fair and transparent with my objectives of the research. Related to this, I was not overly concerned that my participants would ask me about my ideological leanings and opinions on
topics that arose which may or may not have swayed the responses they gave. In an effort to mitigate any possibility that that this might happen, at the time of each interview, I offered each participant a chance to ask me any questions about the research I was conducting; be it my interests in the military or formative experiences that helped me decide to pursue conscientious objection in this context. I was not reluctant to share either. In fact, I insisted in sharing such information as each participant would be taking me through a journey of their experiences as conscientious objectors. This included, for some, their darkest thoughts and misgivings as former military members as well their proudest achievements and brightest moments in embracing and defining their humanity. One important step that was undertaken during this portion of the project was ‘member checking.’ All participants were given the opportunity to view their interview transcripts as well as the completed narrative to ensure that all information was translated correctly and transcribed to a standard that met the expectations of both the researcher and the participant.

A challenge put forth by early positivists is that qualitative research is somehow limited in its capacity to produce trustworthy findings and conclusions. Therefore, qualitative researchers, like Coles and Knowles, have endeavoured to set forth a set of rigorous, procedural safeguards to ensure the overall quality of the research. To be clear, when I talk of “rigor”, I am referring specifically to the positivist tradition that relies on standards or criteria used to make judgments about the quality of both the research claims and the method from which said claims are derived. Cole and Knowles question the legitimacy of such constructs as “every report of

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81 This is elaborated upon in the section dedicated to Trustworthiness, specifically the first two elements as outlined by Cole and Knowles: intentionality and researcher presence.
82 After each interview, the transcripts were sent for review to each participant to ensure they were accurately recorded. This also allowed for the participants to consider what was said and to allow room for elaboration or clarification on what was said. The same procedure was used for the construction of the narratives as well.
research contains knowledge claims and every report of research must provide evidence to support these claims; however, judgments about how any piece of research does both of these things must be fundamentally tied to the epistemological roots of the research methodology” (2001: 123). What this translates to is that any researcher should be able to reverse engineer any research and its claims by examining exactly how the research was conducted in its entirety. The caveat of such a position, which Cole and Knowles take issue with, is that every research claim is fundamentally tied to both the purpose and method, “to use the criteria of validity, reliability, and generalizability to assess a life history study, for example, would be like examining the contents of a barrel of apples in order to decide which orange to buy” (123). While I agree, on a fundamental level, with the arguments presented against the positivist notion of a ‘truly objective truth’ put forth by Cole and Knowles (2001: 123-127), I still employed three “traditional” social science features that, I feel, are unaccounted for in the assessment provided above: member checking, peer scrutiny/ peer debriefing, and, to a lesser extent, confidentiality—specifically the use of pseudonyms for the participants (Shenton 2004). Cole and Knowles articulate a set of eight elements and associated features that balances the positivist paradigm of “scientific” rigour with the realties of an in-depth, interview. In the next paragraph I briefly detail how I incorporated each element in my study.

The first defining element is referred to as intentionality. Intentionality means that the research must stand for something because “good” Life History research has a clear intellectual and moral purpose (125). As such, Life History researchers “have two intentions: to advance the understanding about complex interaction between individuals’ lives and the institutional and societal contexts within which they are lived; and, through consciousness raising and associated action, to contribute to the creation of more just and dignified explorations and renderings of the
human condition that, in turn, lead to the enhancement of qualities and conditions under which lives are lived” (126). I choose to not belabor or repeat statements that have been made throughout this thesis; therefore, I believe it to be abundantly clear that this research project has a clearly defined moral and intellectual purpose. The second is the researcher presence. Cole and Knowles argue that the researcher will make themselves known, or felt, in the research. In Life History research, “the researcher is present through an explicit reflexive self-accounting; his presence is implied and felt; and, the research text clearly bears his signature or fingerprint. Life History research texts explicitly (although perhaps subtly) reveal the intersection of a researcher’s life with that of those of the researched” (126). Early on in the creation of this research project, I made it apparent to locate my own biases and assumptions in the thesis\(^83\) to maintain a level of objectivity while allowing the reader a window into the inspirations that drive the research. The third element is methodological commitment: “Sound life history research reflects a methodological commitment through evidence of a principled process and procedural harmony. … The principles … are rooted in notions of relationality, mutuality, empathy, care, sensitivity and respect” (126). The fourth element is Life History’s holistic quality. Rigorous Life History research emphasizes not just a methodological commitment but a conceptual one that stresses consistency and coherence “that runs counter to conventional research endeavours that tend to be linear, sequential, compartmentalized, and distanced from the researcher and participants” (126). Again, “good” Life History research speaks to the “truthfulness and sincerity of the research relationship, process of inquiry, interpretation and representational form” (ibid). Through a narrative driven account of objectors lived experiences, their stories, as Thomas and

\(^{83}\) Recall my exposition in Chapter 1, Section 5: How I Arrived At This Topic?
Znaniecki suggest, provide the ‘perfect type of sociological material’ that connects the intent, purpose and goals of this research (Farraday and Plummer 1979: 796).

The fifth element is *communicability*. Speaking directly to the expressive potential of the research, communicability refers to the research’s ability to connect with its readers in a holistic way: by connecting to the hearts, souls, and minds of readers (126). Life History research is intended to “have an evocative quality and a high level of resonance for audience of all kinds” (ibid). In the current situation of methodological and theoretical pluralism apparent in qualitative research, the Life History method should be recognized as a major sociological tool and; to reiterate, the *narrative analysis/ analysis as narrative* method provides readers direct insight into the lived experiences of others. The sixth element is the *aesthetic form* of the research presentation. Here, Cole and Knowles stress that there must be consistency between the insights being conveyed and the representational form through which those insights are communicated. That, there is a concern with both the aesthetic quality of the research account and its aesthetic appeal (127). For example: does the chosen form— say a narrative driven thesis —accurately honour and represent the research? I would maintain that yes, a narrative driven account of objectors lived experiences presented through individualized monologues creates a harmony between the aesthetic form and the moral and intellectual purpose of the research. The seventh element deals specifically with *knowledge claims*. Cole and Knowles maintain that life history research rejects notions about the possibilities of an absolute and objective truth which relieves the researcher of any responsibilities for making knowledge claims that are conclusive, finite, and universal. As such “Any knowledge claims must reflect the multidimensional, complex, dynamic, intersubjective, and contextual nature of human experience. In so doing, knowledge claims must be made with sufficient ambiguity and humility to allow for multiple interpretations
and reader response” (127). The experiences presented in the narratives shift and change from context to context, and the criteria of truth here is the grasping objectively of these lived experiences. This is not to say that the experiences lay any claim to being a kind of universal truth as any two life histories in the same area are likely to produce massive conflicts and contradictions both within themselves and between each other. It is important to recognize then the self-apparent quandary that both could be universally right, and that neither need be. The eighth, and final, element relates to the contribution of the research itself. Being directly related to the first element, intentionality, the theoretical and practical potential of the research is intrinsically linked to its moral and intellectual purpose. This means that Life History research has transformative potential (127) as the former acknowledges the “centrality of the question So What?” (Ibid). Therefore, the power of the inquiry to provide insight into individual lives and, more generally, the human condition, the eighth element, “urges us as researchers to imagine new possibilities for those whom are work is about and for” (ibid). Therefore, I would say the most important and prominent strategy is that, the heart and soul of Life History research is a reimagining of our own agency within society; to reject the idea that we are just “passive agents of the state or universities or any other agency of society” (ibid). It is my hope that the insights presented within this thesis can add breadth to and deepen the conversations already being had about objectionism as well as our understandings of the state of war and war making in the modern age.

5.7 Concluding Thoughts

The Life History method itself is about creating a connection between the research, in its entirety, and the reader. Life History research conducted vis-à-vis an in-depth, interview study, is about reconnecting with ourselves and our mutual responsibilities towards one another as the
general can be best understood through an analysis of the particular. Of course, arriving at such a destination must be consistent in its intent and method so that the reader can understand exactly where the research and the researcher are situated in relation to one another as well as in relation to the participants themselves. Readers, or the audience, are then “compelled to consider the implications of a provocative and aesthetically or intellectually challenging image” (Cole and Knowles 2001: 102). The extent, to which any representation of the research allows for the reader to enter constructed life texts, reflects the researcher’s “moral purpose in relation to his/her intuitive and rational frames of portrayal, his/ her technical skills and institutional, political confidence, and his/her intentions with respect to public access and political action (Cole and Knowles 103). To put it plainly, to craft a life history from in-depth interviews is to engage in making art. To make sense of this statement is to understand that the “powers of imagination and metaphors are crucial ingredients for the process of sensitively crafting elements of life— and the crucial meanings of it — for others to discover” (103). There are definite issues that have been heavily considered during the formulation and writing of this project, such as: the fundamental meanings of experience held by the participants given the focus of the inquiry, the work’s moral and political purposes, the intended audience, a development of technical skills and abilities with regards to developing the representational form and, lastly, ‘stepping outside of the box’ of conventional qualitative scholarship (104). For ease of reference, I allocate each of the four interviews its own space to be recounted as narrative driven monologue. The narrative driven histories contained herein provide you, the reader, a glimpse into present societal conditions of a lived, social reality that is not readily seen or heard. Each narrative is offered for

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84 Cole and Knowles mention that “this point is larger than it first appears because it embraces questions about authority of process and roundedness in a tradition of inquiry — issues that some members of the academy are hesitant to consider, and, even less so, act upon” (104).
analysis because it invites the reader into the lived experiences of conscientious objectors: the things they say, felt and heard, the lives they have touched and the lives that have touched them.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{85}These are real stories, from real people, that were articulated in response to the interview guide provided in Appendix C.
Chapter 6

Findings and Analysis

6.1 Introduction

The cast of this thesis is comprised of four individuals, all with unique experiences in the military and their own interpretations of objectionism. Furthermore, all four address objectionism as a moral question that they must each answer on their own as they begin their journey of conscientizing. It is through this process of conscientizing that each person develops a critical consciousness that is constitutive of an awakening to their place in history and a deepening of their relationship to their own humanity.

The first story in this text is from Jess, a former Air Force pilot, who describes her military self as having been a “monkey in a suit”. Mike Smith, who was also an Air Force pilot, like Jess, approaches objectionism and the U.S. constitution from a strong Libertarian perspective that draws heavily on the likes of Thomas Paine, Ayn Rand, and the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. Craig Taylor, the third participant, was a former Logistics Officer who was stationed at a military base in the South Pacific. His journey and foray into objectionism is long and complicated. Craig brings objectionism into the metaphysical as he reacquaints himself with his true disposition and conscience towards the demands that were placed on him as a military member. Robert\(^{86}\) is the final participant in this thesis. Having first received a post-secondary education before enlisting, Robert decided that he would pursue a support role in the military by training to become a Healthcare Specialist/Combat Medic. Though he had preconceived notions of what military duty was, the seductive elements of military

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\(^{86}\) Robert was the only participant who chose to use his given name in the study. All others names provided are pseudonyms that were chosen by each participant during the completion of the Signed Consent Forms.
enlistment and duty persuaded him to volunteer. It was during his training at home in the U.S., and at military exercises in allied nations abroad, that Robert came to truly see the military culture as something he abhorred and despised. In turning to conscientious objection, Robert was able to fully understand who he was and how he wanted to live his own life in contrast to the quasi-benevolent nature of the military.

What follows below, is a series of individual narratives, presented as monologues, which were created from the in-depth interviews that I conducted with Jess, Mike, Craig, and Robert, respectively. After each narrative, I provided a brief analysis of the narrative to discuss, what I interpret as ‘codable moments’ that demonstrate a connection between the literature in Chapter 4, the theoretical framework in Chapter 5, and the general themes, ideas, and insights that comprised their experiences as objectors.

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87I originally had ‘crafted’ in place of ‘created’. I made a conscious decision to change the wording for three reasons: (1) to reflect the authenticity of the interviews as only minor grammatical edits were made so that the responses read in a cohesive manner; (2) to maintain the heuristic nature of the project; and (3) to acknowledge an element of artistry is present here with the purpose of helping to deepen the connection between the reader and the life histories presented herein.
6.2 Jess: The ‘Monkey In A Suit’

So, I’m originally from California. I was born and raised in San Diego and growing up I had very little ties or exposure to the military, which is funny because San Diego is a huge military town with a zillion NAVY bases. One thing that I do recall was when I was young my family and I would go to watch the Blue Angels perform, once or twice a year, because their base was stationed just north of San Diego. My grandfather had served in the American Army during World War Two. He lived in Illinois so I did not get the chance to know him very well so aside from the Blue Angels and my grandfather, those were closest ties I had to the military prior to joining. I do not even feel that I was ever exposed to the military culture until some of the military schools started looking at me. I am a Hispanic female and I was very adept at school and achieved good grades. I guess you could say I came from a typical, conservative/Republican upbringing although politics was never really big in our home. Growing up, I attended a Catholic school from fourth grade to twelfth grade. For many families, I would say, discussions regarding politics are, to some degree, common around the dinner table or at least get there eventually. However in my family, the kinds of discussions related to foreign or domestic policy did not really happen until later in my life when the events of 9/11 happened while I was a senior in high school. I think that for me, like it was for most people joining the military at that particular time, 9/11 stood out as a very influential moment in our lifetime — especially in my life. It was something that felt very close to me and like most, if not all, Americans, were obviously very upset about it. When I think about it now, it was ironic that around this same time the Air Force Academy had already started recruiting me for their soccer team. The combined excitement of getting to play D1 (Division One) soccer with a full scholarship and with 9/11 really serving as a catalyst to join, all these things proved to be a very influential time in my life. Like most
graduating seniors, this is the time where you begin to really decide what you want to do with your life and where you need to go to make those dreams happen. With such an opportunity from the Air Force Academy being placed in my lap, I thought why not give this a shot! It is only now that looking back, with 9/11 happening and the surge in media attention and messages regarding military recruitment, that all these things really helped influence my decision to enlist and now begin to make sense to me. This proves to be especially true when I consider how I bought off on all the propaganda that was going on at the time; all these events and ideas occurring around me proved to be very climactic and very important events in my life with respect to my decision to join the military.

Because I did not really see much of the military prior to joining, aside from the Blue Angel performances, it was all really new and exciting to me when I finally decided to enlist. The only thing that I would say that I was exposed to were the television commercials basically saying that “It is going to be a challenge” and “It is a noble thing to do!” It was generally accepted that being in the military was a vaunted position and society, in general, respects military members. These were very, very attractive qualities to me. I was someone who prided themselves on accepting and exceeding the challenges that were presented before them and I enjoyed and thrived in accomplishing difficult tasks that I could push and measure myself against. When I consider this in relation to how people hold military members up on a pedestal, this also proved to be attractive in that sense as well. We are told constantly throughout our lives that being in the military is patriotic and that appeals to a lot of people; it definitely appealed to me!

Again, a lot of this is looking back but when I do think back to when I first joined compared to where I am now, it is a bit of a mixed bag. I had a lot of great experiences and a lot
of bad ones in the military and I think my evolving as a person has definitely been impacted by that. While I was in the military, I was able to pursue post-secondary education and even graduate studies; I was able to get degrees and be involved in leadership positions. This is all culminated with me becoming an aircraft commander and having over a thousand hours of combat experience. These kinds of experiences really force you to sharpen and heighten your senses and focus. It is a highly structured environment that I thrived in. I really will miss some of the camaraderie and the intensity though. I do not think I’ll find a civilian job or undertaking where so much is on the line and you are being so challenged. The flip side of that is I do feel a lot like that I was mislead and the propaganda that is force fed to you from day one at the academy, as a basic cadet, where the whole point is to break people down and build them back up. This is obviously great for fostering a sense of team but its also kind of dangerous in that you cannot really be a free thinker in that sort of environment and you learn to obey, much of which is unquestionable, and I disliked this immensely. It was not until I became a conscientious objector and reflected on a lot of this that it never really had occurred to me how well that propaganda worked on people, myself particularly. One example that I recall was when I was a freshman in the military academy. It seemed like the first year was just one big hazing ritual as you spend a lot of time with your back against the wall, in the hall way and people are yelling at you while you regurgitate quotes or facts or things about airplanes and generals. There is one quote by Jon Stewart Mills, though it has been some time since I had to recall it in its entirety but it starts with “War is an ugly thing but not the ugliest of things”; and it goes to talk about the man who has nothing for which he is willing to fight and nothing for which he is willing to die. All these quotes, all these messages are just entirely geared towards pumping you up and getting you excited about going to war, essentially, and making it feel like that is a normal thing to do.
On the one hand, I think that is somewhat necessary in that there has to be some sort of training to dehumanize people on the other side; if we did not have that, then it would probably a lot more difficult for people to pull the trigger and “do their job.” It is like your whole first year is this indoctrination that, at the time, I did not really recognize it as such. If I did, I obviously was not really aware of what kind of impact that would really have on me. All of this, the quotes, the memorization, the tradition, it was just something that you do; you are, basically, participating in history, so to speak. It was about convincing you, to help convince yourself, that what you were going to be doing was right. It was not until much later in my life that, looking back, I thought about all these things I had to remember which were just pounded into my head over and over and over again. There was one memory I have that really stood out. It was not uncommon for educators, in and outside of the military, to use videos and music to assist with their lessons. The academy packed us into an auditorium and showed us a video of planes dropping bombs on targets; you’re seeing buildings being destroyed, people being killed, and this was all shown with the song “Bodies” by Drowning Pool being played in the background. There is all this violent imagery, coupled with this explicitly violent song, and I had not really considered the impact that this all had on me; or, to what extent that effected those around me. Looking back, it is really sick and embarrassing but when you are in thick of it, you do not really get to think about things. You are eighteen or nineteen years old and this is what you are shown. Everyone else around you seems to be responding positively and here I am thinking, “Oh, this is cool. I am going to be doing some pretty rad stuff in my future. “You begin to feel this bystander effect, or bystander apathy. It is a really weird phenomenon and it worked. It is very easy to get swept up in something when you are surrounded by four or five hundred of your peers and everyone seems to be really pumped up by what they are being shown. Suddenly, you find yourself thinking,
“Okay, I guess this is what we are doing.” That part of my life is very humbling when I look back at it. It is very easy to get swept up in the hype of what is going on unless you have had some experience with these issues then it might be more of a difficult pill for you to swallow. I had one friend who went to Notre Dame Academy before enlisting and he had an entirely different experience and was able to push back against some of those messages. Anybody who resists that in its entirety would probably not be in the academy in the first place.

What proves to be really startling is when I look back on my career. I feel quite naive and a little bit of shame just because I actually fit in REALLY well into the military structure. It is like they lay out a path for you; this is how you succeed; this is how you climb the ladder; this is what you need to do; check the box. I was really good at that and I really thrived there. Even as a pilot, I belonged to a very competitive squadron. I was a Special Operations pilot. That was my job and almost everyone in my squadron was very capable and very competent at what they were doing. We were working for the most elite military units in the world, you know, all the special three letter words and the classified names that you are not supposed to say. As I’ve said before, I really thrived in that environment and I honestly really tried to do my best to succeed. It was not until much later when I started to really consider what I was doing that I sought learning outside of the military. I found out about the Non-Aggression Principle and some different philosophies which helped me to understand that what we were doing really — what I was doing — was not what I thought it was. I honestly felt duped and I felt really silly that I had poured so much of my life and so much of my effort into things that were ultimately destructive and without good cause. These were things that are, or were, arguably, illegal and very immoral. I cannot stress how embarrassing this is to me to look back and say “Oh my gosh! I was a really
good monkey in a suit.” I was really good at executing lower level tasks without knowing what the bigger picture was for so long.

The way I have often described my military experience, prior over to my conscientious objection, was like I was looking at life through a soda straw. This understanding helped me to articulate what I was doing by situating things as a strategic versus tactical binary where strategy is the overall picture; the ‘mission’ where the strategy is the overarching goal. Then you move onto tactics, which are the very small things you do; the day to day or one particular mission or campaign. In my experience as a pilot, my view was purely tactical. What is the mission today? How are we going about to best execute it? Blah, blah, blah. Like “Oh hey! These guys are planting IEDs. We are going to find them; we are going to toss some suits on and, you know, raid their house and take them” and then your day ends and starts all over in the morning. That is a very tactical view. What is happening right now today? What is my job today? It was not until I started looking and developing that strategic view that I began see a much bigger picture! For instance, “Hey! IEDs are not a big problem when you are not in someone else's country.” That is really the best way I can describe it and one of the biggest issues that I developed was that most everybody I know, or knew, in the military have, or at one point had, a very “tactical view” of their job. They never stopped to think for a minute, step back and see the “strategic picture”. I would hear “Oh yeah, we are fighting for defense.” So you mean to tell me that we just flew eight thousand miles to occupy another country and somehow that is actually defense? I have a really good analogy about this that I saw in a documentary where the interviewer asks some engineers about their jobs working at a nuclear power plant. He asks, “What’s the absolute worst thing that can happen at your job?” Some of the answers he got back were “Oh you know, our computers really suck so if they crashed all our work would be gone,” “Our chairs are really
uncomfortable,” or “The practices we have at our plant are frustrating.” Not one person said we are working on nuclear capabilities, which have the opportunity to destroy the planet! Not one person. Like these engineers, it is so easy for everybody to get caught up in the tactical day-to-day; what’s my job? How do I do it in the best way? As soon as you started seeing the big picture, for me, it was like “Oh my god, what have I been doing? This does not feel right.” It just was not as self-evident as it was before.

If I was asked if I recognize myself better in the uniform or outside, I would definitely say outside as this thought had occurred to me the other day: any schmuck can follow orders. It is a very easy thing to be told what to do, how to do it and not question what exactly you are doing by rationalizing it as: “I’m just doing my job”. I think that people, in general, whether you are soldiers or not, do a really good job at separating themselves and their identities. Lets say, “When I am in my uniform, I am an agent of the government. I do what I am told. When I am home, I am the head of my household. I manage it.” Or “When I am at church, I am an agent of God and I live my life in accordance with whatever religion.” I would not say this is how I am now but I definitely lived like this for a long time and that was one of the biggest things that has changed in me. I would say that I do not separate myself from my acceptable standards of behavior based on whether or not I am functioning as a military officer, as a parent, or as a business owner. I think many people, and I did for a long time too, will engage in behavior that they would never engage in their personal life but because it has sanction from authority, for example you were ordered to do it, so that they then feel free to engage in something that they would otherwise not. I have friends who tell me that they adjust their life and their actions based on the role they need to fill at the time; be it in the military or otherwise. I have come to learn that I have serious qualms with trying to go through life doing that. To engage in conduct that
you would not normally do is just an inconsistent way of living life. I am now more conscious of and comfortable with applying the same set of moral standards regardless of whatever roll I am going to fulfill.

When I had finally gotten through the academy and the initial training regiments, I found my experiences within the military and the Air Force itself as very profound. The military structure and the hierarchy within that institution function in certain ways that effect how you behave and act. I would not necessarily call it “pressure” so much as much as that is just the way the system is built. Aside from the obvious differences found in the chain of command, the military system is built to reward those who do well, work hard and follow orders and do not cause trouble. It is built to reward those that make it [the military] their life and make it their highest priority. I cannot think of many people I know in the military that question what is going on. Perhaps that is a bit of an unfair characterization. There are certainly a lot of people who think we what we are doing is unnecessary but Iraq is as far as they take it. I do not know if I would ever say that I felt pressured, or faced any overt external pressures, because that is just the nature of the system and I said before, it rewards those who follow orders well. Type A personalities, for instance, tend to join and thrive in the military or, at least, people that are good at following orders or need that structured environment. I think that the military is particularly attractive to certain kinds of people; I was that type of person. I was the type of person who enjoys a challenge but also thrived in a space where the path is laid out for me. And they, the military I mean, will tell you that they want their officers to be thinking outside of the box but what they really mean is it is just a bigger box to operate in. They just want people that do not buck the system. For some people, it is really easy when you are growing up and believing that “Hey, this is good” or “We are always on the right side”; or, that “We are doing God’s work”,
“We are doing the country’s work”. That is a really easy thing for people to get excited about and not question, and it just fits right in that neat little box of what you have been told. When your feelings and thoughts start to question that box and, by extension, everyone else operating in that box, things can get complicated.

I spent the majority of my career in Special Operations as a pilot in one squadron. During this time, I developed some really close friendships and the entire squadron generally got along really well. We all really loved the “mission.” Admittedly, I did while I still believed in it. My husband was also in the Air Force but he flew a different plane, in a different squadron and was involved in different missions. So, during our time in the military, we were never stationed together. We obviously wanted to live together at some point and I ended up switching squadrons and learned how to fly a new airplane, which meant they moved me to a new base. I had only been there for a few months before I submitted my Conscientious Objector application so that new base is where I have been stationed for the last few years. Because there was such a relatively quick overlap between when I transferred and submitted my CO package, I did not really get to build any lasting or strong relationships with the people in that squadron. That being said, for the most part, everyone knew that there was something different about me, “Oh, that is the new gal”, “There is something up with her”, “She is not flying” and nobody really knew who I was or what I was about. They just kind of left me on my own and it has kind of been that way for the last three years. People here know that there is something different about me, that I’m not flying, that I’ve been trying to get out but that is the extent of it. Had I still been in my previous squadron where I had been for four years and deployed eight times, I think that applying for CO status would have been much harder to go through. It would have been a vastly different experience because these were people I had known for years, had deployed with, had flown with,
worked with; but as it was, I only knew a handful of people at my new squadron so when I moved there, it was fairly transparent to everybody. I do not really have any regrets about the way things went but it definitely would have been infinitely more awkward to be around people who are stepping the fly and doing crew briefs all the time. I think I definitely would have stood out a lot more in a flying squadron as opposed to where they had assigned me. So when I did file for CO status and I was at my new base, some people knew but no one knew me well enough to really ask me questions about it. They knew I had submitted a CO package and that was about the extent of it. In my experience, I found that people are not generally curious about it [conscientious objection] nor did they ask me questions. The whole process has been a bit isolating. To put things in context, my husband had also submitted for CO status and had actually started his process before I did. So when I had moved bases, I learned to fly a new airplane and when I did put my CO package in, I had a bit of insight on how to maneuver through the process. When my command informed me of my pending transfer, I asked to be put in the Sexual Assault Prevention Office (SAPO) because I had done some work and training with them before. Because I had already started formulating my ideas about CO and my own philosophies, I decided that the SAPO would be the best place for me as I would be the furthest I could be from the mission but still be able to help people. They were receptive to that, thank goodness, and that is where I have been for the last two years.\textsuperscript{88} Ironically enough, when I had first approached my Commanding Officer about filing for CO status, Edward Snowden was leaving for China so I think that made him a bit antsy about the whole thing. He had asked me if I had been talking to WikiLeaks and my security clearance had been suspended that same day which has not happened

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\textsuperscript{88} At the time of the interview, in September of 2015, Jess was still currently enlisted. During out follow up conversation in October of 2015, she informed me that she had approved for “Separation” from the military. This is a starkly different process of leaving the military than being discharged as a CO.
to any other conscientious objector that I know of. So that was a bit unprecedented and a bit of a reflection, I believe, of current events going on in the world and that they also do not get many conscientious objectors to begin with. So I think he was just being a bit more conservative with safety precautions because maybe they thought “We do not know where this girl’s head is at.” In that respect, I think my objection made them a bit nervous but on the other hand, my actions and my words seemed to assuage any worries that I would not follow the rules or the process, etc. In any case, I am no longer around other enlisted people or other flyers. I am currently resigned to my office where I work with two civilians. When I look back at the time, specifically, I became really isolated from the military culture and the squadron setting that I had become so used to. Despite the fact that most civilian members are still former military, it was not the same. As a side note, it is not really surprising that former military members stick with the service. Everybody sticks with the government jobs for as long as they can.

In any case, my experience in filing for CO status has been a bit unique to myself. It is not necessarily the same for everyone who files and, though the process is clearly defined, how it plays out will vary from person to person. This is especially true when it comes to the reactions of your friends and squad mates. My closest friends, the ones who have been with me over the couple of years as my worldviews have been evolving, are generally pretty supportive of my decision. Most of my peers, in some part, question the necessity and productiveness of our mission; especially in Afghanistan and also in Iraq and in East Asia. On the hand one, a lot of my peers would say “Oh my gosh! What we are doing is wasteful, counter productive,” “It is going to result in blowback” but that is as far as they take it. There are more officers who think like that then you would guess. On the other hand, I have had some of my peers, who did the same job I did, not outright condemn my decision to file for CO status but they would say things like “You
are just trying to get out before your contract is up,” “How could you do this?” “You are reneging on your word” and “You are losing all credibility. You would have had more credibility and a right to say something if you had stuck out your ten years.” At this rate, I probably will be or at least fulfilling my whole commitment but it has been a mixed bag in terms of response from different people, friends or otherwise. Like I said before, some people have been very supportive as a lot of people get the first sixty percent of what I am saying. However, it is a big hurdle to face yourself and say: “I am a conscientious objector.” I think most people just resign themselves to saying: “I will wait out my commitment and get out then.”

Part of me gets really, really frustrated when I think about what people used to say to me. I definitely got some pushback from friends and family. Some family had zero interest in discussing the subject while others have come to support me and my position over time. Then there is the online community! The support that my husband and I received has been overwhelmingly positive which was/ is very exciting. But focusing on the military, specifically, was different. If I had to teach a class and it is, let us assume, fifty enlisted guys all in rags or white shirt and tie. No matter what you ask or say to them, they would just respond “Hooah,” as we say anyway. What is most frustrating about this experience is that I would think, “You guys have no idea. None of you are giving any thought or questions to what you are doing.” All they are doing is just simply completing their day-to-day job, like they are stuck in this tactical view, and are not giving any thought to the bigger picture of their actions. That was and is still really frustrating for me. Sometimes I find myself holding that against other people but at the same time, I remind myself “You deployed eight times before you figured it out” and not everyone is going to have the same experiences or reflections and reading that I did. So I feel

89 Jess clarified that "Hooah" is a saying amongst soldiers that one uses as a bit of a catchall phrase but generally it is used to respond in the affirmative.
really torn with my relationship to other military members because on the one hand I truly believe that people are accountable to what they do; whether they are following orders or not. On the other hand, I very much understand how someone can get sucked into that way of thinking and living. You just do you job, do your job, do your job and you trust there is a good reason why you are doing that job. You trust that there is a good reason why you are in this shit hole; why you are attacking farmers and civilians. You have to justify it to yourself and somebody else has the bigger picture. I get torn because I feel like my good friends that are still in the military are engaging in things that are not right and I know, that deep down, they are good people. They either, obviously, have to believe in what they are doing to justify it to themselves in some way or just hold themselves not accountable. This gets back to what we were talking about earlier with respect to this separation of identities: “I was just doing my job.” So that speaks to how I feel with respect to other soldiers and other people in the military. Sometimes I really want to condemn them and other times I have to remind myself that “You were there once too” or “You were there for a long time.” It is very difficult to cast judgment on somebody’s character especially if they really believe in what they are doing. I guess, in the grand scheme of things, I really want, and expect, people to be like “Take a look at what your beliefs are” and take it one more step by asking yourself “Is what I am doing, in my daily work, in accordance with those beliefs?” Whatever they are. I cannot certainly dictate that everyone should follow my Non-Aggression principle; I wish they would but I cannot do or expect that; I will not do that. I just feel like there are so many people out there who do not even put the thought into it what they are doing and that is incredibly frustrating because people’s lives are on the line; there is property on the line. There is just so much at stake.
What is really difficult for people to understand about my application, as well as my husband’s, is that we are not conscientious objectors from a religious perspective. A lot of people will be like “Oh, yeah you started reading what Christ said. I can see how you became a conscientious objector.” It makes me chuckle a little bit because a lot of people are more understanding if you phrase it in such a way that “My objection is in accordance with my faith” or “The teachings of my faith.” My husband and I came at it from more of a moral rather than a religious perspective and I think that is a lot more difficult for people to grasp. That has definitely influenced the conversations we have had with other people because our philosophy is based on principles of non-aggression. Basically what that means is that the only morally, justified use of force is in defense of one’s self—your person. Why I love it and why I would honestly consider it my faith system is that I can apply these principles of non-aggression to what I am doing professionally and I can also apply it in my personal life. For example, the first precept is “Do no harm” and that has coalesced into my worldview. To be honest, I would consider myself an anarchist. What I mean when I say ‘anarchy’ is not in relation to the popular misconception, which is that anarchy means chaos or disorder. That is something entirely different. Anarchy, by definition, is a refusal to obey illegitimate authority. Furthermore, I fundamentally believe that people own themselves. I do not want to get into the entire philosophy just yet but there are a whole lot of other considerations that come with my reasons for being a conscientious objector. When it comes to the currently military campaigns abroad, I do not believe that what we are doing is defense. Though I will often hear from my fellow military members, or even those outside that, “Well, you know we have to root out terrorism.” In the context of what has been going on abroad, that is, quite frankly, one of the dumbest things I have ever heard. Sure, there will always be terrorists but you need respond to the attack once it
happens; not occupy another country, use drone strikes, and fly your people 8000 miles to conduct preemptive defense. To me, after having been there, having lived that ‘fantasy’, that sounds like a load of shit. However, because my worldview is wrapped up in this moral position, not necessarily a religious position, I have come to question what is considered a “legitimate authority”. That point alone, I think, really throws people off and I believe that this misunderstanding of what anarchy is in relation to questioning authority makes it more difficult for me to make my case. This proves to be especially difficult with those people who have no background or understanding of where my leanings come from. I think it would be a lot easier if I said “Oh I’m a Christian! This is what Christ says about how we should treat one another.” That, I think, is a lot easier, at least for Americans, to grasp. “Oh I can respect your decision” but once you start attacking the god, that is the state, people turn off really quickly. Never the less, being a woman in the military did have an effect, to some degree, on my experience. I was only the fourth, female pilot in my squadron so it was a very masculine environment and very gung-ho. As I said before, people were very competent, very competitive and we had a very challenging but rewarding ‘mission.’ I have no idea how things might have turned out had I stayed in my original squadron when I submitted my CO package. Perhaps there might have been more being said, maybe, but by virtue of me being in a new place, a new airplane, a new squadron, I was able to avoid it. In my new squadron, people did not know me. It was just kind of “Well that is just the gal that is trying to get out.” I do not really recall encountering any “You are a wimp” or “You are a coward” or “You are scared.” I think part of the reason why I never heard that is because I feel I have some serious credibility and I think that matters to people. Had I been a desk jockey or someone who had not been deployed as much as I had, or had not taken part in the sort of missions that I had, then people might have reacted differently. The fact of the
matter was that I had been around the world; I had been doing my job for a long time and I definitely have some experience to speak from. I think that was a positive or at least helped to avoid some of the negative reactions to people about claiming to conscientious objection.

The funny thing about all of this was that I loved my job for a long time, which makes where I am sitting now so ironic. I loved the challenge; I loved the camaraderie; I loved the sense of teamwork; of accomplishing something and having a difficult problem to solve where I felt like I had to prove myself. I really liked that sort of environment and the military is a great fit for that. It is funny that when I reflect on the last ten years or so, that a lot has changed. I really liked it. At least while I believed in what I was doing while I still had that tactical view. I was very excited to do my job. I was very happy, very proud of myself, very motivated to do my best and to continue to do my best so when I became an objector, it was not something that necessarily happened over night though there were important and memorable moments that lead to my objection. Honestly, it was really a “faith journey,” so to speak. I started reading some Thomas Paine and this guy kind of shook my belief and revealed a lot about religion that I had not previously considered. So in my private life, outside of the military, I began to question things like “Well, I do not know if I believe in all this stuff that is in a book, that was written by humans and translated. It is open to error and interpretation.” I began demanding proof of things before I would believe anymore and that started roughly in 2009. When I was still flying, I went to Afghanistan about five times and between the first time and the fifth time, nothing had really changed. There were more dead people, more property destroyed and that was it. I had lost more friends between the first and fifth time and at some point I said, “I do not question things here like I have been doing in my personal life. Things now have to be self-evident for me before I just trust that it is the right thing,” and “Why am I not I doing this in my professional life? Why
am I placing my trust in someone else's judgment that ‘This mission is necessary’” or “‘Yeah, it 
[Afghanistan] is the right place for you to be”’ or, just bluntly, “It is Afghanistan”. At some 
point, this belief in a higher power, or that somebody had a bigger, better, strategic picture, was 
not enough to justify the taking of human life. I think human life is sacred and if I am ever going 
to have anything to do with taking it, or destroying property, then I have to know for myself that 
what I am doing is a defensive act. I had lost that and that feeling of loss occurred over a very 
long time. My husband had put in his CO paperwork about six months before I did and, for him, 
I think it was a lot to make the decision because he was a fighter pilot. A lot of the bombs he 
dropped were really bothering him and he and I travelled this path together. What ultimately, for 
me, was a cataclysmic event was when I was talking to my husband about how I thought that 
Afghanistan was illegal and unconstitutional. I had done my Master’s thesis paper on drone 
strikes and targeting American citizens without due process and I remember we were talking and 
I was just rambling on and on to him. During our conversation, he looked over at me and said 
“Jess, if you really believe what you are saying, how can you stay in?” Until then, we had both 
had been travelling down this path but we never really pressured each other. We have always 
been a team and each person needs to make those kinds of decisions on their own but when he 
said that, it really cut to my core. He is somebody that I love and trust; someone who has been by 
my side through all of this and he was the one to say: “If you believe what you are saying then 
how can you stay in the military?” I will never, ever forget that. It was a very startling moment 
and part of me resented him for putting me on the spot. Like, shit, that was a really hard question 
to answer and, ultimately, I could not come up with a good enough reason that would make me 
want to stay in the military. So, in tandem with things going on in my life, my decision to object 
began to percolate more and more.
When I had finally submitted my package, it was situated almost, entirely as a moral position. I learned about the Non-Aggression Principle and I was like “Holy shit! This makes a lot of sense.” As I began studying and learning more about it, I began to apply it my personal life and what I was doing in the military. I can name any political issue and I can tell you exactly my position is based on that framework. It is a set of principles that spans across geography, time and people; every person, anywhere, can follow this thing and, for me, it became a self-evident truth. I had found a moral metric by which I could measure my own actions as well as measure the actions of others. It really is my decision making model now. What is really great is that the Non-Aggression Principle is compatible with religion, which is another thing that I like about it because it is a moral position. I believe it is an actual truth and, for me, there are very few truths in the world. What I had learned about the world, and myself, was strong enough to get me to submit a CO package because it was not easy watching my husband suffer through the process for six months already and the process itself is not easy by any stretch. You have some serious hurdles to get over, to say the least, in order to finally get your package in.

Right around the time I was considering submitting a CO package, which was about two and a half years ago, my husband and I were surprised with a pregnancy. This proved to complicate things slightly because when you are pregnant you can apply for Separation. So, initially, I thought that would I first tried to separate from the Air Force that way because I knew I had objections to why and what we were doing; I did not want to do it anymore but I had not quite come to the point where I could say “This is a moral issue for me.” I thought, “This is a stupid issue.” I had a pragmatic disdain for what we were doing and it had not quite yet become a moral thing for me. So I initially tried to get out through pregnancy/ Separation because it is faster, it is easier and I was obviously eligible. In a couple months, between the time I found out
I was pregnant and when I submitted my CO package, is when my husband and I had that conversation where he asked me if I believed was I saying then could I stay. That conversation caused a lot of turmoil for me. I think for me that was the first time in my life I became depressed. I was really struggling with who I was, how I was acting and is what I am doing consistent with what I believe? Two of the biggest hurdles that caused me a lot of turmoil were: first, the idea that I had signed a dotted line that said you will serve for ten years after pilot training and I had not yet reached my ten years. I was always raised to do what I said I was going to do and this did feel like a violation of that. That was one thing that caused me a lot of angst. The second thing was I had just switched airplanes and the new plane I was going to fly was going to be more of a supporting role so it would be a lot ‘less aggressive’ than what I was doing for the previous four years. So part me thought “Well, you know, maybe if you are not at the tip of the spear, is that the same?” or “Are you still supporting the same machinery of war?” In the end, I came to the conclusion that, yes, no matter what your job is in the military, the primary goal of the military, what it accomplishes is death and destruction. So even in my role now, as a Sexual Assault Prevention officer, I feel like I do not want to be contributing to this mission at all. Even if I was the gym clerk handing out towels, I still do not want to be part of this team. Those two hurdles, the feeling like I was going back on my word, really, really bothered me; and, the uncertainty of “Well, maybe in my new job I will actually be doing good things.” I obviously got over both of those and the part about my feelings that I was going back on my word, did not quite subside till I started reading a bit of Murray Rothbard. He is a famous anarcho-capitalist and he had a great conversation on what a legitimate contract is. What this helped to figure out is that I came to the conclusion that if you truly own yourself, then you cannot sign yourself over to, what is essentially, slavery and indentured servitude. Those things
do not allow you to change your mind. The second thing is that I believe both parties have to uphold their end of the contract; I took an oath of office that said I am going to defend the Constitution and all of the deployments that I participated in did not feel constitutional nor did they have anything to do with defense. They definitely did not do anything to increase “freedom” at home. In fact, what I see now is that it decreased lives and liberty elsewhere. So from my perspective, the military had not upheld its end of the contract and, therefore, I should be free to go. But those two hurdles were very difficult for me to get over before I could submit a package.

I have also been huge bookworm since this whole thing happened. A lot of the books that I had read have really shaken my religious foundation as my own personal philosophies have been changing. I read Atlas Shrugged maybe five or six years ago. I really enjoyed the book though I am not an objectivist like Rand is but that was really the first book that exposed me to the idea of self-ownership and self-sovereignty: you own you, I own me. Even though I did not recognize it at the time for what it was, a lot of things rang true in that book for me. Then there was Thomas Paine. I read Common Sense, The Rights of Man, and The Age of Reason is the one that really threw my religious world for a loop. Then my husband and I discovered Ron Paul. I recall that he wrote an article that was published on his birthday called “Ron Paul: The Gateway drug” and that is exactly what he was for me. I started listening to what he was saying about our foreign policy and it jived with the experiences that my husband and I had overseas. So through him we got exposed to dozens of other authors and philosophies. It was like this whole world that we did not know really existed. Like I said before, Murray Rothbard was also really influential as well as Harry Hazlitt and Lew Rockwell. I could go on and on. There is a very philosophic center that goes with my conscientious objection and it has been wonderful for me how it has all really dovetailed.
I remember the day I was supposed to have a meeting with my commander to tell him about my conscientious objection and I had scheduled a meeting for the afternoon. That morning I got an email from his office that he had to reschedule and I emailed him back saying, “Fuck it. Nope. I’m deciding to conscientiously object” and I just put it in an email. I was smiling the rest of the afternoon and I was bouncing down the halls because I had finally taken that burden off my shoulders. I was finally making a decision that made sense to me; I made a decision that was in accordance with my principles and I began to believe again in what I was doing. There were a lot of ups and downs in the 18 months that followed while my package was being processed which ended up being denied. Through it all I have never wavered in my belief that I did the right thing; I have zero regrets about it but here I am, two and a half years later, still trying to get out but this whole experience has certainly made some things more difficult. It has come with some financial costs and it has definitely come with some personal costs. I have lost some friends in this whole thing but I have no regrets with how I have conducted myself, or the decisions I have made.

I think for most of my life, I was content to accept the answers to my questions from others without hesitation. I was content to justify that somehow, somewhere I would find the answers or that someone else had them. In the Catholic faith, there are three cornerstones: faith, mystery, and miracles. I see that in a lot of religions and there are some things that you just cannot understand or just are not clear. So the answer to those questions is: you just believe. That is what faith is. You take the unanswerable things or the vague answers you do receive at face value. I think for most of my life, I did that. If I ever ran into a question that prompted me to ask “Is this thing moral or not?” I would immediately think, “What does the church say?” or “Is this mission necessary? Somebody sent me here so it must be.” For most of my life I was just content
to play my role without a lot of deep thought into why I was doing certain things and I have always wanted to know the reasons why. I am sure I was a difficult child but I think the biggest change since this whole process has been that I do not do things frivolously anymore; especially important things. I think human life is important; I think how you spend your day and your life is important; I think how your actions affect others is important. That is why the Non-Aggression Principle has been so valuable to me. It gives me this really appropriate framework to help guide my actions and to make decisions moving forward. I feel like I am very deliberate now when I decide on something; that I have a very good reason and that I know what my worldview is. I can defend it. If somebody knows a better way of doing things, I am open to learn about it! I am constantly seeking to make myself better but I definitely make decisions in a very deliberate fashion. I have a very strong foundation for the decisions that I do make whereas before it was very easy to just be a cog in the wheel; that has been a huge difference in who I am today. I don’t have any regrets. I regret that my package was turned down and since then I have applied to separate six times in the last two years and all for different reasons and they have all been denied. But in the end, I have zero regrets about how I have conducted myself throughout this boondoggle.

*Analysis of Jess’s Narrative:*

Having had a grandfather who served in World War II, Jess begins her interview by recounting her earliest memories of the military while growing up in San Diego as well as the inciting incident that lead to her joining the Air Force.

I do not even feel that I was ever exposed to the military culture until some of the military schools started looking at me…I think that for me, like it was for most people joining the military at that particular time, 9/11 stood out as a very influential moment in our lifetime—especially in my life. It was something that felt very close to me and like most, if not all, Americans, were obviously very upset about it. It is only now that looking back, with 9/11 happening and the surge in media attention and messages regarding military recruitment, that all
these things really helped influence my decision to enlist and now begin to make sense to me. This proves to be especially true when I consider how I bought off on all the propaganda that was going on at the time; all these events and ideas occurring around me proved to be very climactic and very important events in my life with respect to my decision to join the military. (102)

Despite this only being the opening of her narrative, Jess addresses some of the central concerns I imagined the responses to embody during the framing and creation of theoretical framework—specifically, Gramsci’s (1992) hegemony and Marx’s (1845) insights on consciousness and conscious behavior. Her internalizing of the incidents of September 11, 2001 speak to the emotional and physical connectedness of the U.S. citizenry, “9/11 stood out as a very influential moment in our lifetime — especially in my life. It was something that felt very close to me and like most, if not all Americans, were obviously very upset about it.” Like any nation that comes under ‘attack’, when one person feels pain or suffering of this kind, that pain and loss will come to unite the people under the banner of a common goal or ideal that, Marx and Gramsci maintain, will manifest and be nurtured in the ideological project of nation building. The ideas of security, safety, freedom and the pursuit of happiness—all core ideals secured and enshrined in the U.S. Constitution—come to take form and shape an interdependent relationship in the consciousness of individuals like Jess; a relationship that is worth fighting for. Jess substantiates this notion in reflecting on her time during training:

It is like your whole first year is this indoctrination that, at the time, I did not really recognize it as such. If I did, I obviously was not really aware of what kind of impact that would really have on me. All of this, the quotes, the memorization, the tradition, it was just something that you do; you are, basically, participating in history, so to speak. It was about convincing you, to help convince yourself, that what you were going to be doing was right. (105)

During a first year demonstration, Jess recalls a startling memory of this ‘indoctrination’ into a culture of ‘legitimatized’ violence (Tilly 1985):

The academy packed us into an auditorium and showed us a video of planes dropping bombs on targets; you’re seeing buildings being destroyed, people being killed, and this was all shown with the song “Bodies” by Drowning Pool being played in the background. There is all this violent imagery, coupled with this explicitly violent song, and I had not
really considered the impact that this all had on me; or, to what extent that effected those around me… You are eighteen or nineteen years old and this is what you are shown. (105)

When Jess finally began to think about conscientious objection, she articulates a differentiation between what she was being told to do (tactical day-to-day) and the overarching strategy that her actions were going to, or supposed to, accomplish. She refers to this as a “strategic versus tactical binary” wherein she reflects upon the foundations that spurred her objection,

everybody I know, or knew, in the military have, or at one point had, a very “tactical view” of their job. They never stopped to think for a minute, step back and see the “strategic picture”. I would hear “Oh yeah, we are fighting for defense.” So you mean to tell me that we just flew eight thousand miles to occupy another country and somehow that is actually defense?…As soon as you started seeing the big picture, for me, it was like “Oh my god, what have I been doing? This does not feel right.” It just was not as self-evident as it was before. (107,108)

As her thoughts and insights of objection began to take form, her husband, Mike Smith90, too was beginning his own journey of conscientizing. Demonstrating the distinction between secular and religious forms of objection, as well as a question of ‘just’ causes for war, Jess and her husband Mike, approached objectionism from a ‘moral standpoint’ that came down to a question of continuity between thought and action and how this connects her view of what constitutes a legitimate authority:

My husband and I came at it from more of a moral rather than a religious perspective… That has definitely influenced the conversations we have had with other people because our philosophy is based on principles of non-aggression. Basically what that means is that the only morally, justified use of force is in defense of one’s self — your person…However, because my world view is wrapped up in this moral position, not necessarily a religious position, I have come to question what is considered a “legitimate authority.” When it comes to the currently military campaigns abroad, I do not believe that what we are doing is defence…To me, after having been there [Afghanistan], having lived that ‘fantasy’, that sounds like a load of shit. (115, 116)

Echoing early comments made by Tilly (1985) and Ivie (2012), Jess demonstrates that during her time as Air Force pilot contradictions began to emerge in her life. To make sense of these

90Pseudonym in place of his real name.
contradictions, Jess juxtaposes strategy and tactics; this juxtaposition alerted Jess to a clear conflict of interests present in the ‘mission’ she had signed up for and the expectations of the duties being demanded of her. As these contradictions became more self-evident, her understanding and turn to objectionism started to really take form as she began to consolidate and attend to the disconnect between her actions in the military and what she believed to be the right course of action:

At some point I said, ”I do not question things here like I have been doing in my personal life. Things now have to be self-evident for me before I just trust that it is the right thing,” and “Why am I not I doing this in my professional life? Why am I placing my trust in someone else's judgment that ‘This mission is necessary’” or “Yeah, it [Afghanistan] is the right place for you to be” or, just bluntly, “’It is Afghanistan’”. At some point, this belief in a higher power, or that somebody had a bigger, better, strategic picture, was not enough to justify the taking of human life.(117-118)

Jess’ experience expressed a deep-seated concern for the nature and health of society, at large, which is evident in discussions about the coercive and binding nature of the social contract (Bergeron 2014; Zupan 2014; Robinson 2014a; Montrose 2013). These concerns originated from the contradictions between what behavior is expected of military personnel with the actual demands placed on her during her employment. It was these experiences that prompted Jess to become an objector,

What this helped to figure out is that I came to the conclusion that if you truly own yourself, then you cannot sign yourself over to, what is essentially, slavery and indentured servitude. Those things do not allow you to change your mind. The second thing is that I believe both parties have to uphold their end of the contract; I took an oath of office that said I am going to defend the Constitution and all of the deployments that I participated in did not feel constitutional nor did they have anything to do with defense. They definitely did not do anything to increase “freedom” at home. In fact, what I see now is that it decreased lives and liberty elsewhere. So from my perspective, the military had not upheld its end of the contract,” (120-121).
6.3 Mike Smith: “I felt trapped because what they were asking me to do is kill people and I wanted to have no part in that.”

When I was very young, my father was a naval aviator so there is a little bit of military history in the family. He went to a naval academy and flew A-6s’ in the early seventies and eighties; I was one or two years old when he got out but he was a Delta pilot from I can remember. So growing up, there was a military presence in my family but it did not have a huge impact on my decision to enlist when I was much older. Having had a father who was an aviator, the movie “Top Gun” was fairly influential to me as a child. I ended up becoming a fighter pilot so that movie had some impact on me but that was more minor, aesthetic stuff growing up than anything else. I graduated from high school in 2002, so 9/11 happened when I was a senior and I had begun to think about college applications. Obviously, this was a very important and influential time in my life given that high school was ending and I was considering what to do afterwards. So when 9/11 happened, it really struck me and I had this feeling that we just got attacked. I had this feeling; it was almost like a gut reaction to want to defend myself, my family, my your country or any number of things like that. Although I was initially looking at some of the Ivy League schools, I did not get into any of my ideal choices so I began looking at attending either a Naval or AirForce academy, a safety school and/ or doing a post-graduate year at high school. I ended up attending an Air Force academy in Colorado Springs. Aside from my father’s participation in the military, I did not really have any preconceived notions or life long plans to join the military but things just kind of played out that way with regards to being a senior in high school when 9/11 happened and the colleges that I got into. There were several things that helped to influence my joining of the military and why that choice made sense. There is definitely some job security in the military; you do not need to worry about your finances as much because you
have a constant paycheck so you are taken care of in that regard. You also receive some pretty good benefits as well and it was also a good opportunity for free school with a guaranteed job afterwards. Not to mention, I thought that being an aviator would be a fun job! I felt like if you were not going to play professional sports then being a fighter pilot was the next best thing. It certainly was/is a high level, high tempo, exciting profession. There are definitely things that you will either like or dislike about the military dependent on what your job is or where you are located. I found that being a part of a fighter squadron was a lot like playing on a sports team. I had grown up as an athlete my entire life so I was quick to pick up on the aspects of sport culture within the squad setting. While I was at the academy, I also played for the lacrosse team so I encountered that squad culture very early on in my military career.

Being in the military is a very unique experience, which can be very jarring for some people. During your first year, they push a lot of strict discipline, structure and responsibility. This was something that I had grown up with already, so it was not really anything particularly new to me. This is not to say that the military does not push a certain message or expect certain things from the people that join but they definitely do have their own culture that they push. People who are in the military are not just stupid robots and do whatever is they are told though the military culture might suggest otherwise. Everybody is unique and different but there are those who buy into the lifestyle harder than others. It is a very big spectrum of experience but the military does definitely push the ideas of honor, courage, commitment and things of that nature. One thing that never sat well with me was when they would ‘encourage us to speak our mind’ and ‘express our opinions.’ At some point though it really does become a “Shut up and color” kind of culture. You do get an opportunity to say your piece but that after that you need to salute
smartly and do what you are told because someone else is making the decision. If you do not like it, that is too bad; that is not how things work in the military.

One of the first things that I encountered during basic training was an instruction of military culture and military history. When I was a recruit, we had this thing called ‘contrails.’ In the real world, contrails refer to the vapor that forms from the exhaust of a jet engine. At the academy, it was this little book of military information and military knowledge. From day one, they stand you up, they are screaming in your face and having you memorize quotes and what not. So you begin by repeating the quotes and everyone is doing this; everyone is repeating the same things over and over and over and over again until everyone memorizes them. If someone fails to do so, then you have to do push-ups or something like that. However, after basic training that all ends. I do remember one of the quotes they had us memorize and it really stuck with me: “War is a terrible thing but it is not the worst thing.” From what I remember, the rest of the quote goes, “the decayed and degrade state that thinks nothing is worth war is much worse.” So they definitely push the idea that “Hey, look. We would not be going to war if it was not worth it. When we do, you are going to do exactly what you are told and it is going to be worth it.” So when you have to consider something like that in the context of who you are as a person, and who you are expected to be when you wear the uniform, it becomes a tough question to answer.

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91 The complete quote is: “War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things: the decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth a war, is much worse. When a people are used as mere human instruments for firing cannon or thrusting bayonets, in the service and for the selfish purposes of a master, such war degrades a people. A war to protect other human beings against tyrannical injustice; a war to give victory to their own ideas of right and good, and which is their own war, carried on for an honest purpose by their free choice, —is often the means of their regeneration. A man who has nothing which he is willing to fight for, nothing which he cares more about than he does about his personal safety, is a miserable creature who has no chance of being free, unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself. As long as justice and injustice have not terminated their ever-renewing fight for ascendancy in the affairs of mankind, human beings must be willing, when need is, to do battle for the one against the other.” Mill, John Stuart. 1862. “The Contest in America.” Harper's New Monthly Magazine 24 (143): 683-684.
never really identified with myself that way. I think people are individuals in the military and this was just one of the many things I did. Being in the uniform did not represent me as a person. It was my job and though it did occupy a lot of my day to day, there are a lot of other aspects to everybody in the uniform. The same goes for myself. So, I never really looked at it like that. I was not one of those people who showed up to the military, flipped the switch, and that was their life.

When you join the military, there is an expectation that you will obey the orders that are given to you. However, you are also expected to disobey an order that violates the laws of Armed Conflict, which have been ratified in international law like the Geneva Conventions. So if you were told to drop a chemical bomb on a civilian population, that would be an order that you are encouraged to disobey; if your country decides to go to war, then disobeying orders where the war is assumed to be or deemed ‘legal’ is where you will run into problems. The major issue with that is there is no flexibility in the system to question the big picture. Is this larger effort a moral effort? Is this invasion a moral effort? Is the strategy morally sound? You have to trust that someone in the command structure has all the information and that they have a moral code to help guide that they are making the right call. You, as a soldier, are just expected to do what you are told and play your piece in the puzzle.

I think that most of the people in the military are really, decent people; that they are trying to do the right thing and not do anything blatantly wrong but it is a weird juxtaposition with what they are literally doing and what they ought to be doing. In my line of work, that was dropping bombs so it was a really weird grey area where as long as you were acting within whatever ROE [Rules of Engagement] was put forward by command then your actions, assuming you do not violate the ROE, are assumed as moral and legal from a tactical
perspective. If you operate outside of that ROE that would be considered illegal or immoral but there is no flexibility to question that framework because it is such an ambiguous phrasing. There is definitely top-down pressure to do what you are told but the fact remains that you are in a culture where your actual job is to break things and kill people. That is the stark reality of this line of work. So there is an inherent feeling associated with the military where you come to acknowledge, “This is what we do.” People definitely do have policy opinions and they certainly do talk about them amongst themselves but the bottom line is that these same people will generally do what the leadership asks them to do. No one is really talking about that kind of stuff in the military. However I can tell you, from my experience, having gone abroad and deployed a couple of times, that things changed my mind once I got over there and really had a good view of what the bigger picture was and what was happening overseas. I definitely talked to my peers and other people about that as a lot of people agreed that what we were doing was a waste of money and it is a waste of life and time and all that. But there is a huge jump from coming to that conclusion to actively sabotaging your career and putting a CO package together. Most people just kind of shrug it off and say “Well, these are not the things that I get to decide. This is my job and I will do just my job.”

My approach to becoming a CO was something that was unique for me. That is not to say that another CO may not have felt the same as me but it is different for everyone. There is certainly no one single reason why people conscientiously object though the end result is generally the same; some people come it at from completely one eighty reasons. There was another pilot in my squadron who conscientiously objected and his reasoning was that he felt that he did not have a right to be killing people. He was subsequently approved but when I spoke with him about his reasoning, it did not really seem logical or rational in the traditional sense of
A plus B equals C. He just bluntly said, “I do not feel I have the right to kill people.” That was it. It was that simple. Conversely, my wife and I entered into the foray of conscientious objection from a bit of a different perspective. It was very much philosophical starting with the Non-Aggression principle: why it was legitimate, etc. And it became one of those things that I was able to prove to myself that it was logically sound and there were other elements that helped me adopt this philosophy. This is not to say that I disagree with my friend; I feel that I also do not have a right to kill people but I base that decision in the realm of logic and reason. I believe that self-defense is a position that can be easily vindicated but there cannot be any grey areas there. It is not self-defense if use you tax dollars to wage war because that assumes that those same people share your reasons for waging said war; it is not self-defense when people are quite literally being forced to fight. To me, self-defense resides in a civic context that has clearly defined boundaries and limitations. We have met a few people who have had similar influences and experiences and a few people other with whom we have nothing in common. Everyone is different. One of the big influences for my wife and I was Ron Paul and we have met a few other people who have said that he was a ‘gate way drug’ to a few other intellectuals. People like Ron Paul helped changed their worldview and made them think twice about their actions. That was certainly the case with us.

I have openly spoken about my experiences more recently. With regards to people in the military, I have distanced myself from that crowd. I think that what they, the military, are doing is morally wrong and I do not really want to be associated with them anymore. This has proven to be tough on some of my friendships because it is very difficult to have a relationship with someone when you have taken issue to what it is they for a living. I do not say these things lightly because the issue I have is that, whether or not they realize it, what they are doing and
what they are involved in amounts to the murder of foreigners. So I have had to withdraw from that crowd for some very substantial reasons. With that said though, I still have a few buddies in the military and I do treat it on a person-to-person basis. Some people you may not to talk to at all while some are still close friends. It just depends. Now, with regards to people in society, in general, as you can imagine there are a lot of people out there with opinions that are very different from mine. Some people have never even heard of conscientious objection or really have the slightest clue about what it is. That being said, most people do not even have a good understanding of the military either. Some people think what you are doing is the greatest thing and some people think you are a traitor and everything on the spectrum in between. While I have never heard anything too outlandish, I think a lot of that has to do with people’s worldviews. If you are a foreign policy hawk, a neoconservative or neoliberal type, or an interventionist, as far as foreign policy goes, I found that those type of people are much more apt to think that “Oh, you’re a traitor.” On the flip side, if they are, libertarian, a progressive or something along those lines then they are probably more inclined to think that “Wow, that is amazing that you did that.” The general sense that I get from anyone who was against the Iraq War, think that objectionism is awesome, generally speaking. Anyone who is in favor of the Iraq War, and all the things that have come since then, generally think that objectionism is awful. So it depends.

The idea that objectors are not sincere is one of the most absurd things that I have ever heard in my life. It was so incredibly difficult to buck the tide that it literally tore me apart. My whole life was thrown up side down. I had dedicated the better part of ten years of my life to becoming a test a pilot; my career was on fire and going amazingly well! All of this changed when I had this moment, or series of moments, where I thought, “What we are doing is wrong and what do I do now?” Here I am, twenty-seven years old and had no idea what conscientious
objection was. I had never even heard of it. What I did know was that I was a part of an organization that I no longer wanted to be involved with anymore and I disagreed with what we were being asked to do. What bothered me the most was that I felt trapped? I felt trapped because what they were asking me to do is kill people and I wanted to have no part in that. My mind had changed on such a fundamentally important thing and I was stuck with no way out, so what do you do? Not everyone files for CO status either. Some people go AWOL; some people in combat purposely misaim on their targets; and, some people become ‘truthers’\(^2\). I would have gladly left without submitting a CO package if they would have just allowed me to leave. If I could have simply resigned then that would have been it for me but the military will not let you do that. So people will go looking for any possible way to get out and putting in a CO package is not the easiest thing to do nor is it the least problematic for the individual. There is a huge stigma in the military for conscientious objectors. People will think you are some sort of weird person because, on a fundamental level, people generally agree with the idea of self-defense. So when you out yourself as someone who objects to war, it is very difficult to take that position as legitimate because of that tension in ideals. So it is often assumed that when you say you are against all war, you automatically rule out self-defense. Quite frankly, that is ridiculous. It is ludicrous and that part did not really fit well with me. It is ironic because you have to be very selective with the verbiage that you use when you submit your CO package. Suddenly, you have these different people, the ones you do not want to associate yourself with anymore, digging into your life and somehow the burden proof is placed on you that you have defend the validity of what it is you are saying! And it is not uncommon for the military tribunals to dismiss people on

\(^2\)A ‘truther’ is a colloquialism for someone labeled as a “conspiracy theorist.” A conspiracy theorist/truther is a person who doubts the generally accepted account of an event or phenomena, believing that an official conspiracy exists to conceal the true explanation.
the basis of sincerity because the burden of proof is on the applicant and that is a major problem. What you will encounter is that, as individual, you are trying to prove yourself to an institution that is built upon systemic, institutional biases that operate against everything you are saying. There is a panel of judges, operating on these same biases as well, who will rule on your case. If there is even the slightest hint of evidence that can be used against you to dismiss your claim, they will try to sniff it out and use it against you. There is clearly nothing for them to gain by keeping a soldier who no longer wants to fight; maybe it is because it would look bad if a bunch of soldiers all drop out because they disagree with the war. Whatever the case may be, there needs to be a better system that allows people to get out much easier than what they currently have in place. The truth of the matter is that it is not uncommon for people to seriously suffer over just the process itself. I had my own personal issues in dealing with depression with just having to fucking go through it. It was so incredibly difficult. So the concept that objectors are not sincere is beyond absurd. Sure, it may be possible that some might not be as sincere if you are to measure such a thing against the standards set for conscientious objection; in whatever form or description that might be. Those people have their reasons and will take the avenues available to them to escape doing things that they just do not want to do. The truth of the matter is that I am very much in favor being able to discuss whether or not they agree or disagree with objection — to agree or disagree about war in general — but there has to be a better way that allows people to opt out for using their conscience.

I think that, in my ideal world, a moral military would let people come and go freely if they really thought that what they were doing was wrong. They would be allowed to leave without question. Period. Dot. There would be no such thing as a military commitment because what they are asking is for people to be open to the idea of killing someone and actually doing it
when the time comes. The fact of the matter is that if you are going to ask someone to make such a serious decision then they should also be able to act on their conscience if it compels them to reject such an idea. The antithesis of that position is being told to kill someone and not having any freedom of action to take the localized information you have and say “This is wrong. I’m not going to do that.” It is a really dangerous thing and what it means to be a soldier today, I think, means that you are an individual who has pledged fealty to whatever you are told to do; to kill whoever you want for the political purposes of the government who you work for and that is a terrible thing. For example, in the United States most people would say “Oh, you signed up to defend the Constitution.” I am not entirely sure what the oath is like for officers in the Canadian military but I can tell you that I have never met an enemy of the Constitution. If there are enemies of the Constitution, most of them, in my estimation, would be the people in the government themselves. So, it is sort of like a propaganda tool to say, “You are defending this document.” When in reality, the things they ask you to do are unconstitutional and/ or have nothing to do with that. We do not even have a real consensus on some things that are in Constitution or things it says or asks us to consider. For instance, the Constitution says that Congress shall declare war but they have not done that in some time. It is honestly a lot like fealty than it is anything else.

When I initially became involved with the military, I thought it was going to be really honorable work. I believe that soldiers are hard working people defending the country and things of that nature. Towards the middle or end of my career, that position had taken a complete one eighty. I think that it is criminal that they, the military, have aggressively invaded several dozen countries without a declaration of war; without the actual rule of law; or, without being provoked or attacked. I think it is wrong and I would call their actions what it is: mass murder. Not to
church it up. For example, no one in Iraq ever attacked the United States and there was never an imminent threat from the Iraqi military yet there has been about a million Iraqis that were killed as a consequence of the invasion. That is extremely wrong. Furthermore, nobody in Libya ever attacked the United States or never intended too and a whole bunch of people got murdered in that country. You might wonder why it is now a total refugee zone for terrorists. The same thing is happening in Syria and you could even argue the same thing happened in Afghanistan since the majority of the people who attacked us, and were involved in 9/11, were Saudi Arabian.

When I began to seriously consider all these things, it was not an over night decision; I did not just suddenly flip a switch and here I was. Though there were elements of that, the overall development of my views and philosophies was very nuanced and gradual. During my first tour, I was deployed to Afghanistan on two separate occasions and I was stationed there for a year total. After that first cycle, I began to develop the general impression that the mission was looking more and more like a waste of money. We were just throwing money at nothing and, in the middle of it, lots of people are just dying for no reason. You would have kids, on our side, getting blown up by IEDs. On the other side, you have villagers that are getting bribed to place IEDs on the road and they are getting blown up with bombs from the air so it was this really weird thing that was going on. There seemed to be no obvious right and wrong but I came down on the side of “Look at the map. This is not our country. They are not attacking us. Do not bomb them!” So this change in my position was a bit sudden, to some degree, but many things changed during this time. For me, the standard narrative over there, at least for Afghanistan, is that “You are preventing it [Afghanistan] from being a safe haven for terrorists”. It is quite literally the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard. After having seen the country and having flown around it, you would see that it is without infrastructure. Terrorists could hide out in any of number of
holes out there and have a training camp in any one of a million caves and there is no way that you could possibly prevent the place from being a safe haven. It is just an absurd thing to say. Not too mention the fact that dropping bombs on people, with the intent of killing terrorists, caused ten more because those individuals now feel morally justified in what they are doing. So when you put something like that in context, what we were doing is killing people, dropping bombs and the aggressor has now created the conditions for the locals to say, “They are dropping bombs on our soil. Let us go fight them.”

I came to the conclusion that I am responsible for my own personal actions whether or not they are illegal. Period. Furthermore, I should judge my actions in accordance to my own personal, moral compass and not according to someone else’s. My conscience will help inform me to decide what is right from wrong; not what someone else tells me is right and wrong. As I mentioned before, I base my personal, moral beliefs in the Non-Aggression Principle and the Golden Rule. So “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” and “Force is only justified in strict self-defense with no exceptions.” So the conditions that would necessitate force would be if someone was attacking me. Then, and only then, I would have a right to defend myself. Anything else short of that, in my opinion, is aggression. Things may not necessarily appear to be so simple in every case but I firmly believe that groups of people should not get to enjoy certain privileges or rights that an individual cannot also enjoy. So the unconstitutional comment becomes irrelevant, in my opinion. Anyone can make an argument about who or what makes something constitutional or not. This is not to say that the Constitution, itself, did not have a big impact on me — in fact, it played a huge part in my transition from A to Z. When I first got into the military, I firmly believed in the Constitution and I liked the idea that there were certain rules that the government had to follow. As I got older, I realized very quickly that those rules
are not followed and they are totally up for debate as far interpreting what the rules are and how they apply in certain contexts. So the rules themselves come to matter less and less. On top of that, what exactly are we talking about here? This is the same document that, at one time, said slavery was okay and that Africans were three fifths of a human being. To be frank, what really matters is whether or not your actions are consistent with your morals. Not some document that was written over three hundred years ago which authorizes a select five hundred people to decide that three hundred million are going to war. I could not care any less what nine Supreme Court judges think. Their position as a moral authority slowly becomes more and more irrelevant when you, as an individual, consider what is important to you: are your actions consistent with the way you want to live your life? Are your actions limiting or promoting the freedom of others?

As far as influences go, Thomas Paine had a big impact as well as Ron Paul. I was also exposed to Murray Rothbard and Noam Chomsky. I read about a lot of different people who come from vastly different political persuasions. Noam Chomsky espouses the exact opposite of a lot of things that I believe but he is also in line with a lot of things that I think are right when it comes to foreign policy. So my influences range from a lot of different people and from a broad range of perspectives. Even though I reference the Golden Rule, I am now Agnostic despite having been raised Christian. I have my own issues with my religion that I do not think are really relevant to this discussion but there are lot of good teaching in many religions. Christ’s teachings follow the same fundamentals as the Non-Aggression Principle except I would argue that my views are based in a “natural rights” philosophy. I think I would call it a Libertarian political philosophy but there happens to be a moral principle at the center of that philosophy. I would definitely say I am spiritual but I am not religious in the organized sense of the term. Despite all
that, these differing perspectives all shaped and influenced the various aspects of my life that helped shape my conscientious objection.

About a year before I submitted my package, I had just returned from a tour so there were no pending deployment orders. When I came back state side, there was a lot of internal consternation for me. It all started for me at the Presidential Republican debate in the States when I started listening to Ron Paul. Let us just say that he stuck out like a sore thumb. In comparison to him, everyone was very much espousing similar ideas of “Support Israel” and “Bomb Iran.” It was the same, tired message from these super hawks and here is Ron Paul saying “No, non-intervention. Peace. Free Markets. The wars are wrong and they are wasteful.” His position was very different from those with whom he shared the stage. As I was listening to him speak, I thought “Holy shit, this guy is hitting it on the head. This is exactly my experience over here. He is right and these other guys are morons. I need to look into what he is saying and what he is talking about.” Following that debate, I did a ton of research for the next six to twelve months and, during this time period, my whole worldview had changed very dramatically. It did, however, lead me to a lot of consternation where I did not feel right about what I was doing in the military anymore. That is when I came upon that feeling of “I do not want to be in the military anymore. What do I do?” During this time, I almost put in a package three or four times. I was back and forth with talking with friends; talking with family; getting talked out of it and talking myself back into doing it. It was really challenging and I was having serious issues and doubts. When I think back on it, saying that it was a tough time is an understatement. Making that decision really forces you to consider all the different things in your life: your career, your future and your family. All those things were good enough reasons for me to not do it. Eventually I did make the leap but it was one of the most difficult times of my life. As I
mentioned before, the process is not quick by any means and you have to wait for what seems like forever. What’s more is that it is not guaranteed that you will even get out as a CO. It is an application process and you have to wait to be accepted. The burden of proof is on you: the applicant. It is a very, very difficult and arduous process to deal with. Both my wife and I had our CO applications denied although I ended up getting discharged via a different way. But even that was not easy.

The regulations, which guide the Conscientious Objector application process, say its supposed to be a thirty-day review stretch between each person who sees the package. There are various levels of leadership that get to see the package as well as various steps that happen in tandem such as the investigation and interviews, etc. So in actuality, the process becomes almost excruciatingly long which is awful. Once you submit your application, it is not like you just get to stop what you are doing and wait it out. At that point, you are forced to continue being a part of something that you think is wrong and it is extremely difficult because you cannot just leave. Even though, morally, you feel the need to do so, you are really messing with your future. You could get court martialed and lose out on a lot of opportunities outside the military as a consequence of that. With my wife and I just having our first child, I did not want to risk going to prison for not following orders. If it came down to it, and push came to shove, I think I would have. Luckily, I got out another way that did not end up being as much of an issue but there was still a lot of consternation with waiting while your stuff gets processed and people start digging into your personal life. Being forced to have to prove your beliefs is a real pain in the butt. What is really frustrating for me is that somehow it is ‘very difficult’ for people to understand how a soldier might be compelled to change their opinion on war. Countless men and women will go abroad, to see all sorts of place and be involved in all sorts of horrific things that may force them
to change their minds about going to war. It is very easy for a soldier to say, “Wow, this is fucked up. I do not want to be a part of this anymore. This is wrong.” For many people, that is what happens. It is very real and it happens to thousands of people every day but for some reason, in the context of the military, this is not supposed to happen to soldiers. It cannot happen. There would definitely be a lot more people leaving if there were less barriers that prevented them from doing so; if there were less stereotypes perpetuating a fear and disdain of objectors; or if there was less economic incentive not to leave. Perhaps, if the law was made simpler then maybe more people might conscientiously object to the missions and situations that they are being forced in to. Until you are forced to write down your thoughts and beliefs on to a piece of paper and present it to a committee, the average person will never really consider what it is they truly believe until they are interrogated and have their entire life questioned. Most people will never encounter something so invasive in their lives because they do not have to. Everybody has a different take on the issues or things around them. This does not mean that every person’s thoughts or ideals will be consistent from issue to issue or that everyone will feel the same way on one particular issue. People feel a certain way because of the things that have influenced them and helped them to come to those feelings — sometimes it has nothing to do with that. Ultimately, people just feel a certain way about certain things.

When I did begin this whole process, I had shared it with my squadron. I had a lot of support from people and I received about eight or nine character recommendations but the leadership separates you from your squadron, platoon, or placement, effective immediately. You get pulled out and put somewhere where they believe that you, the objector, are not going to make waves and have any influence on anyone else. At that point, pretty much everyone you knew from the military will find out and you are put into a little holding pen, figuratively
speaking of course, till they process your package which can take up to a year in change. So everything that I had done, everything that I did, the places I had been, the people I had seen, all influenced why I became a conscientious objector. These were all very impactful experiences on my life. Had those things not reverberated through my life the way they did, I probably would still be there [in the military]. As Joe Schmoe civilian, who has never experienced the military, it is hard to really take a position on certain things. How do you determine if violence is “right or wrong” when you have competing philosophies and different things that might say, “No, it is good” or “No, it is bad” but you do not have any experience to really draw from? You just do not really know until you got out there and figure it out for yourself. This whole experience has really changed parts of me. I am the same person but totally different. Being an objector, and the things I have come to learn, have had a huge impact on what I want to do in the future; how I want to live my life; whom I want to associate with and whom I do not want to associate with. I take this very, very seriously. Maybe more so than most people where some can look at a debate about foreign policy and say “Oh I disagree with that guy. I am on this side or that side. ” For me, this becomes intensely personal. It is like “Jesus, you guys are criminal. You want to send these kids to get killed in these foreign countries.” It is very hard for me to not get really emotional about it after having lived that life.

As I mentioned briefly before, one the people who really solidified this notion of objection for me was Murray Rothbard. The biggest influence of his was why the Non-Aggression Principles are logically sound. His justification for that, which rang true for me, is the principle called “self ownership” where you own yourself. It is a, sort of, self-evident thing and is kind of impossible to deny. He deduces that either: a) you own yourself or; b) someone owns you; c) you own other people; or, d) everyone owns everyone. Through his discussion, he
eliminates “b,” “c,” and “d” as not being morally consistent or philosophically sound. So without getting into it too in-depth, the self-ownership principle makes the most sense because you are your own person. Therefore, you have the right to your own person and that you have the freedom of action within your own sphere as long as you are not interfering in someone else’s. Everyone right has their own equal right to their own person. The Golden Rule works in tandem with this idea. The self-ownership principle and the Non-Aggression Principle are what I would call the “Silver Rule.” It functions as a negative not quite like a positive. The Golden Rule is a “do,” like a positive action: do unto others. The Non-Aggression principle is “do not do unto others that you would not have them not do unto you.” In other words: do not kill, do not steal, do not commit fraud, etc. When you are forced to write down your beliefs on a piece of paper and present them to people, it really helps you iron out exactly what they are and who you are. That was definitely the case for me as I was sorting out my package. It was just a really difficult year waiting for a decision, which seemed like an eternity.

After my application was initially denied, I ended up getting out about six months later. Life after getting out is not somehow miraculously better or worse. I just feel relieved that I am not a part of something that I feel is wrong. It feels really good to not be a part of that anymore. The change has not come without issue though. I had a lot invested in that world so I have to start over with a new career at the age of thirty, which is extremely difficult. I still have a lot of friends in the military so I am learning about how to best manage that. It is on the back of my mind and is something I am not particularly psyched about. I do not really condone what they are doing even though they might have good intentions for what is driving them. I do not believe that they have bad intentions but it is just a difference of opinions and views on it. The world is a

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93 The reasons for his discharge were asked to be kept out of the thesis.
pretty great place, so things like morality become very subjective. People have different perspectives on it. In hindsight, there are a few things that, maybe, I did not handle perfectly or I wish I had done things differently. It is a difficult situation to handle so how do you really navigate something like that without incident? That being said, it is great to be out; I feel more relieved. Unfortunately, my wife Jess is still going through it so I do not feel completely free of the military just yet. To be honest, because my wife is still in the military, this remains to be a big deal for both of us.

**Analysis of Mike’s Narrative:**

Like his wife, Jess, Mike too had a similar up bringing with having a military presence in his family. Though it was not the deciding factor that pushed him to enlist, it did factor into his decision to join the military,

Having had a father who was an aviator, the movie “Top Gun” was fairly influential to me as a child. I ended up becoming a fighter pilot so that movie had some impact on me but that was more minor, aesthetic stuff growing up than anything else.(127)

Furthermore, his decision to enlist resonates with the reasoning that Jess offered in her narrative: a connection to and love of country,

So when 9/11 happened, it really struck me and I had this feeling that we just got attacked. I had this feeling. It was almost like a gut reaction to want to defend myself, my family, my your country or any number of things like that.(127)

Not discounting the economic benefits and security of military service, joining the military was an easy decision for him because

You also receive some pretty good benefits as well and it was also a good opportunity for free school with a guaranteed job afterwards. Not to mention, I thought that being an aviator would be a fun job! I felt like if you were not going to play professional sports then being a fighter pilot was the next best thing. (128)

However, evidenced in the ways he speaks to the aspects of ideological inculcation into the military identity and writ at large, Mike expresses some cynicism towards the culture of the military that he experienced,
This is not to say that the military does not push a certain message or expect certain things… People who are in the military are not just stupid robots and do whatever is they are told though the military culture might suggest otherwise…but there are those who buy into the lifestyle harder than others. It is a very big spectrum of experience but the military does definitely push the ideas of honour, courage, commitment and things of that nature. One thing that never sat well with me was when they would ‘encourage us to speak our mind’ and ‘express our opinions.” At some point though it really does become a “Shut up and colour” kind of culture. You do get an opportunity to say your piece but that after that you need to salute smartly and do what you are told because someone else is making the decision. (128)

He later adds that,

I do remember one of the quotes they had us memorize and it really stuck with me: “War is a terrible thing but it is not the worst thing.” From what I remember, the rest of the quote goes, “the decayed and degrade state that thinks nothing is worth war is much worse.” So they definitely push the idea that “Hey, look. We would not be going to war if it was not worth it. When we do, you are going to do exactly what you are told and it is going to be worth it.” So when you have to consider something like that in the context of who you are as a person, and who you are expected to be when you wear the uniform, it becomes a tough question to answer… The major issue with that is there is no flexibility in the system to question the big picture. Is this larger effort a moral effort? Is this invasion a moral effort? Is the strategy morally sound? You have to trust that someone in the command structure has all the information and that they have a moral code to help guide that they are making the right call. You, as a soldier, are just expected to do what you are told and play your piece in the puzzle. (129-130)

These two excerpts from Mike’s narrative demonstrate some key issues within the debates on objectionism. Here Mike questions the state’s ability to wage war as well as their authority to legitimize the claim that only the state can appropriate the use of violence. This juxtaposition of what the military is “literally doing” and “ought to be doing” became abundantly clear in Mike’s experience and leanings towards objectionism. His concerns also echo with what Jess’ articulates in her “strategic” vs “tactical” binary as well as that of the criticisms apparent in pro-objector discourse (Tilly 1985; Ivie 2012; Robinson 2009; Navin 2013; Clifford 2011; Cohen 1968; May 2012, et al.). Having had a former squad mate exit the military on grounds of conscience, Mike approached objectionism from an interdisciplinary perspective:

I also do not have a right to kill people but I base that decision in the realm of logic and

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94The full quote is available in the narrative above.
reason. I believe that self-defense is a position that can be easily vindicated but there cannot be any grey areas there. It is not self-defense if use you tax dollars to wage war because that assumes that those same people share your reasons for waging said war; it is not self-defense when people are quite literally being forced to fight. To me, self-defense resides in a civic context that has clearly defined boundaries and limitations. (132)

His formulations of objectionism originate from an internal conflict that was prompted by a serious crisis of conscience, integrity, and sincerity (Robinson 2009; Navin 2013). These feelings were exacerbated by his dealings with anti objection sentiments and his uneasiness with what the future would hold for him,

The general sense that I get from anyone who was against the Iraq War, think that objection is awesome, generally speaking. Anyone who is in favor of the Iraq War, and all the things that have come since then, generally think that objection is awful. So it depends. The idea that objectors are not sincere is one of the most absurd things that I have ever heard in my life. It was so incredibly difficult to buck the tide that it literally tore me apart. My whole life was thrown up side down. I had dedicated the better part of ten years of my life to becoming a test pilot; my career was on fire and going amazingly well! All of this changed when I had this moment, or series of moments, where I thought, “What we are doing is wrong and what do I do now?”…How do you determine if violence is “right or wrong” when you have competing philosophies and different things that might say “No, it is good” or “No, it is bad” but you do not have any experience to really draw from? You just do not really know until you got out there and figure it out for yourself. (133-134)

However, as demonstrated in Mike’s experience, his objection is not singular or entirely cohesive in terms of how objectionism is employed and defined within the literature. For example, the static differentiation between a pacifist and someone who may use violence in self-defense suggests that objectionism may operate on a spectrum that is tempered by experience and thought. Mike remarks,

There is a huge stigma in the military for conscientious objectors. People will think you are some sort of weird person because, on a fundamental level, people generally agree with the idea of self-defense. So when you out yourself as someone who objects to war, it is very difficult to take that position as legitimate because of that tension in ideals. So it is often assumed that when you say you are against all war, you automatically rule out self-defense. (134)

In commenting on the binding nature of the military contract between the individual and the state, Mike also comments on the binding force of the social contract which ties the individual to society at large through a ‘shared’ consensus that all members will do their part to protect the
greater whole (Bergeron 2014). Relatedly, Mike’s articulation of what constitutes an ‘ideal military’ speaks to several issues in objectionism scholarship: the contradiction between the interests of the state undertaken through military action, the expectations of duty of military members, the recognition of and obedience to a ‘legitimate’ claim demanded by a ‘legitimate authority’ (Tilly 1985; MacPherson 1964).

I think that, in my ideal world, a moral military would let people come and go freely if they really thought that what they were doing was wrong. They would be allowed to leave without question. Period. Dot. There would be no such thing as a military commitment because what they are asking is for people to be open to the idea of killing someone and actually doing it when the time comes. The fact of the matter is that if you are going to ask someone to make such a serious decision then they should also be able to act on their conscience if it compels them to reject such an idea. The antithesis of that position is being told to kill someone and not having any freedom of action to take the localized information you have and say “This is wrong. I’m not going to do that.” It is a really dangerous thing and what it means to be a soldier today, I think, means that you are an individual who has pledged fealty to whatever you are told to do; to kill whoever you want for the political purposes of the government who you work for and that is a terrible thing. (135-136)
Craig Taylor: “What a weird, weird trip this has all been for me.”

I live in New Jersey, maybe about fifty minutes by car from New York City. When the towers went down, I think I was in seventh grade and it was a huge, huge turning point for me. I think that most people from my area, if not America in general considered that a moment that divide their lives at that point. I believe that point to be especially true for people my age. So I was in middle school when the towers got hit. The school got all the classes together and brought us down to the cafeteria. So it was a combination of sixth, seventh and eighth graders totaling hundreds of kids; nobody knew what was going on and it was then that the rumors about what happened, and why we were all brought down there, began to spread. Soon after, the school administration would take two or three kids off at a time to go to the office to call their parents and from there everyone slowly started to figure out what was going on. Eventually, they sent everybody home but it was this crazy day when the towers got hit. Then everybody started to learn the identities of who was behind it and what exactly happened. Being so close to Ground Zero, it was very easy to see the huge up swing patriotism. For a brief couple days after 9/11, the America that you would read and hear about, like the really good one where everybody was kind to each other, had finally come to the forefront as people came together in this great tragedy. People were not honking horns as much; every one was eager to assist one another and there was this really incredible feeling of brotherhood. There was also this looming feeling of “Why?” Why would they hurt us? We are such good people!” As a thirteen-year-old kid, having no other experience or knowledge of American history to go off of, I was told “They hate us for our freedom.” To put it in context, I was still reading Harry Potter books so I believed almost anything I read or what I was told by people in positions of authority. So when they said, “They hate us for our freedom,” I immediately thought “Oh, no! That is terrible! They are monsters. We
need to go get them.” So that feeling was cemented in my brain; it was this huge awful moment in American history, there was all kinds of rhetoric being thrown around and, on top of all that, it was also so close to home. I did not know anyone who died in the attacks but I knew people who knew people. 9/11 reinvigorated this common identity among all Americans: we were victims. So I think from that point on, I had this feeling of “I need to protect my country. I owe it to my country to do this. I enjoy a lot of freedom.” I was born into this ‘free’ lifestyle but I had never really earned it. So then and there I had decided that I deserved to enlist.

When I finally came of age, I first looked at joining the Army. I was playing a lot of war inspired video games in high school and that pushed me to initially start looking at the Army, researching enlistment, and what not. However, the more movies I watched; the more articles I read; the more commercials I saw … everything paled in comparison to the way people talked about the Marines. The Marines were this top dog and everything was the hardest for a Marine. You had to be the best of the best. So I bit and fell hook, line and sinker. If you want to be a man and if you want to serve your country then boom: you have be a marine. So I definitely bought hard into this idea of civic duty. After high school, I decided that I was not ready to jump straight into it but if I did with the intent of becoming an officer then they would pay for your college and you could join the Marines right after graduation. This seemed like something that I could do and I was completely okay with that. So I applied to a naval ROTC program, that’s the Reserve Officer Training Corps., and I ended up going to the University of Colorado in Boulder. So I started the ROTC in 2007 and I graduated in 2011. During my time in the program, I did a whole bunch of different kinds of training throughout those four years. When I graduated on August 8th, 2011, I was officially an officer in the Marine Corps. As an interesting side note, on August
6th, the day that I had commissioned is the same day Hiroshima was nuked. That was kind of interesting when I realized that.

When I finally joined the Marine Corps. I began to see that there are a lot of people who pretend to love what they do. I joined the military because of this strong foundation of honor, courage and commitment; you respect everybody you work for; you salute the people you work for; the people that work for you salute you; and there is all this tradition that you are apart of and all this discipline. So the assumption is that you are getting into this very rigid structure, where everybody is looking out for each other, you are serving your country and fulfilling your ‘duty’. There are all these images and tropes swirling around and, of course, serving in the military is a very honorable thing to do. In civilian life, people hate their jobs — it is just a thing that people do. We hate our jobs, we gripe about it, we hate our jobs some more but in the military, people really hate their jobs. The majority of the people I worked for really hated their jobs. They were very clearly not enjoying their lives but they pretend that “This is hard because it’s my duty” and “I’m doing this to protect my family” and “To protect people I love” and “To uphold the Constitution” and they really force themselves to on this act like they are really enjoying themselves. When in reality, it is the complete opposite. I think people fake it so hard because they want to be part of that military identity which is why, I think, the suicide rate is so incredibly high; sexual assault is a crazy problem; there is rampant alcohol abuse; and people are getting kicked out for doing cocaine or drugs. So there are all these other problems manifesting as symptoms and people just force themselves to do this job that they hate. Because it is this honorable thing, they have to do it and it hurts. It hurts because it needs to. You need to feel that pain and I felt that way. I certainly did not see a lot of happy people in the military. Maybe people in the military are more fit, maybe they have more discipline, but honestly, it is only a
small degree more. You still have the same people who slack off, who do not meet the physical standards, who are overweight, who do not uphold the honor code, who lie and backstab but are a small bit better; only a small bit. The way I try to explain it is, the military, at least I felt, is like a bubble but with a two way mirror. I can see out. Military members can see out and we can see the civilians but they cannot see in. So it should come as no surprise that they think our life is like a commercial or a movie, filled with all the saluting and flag praising. There is this perception that military service is this incredibly honorable, disciplined thing but it is anything but that. If they saw what the day-to-day nonsense was like, the average person would be appalled. We certainly shave a lot more but you still have a lot of fat people, a bunch of slow people, a bunch of mean people and you have some good people too but once you make it through the hard parts, which are boot camp and the initial training, almost everybody reverts to who they were before to enlisting.

I did find that people are generally more on time. There are some people who are late all the time but the regimen definitely helped me to be more on time and you learn to really develop trust in yourself. You develop this ability to plan ahead, to know your strengths, and to know your weaknesses because you get pushed hard enough to figure them out. You also find out that maybe you do not have certain boundaries that you thought could had. Maybe you can do anything you want. I figured that part out because some of the training was so hard where I would get to a point and say “Look, I can do that. There are a lot of things I can probably do that I did not think I could.” Certainly though, there’s discipline because you have to keep everything neat, at least in the training portion. You have eat and keep a certain level of exercise if you want to stay at the top of your class so I definitely developed a respect for that. One thing that I think everybody likes the most is the shared identity because it is this identity that you fight months
and months and months for and then, once you are in the Marines or the Army, etc., you have this identity. Even if I meet a marine out in public or the anti-war circles I run in, and I still feel this despite disliking the military immensely, I feel more connected to them than I do anybody else. So when I hear someone in the Veterans for Peace group that I am a part of talking about their military career, I am very much like “Ah! I want to go to talk to him.” While I was in the military, there were a lot of people that I worked with that were similar to me; who had similar views as I did but did not want to go as far as I did. We would commiserate a lot and we had that shared “This is bullshit,” “This is so stupid,” mentality. Even with the people that did not agree with my views, we still had that common history where we could ask: Who founded the marine corps? Who is the best commandant? What is the Marine Corps birthday? There is all this rich tradition and history in there and everybody owns it once they are in. So there is this whole identity, which people cling to. There is a sense of brotherhood and team spirit; the “esprit de corps” is what they call it. That sense of tradition and rich history is probably what I enjoyed most about my time in the military.

During my time in training and as an enlisted officer, I definitely developed as a person and improved certain skill sets. I have a much better grasp on planning, what it is to fill a day with activities, what it means to plan your month out and how to travel. I recently did a cross country road trip because, at the time, I discharged after having been stationed in the South Pacific and I shipped my car to Los Angeles. When I got to Los Angeles, I then drove my car back to New Jersey. The entire trip took lasted about six weeks. I just drove my car around, met random people who I knew, people I was friends with or family members, and I just drove across the country. However, I did it with two backpacks full of stuff and that was it. Where as before, a trip like that would have required me to take several suit cases and I was very comfortable with
being on the fly and just being able to make things happen. There was one night where I just
camped in a tent and a sleeping bag without hesitation. I was very comfortable with doing things
last minute, figuring out on the fly and also being okay with being uncomfortable, in general. A
lot of the training we did as recruits was out in the woods. You were dirty, you stink, you are
tired and you are certainly not getting any sleep. Now, if I stay with someone and they say “All I
have is floor space,” I will respond with “Awesome! Great. Sounds awesome.” If all I have to eat
is a bag of almonds all day, I am cool with that too. I can make things work for me so I am
definitely much happier with what I have rather than feeling like “Oh I wish I had that. I am just
so miserable with the crap I have.” I am much more content with the little things and making
things work with whatever I have at my disposal. I guess you can call that the “doing more with
less” mentality but my training definitely strengthened that part of me — just being adaptable to
your surroundings in general. You will come to a point where you go through enough misery,
where you are like “This is not that bad. Whatever I am going through, it is not that again. So
this is pretty easy in comparison.”

So my time in the military helped me to grow up and be more mature, I guess. This was
not necessarily because of the ‘gifts’ they gave me but because I hated it so much. My time in the
organization really helped me figure out who I was. I can remember very vividly the crucial
moment that really crystallized my decision file for CO status. Reflecting on that time, it was like
I had gone undercover as a Marine and then forgot I was undercover. So I was just a marine and
then I had this moment where I was like “I am not a marine. I’m **** and if I do not want to be
a Marine, I do not have to.” I had kind of forgotten that and when I finally found that again is
when I was like “I do not have to do this. I do not want to do this” so I definitely do not feel like
I identify with myself more in the uniform. But now, I am in this part of my life where I am
coming out military, which was just this past May [2015]. When I was first in the military I had this constant feeling of “Who am I?” and then before I finally left, the question happened again: who am I? I was kind of remembering who I was in high school and college; more so in high school before I started my training and college and everything. I was reacquainting myself with that person because I identify more with myself in high school more and more now. I remember that in high school I used to listen to all these musicians, poets and philosophers from the seventies, who were all so anti-war. Some of my favorite songs were about war and about how bad it was. Some of my favorite movies were about the same subject and now I am kind of bewildered because I really have to think about the question: why did I join? Sometimes I don’t even quite understand it. I think maybe it was to prove something but I am finding myself listening to some of that old music and feeling that nostalgia of when I first time I listened to those tracks, read those authors or poets for the first time, or watched those movies. Why did I do that? Why did I join the military? It is so weird. It is just so weird. I would never in a million years do that again but for a while there when I first got out, I was totally confused because I felt so disconnected from that part of my life. From 2010 to 2014, I could not put a finger on who I was and what I was doing. So I really cannot identify with myself during my time in the military. It was just weird.

I have a memory of when I was in the early stages of officer training and during the instruction they showed us this pyramid or hierarchy of when to not follow an order. It asked some fundamental questions like: “does it violate your morals?”, “does it violate laws?”, and “does it violate this?” The pyramid detailed when it was appropriate that you should say “no” to an order but it was incredibly vague considering they train you to follow orders and to instruct others to do the same. So they kind of gloss over this point of “…and if it is really bad, do not
follow an order. Next.” I never really understood the reason behind why they showed us that and I never got an order that I thought was totally immoral because I was never in combat. Later in my career, I definitely had this moment where I was like “These people have no idea what they are doing. Nobody.” Even when the Republicans shut down the government over anything they could get their hands on, I still maintained this position that “Shit, these people know nothing. They have no clue.” Soon my feelings turned to “I do not trust any of the orders they are giving me any more because they do not know anything. Certainly not more than me.” So at first my thoughts were “if they are as clueless as I am, I do not trust the orders I am given anymore. I do not want to be put in a situation where they tell me to go take a platoon out, to hunt people down and I could get into a fire fight over something they told me to do because I do not trust them.” Many of the officers I encountered were not specialists. They were just there to collect a paycheck like me and support their family. So the command really beat this idea of unquestionable obedience. You just follow orders because it is the statue quo there. Now that I am able to look at it from an outside perspective, it begins to look so eerily similar to what the Nazi’s did. I am not saying anyone I was with committed a war crime but there is this weird mentality that is so similar to what we heard during the Nuremberg trials: “I was just following orders.” But in reality, that is exactly the mentality that they drill into you: you follow orders. Even as an officer, you are not supposed to repeatedly question your authority or challenge the plans provided by Command. I did that quite a bit towards the end of my career because I was a Logistics Officer and I had ideas about how we could make things work better. It was very difficult to try to convey to them that the way they had planned things just did not make a lot of sense. What I encountered with the command structure was that the people who were actually doing calling the shot maintained this blanket disproval of “That is not how we do it. That will
not work.” They really just want you to do it their way because “I am the boss,” because “I’m such and such rank. That is why” and they really do not explain their actions or reasons behind them. Within the Officer Corps., they really just want you to take care of things; make it go away; and “Do what I say” even if it does not make sense. So the pressure is to just “Do the damn thing. Just do it, Lieutenant” and at some point I thought, “What we are doing is just wrong. That has to matter.” It is funny that, in meetings, the Command will say, “I want you to challenge me. I want you to bring things to me” but they just say it as lip service because they really do not. Because when you actually do, like I did, they get really upset. They really do not like it no matter what they say. And I get it, I do. But there is pressure for you to do what they say, how they say and when things do go wrong, they will ask “Why did you not speak up.?”

When people first found out that I was applying for CO status, a lot of people were either confused or scared. I had done nothing to give them that impression because they assumed my position was “I don’t want to kill them” but really it was “I don’t want to kill anyone.” To my co-workers, that is this weird, scary perspective. I just really want to be nice to people and that really freaks them out. So at first they were kind of wary of me; maybe a little put off but all my good friends saw me for who I was and saw that I had not really changed. I had always had these feelings but it was only now that I had finally decided to really do something about them. So I think that ninety percent of the people I knew understood that “Hey, that is just ****.” I made an effort to not push my views on and anyone. A lot of my co-workers and friends felt like they come to me and say, “How do you feel about this?” or “What is your opinion on this thing.” They knew that they could challenge my view but that could also come away looking at some things from a different perspective. So I could tell they definitely did not feel like I was trying to change them but I think one of my biggest worries was that people will think I was making
judgments about them. That maybe because I would say “I am a conscientious objector therefore I am saying you guys are all bad” but that is not all what it was. I made this very clear from the start. I was saying I should not have joined the military. I was not making any judgments on them for joining but I think that a lot of them heard me and that assurance made them feel like “He is still my friend” and it stayed like that. They were still my friends and the people who worked for me respected me before my decision to file and they respected me afterwards because I was always upfront with them. I always treated them with respect and I always listened to those around me and their ideas instead of just squashing them and saying, “Do what I tell you.” I only had one problem with somebody who outranked me and he only outranked me by one rank. In the Marine Corps., there is this one specific rank for officers where ranks go second Lieutenant, First Lieutenant, Captain. Second Lieutenant and First Lieutenant are just like buddies; there is no difference between the ranks. It is just a pay raise, really, but in between first Lieutenant and Captain there is a much bigger gap. Captains hold a lot of power over the subordinate officer ranks. So I had this one Captain who, I was working with when I had filed for CO status. At the time, I had a platoon and I said “I love you guys but because I am doing this [applying for CO status] I cannot train you the way you need to be trained anymore. I need to give you up.” I did it and it felt awful. So they gave me a different paper-pushing job, which was more of an administrative position working for this Captain. This was very really early on in the process. One day, the Captain had said to me “I know why you are disgruntled. I am disgruntled too. If you cancel your package, you can work for me and you will not deal with any bullshit. You can simply just ride your time out, get out and everything will be okay. I don’t see why you need to go with through with this. I will just take care of you.” I was very respectful in my decline of his offer. I said, “Well, thank you but its not about proving
a point.” To some degree it was but I was had to reiterate “I just could not do it anymore.” After that, things got really sour between him and I. There are two instances where we got into yelling fights because I would tell him that he was treating me really poorly. I made sure to let him know that you could treat me the way that he was and I would tell him in front of people because that is exactly what he would do: he would degrade and ridicule me in front of my peers. At one point, I said “You cannot do this to me. I will not let you” and he did not like that. So him and I got into some of really big, big fights and my other superiors constantly backed me up because ‘they knew’; they knew I was right and he could not treat me that way. This particular Captain was really the only one who did this because everyone else knew I was taking a stand for something I believed in. What also helped was that I was not being a dick head about it because I knew what I was doing was new for everybody. Nobody knew what to do or handle it [conscientious objection] so I was the ‘expert’ the whole way through. I made it very aware that I was not adversarial and I was not demanding things along the way. I resigned myself to the position that “I will take what I can get from you during this process. If they deny it, they deny it.” So I was kind of working with them [the military] instead of against them throughout the whole process.

One of the repeated questions that I would get from people is: “Why did you join then?” My college and training was paid for and no one forced me to join. So again I would get the question of “If you were against this, then why did you join?” Initially, I would tell them along the lines of “Well, I changed. I started college when I was 18. I was with a lot of people who I really liked and I went through all the training with these people. I made this decision at a very young age, right? But I am 25 and I have changed my mind. It has been six years and I have grown and I have changed.” Soon after I started to give the analogy of divorce: “Well have you
ever heard of someone getting married and then divorced? Well marriage is supposedly for life but some people say I do not want this anymore and I want a divorce. So they go quit or they opt out. Well, that is exactly what happened with me. It is the same thing.” So everybody is familiar with this concept of growing old and changing but they are just confused about it in the context of the military. Nobody ever asks a divorcee “Well why did you get married in the first place?” Those who ask know exactly why but they do not really connect that with being a CO in the military. That was always the biggest question: “Why did you join? No one put a gun to your head.” Other than that, I think a lot of people were worried that I might get a Dishonorable Discharge. They were really worried that the rest of my career would be ruined, which I learned is a common stereotype. If you kill someone, drink and drive, get caught doing drugs or do something really horrible, then you will get a Dishonorable Discharge. So, even if you are discharged because you are granted “CO status” that is not a dishonorable thing. It is a very honorable. There are programs in place in the military so that people can get out this way. The program is there to be utilized but there is still this stereotype or stigma that people will think your job opportunities are going to be limited when you got out. They are right to some degree but any job that would not want to hire me because I am a conscientious objector is a job that I would not want in the first place. Ironically, being a CO helps me narrow the field. But it is hard for other people to grasp it because it is so foreign and people generally do not talk about it until someone is doing it. You have to remind yourself sometimes that this is not something they preach about, like “Hey! Who wants to be a conscientious objector?” It is never brought up.

When this was all going down, I think I may have heard some rumblings about stuff being said behind my back but it was never to my face. I think part of that was because I was already in a position of authority and, as an officer, it cuts out a huge portion of people who can
tell you no, or who can tell you to do things or who is in charge. So other than that, anybody who is beneath you owes you respect because of your rank. However, I was always the kind of guy who tried to earn that respect. I did not just demand it. I think a lot of the people who I out-ranked saw that and did not think I was ‘that guy’ who got respect because I just had this rank. So when I did file for conscientious objector, the people who worked for me just respected the fact that I was making this choice that I believed in. I was very upfront with them about it and no one ever told me to my face that I was a coward because I would not back down or cower from an accusation like that. I would not take that. That being said, I would not say that I am an aggressive person but I would say I was confrontational if the situation demanded it. If somebody said something to me that I did not like, I had no problem with questioning them about it in that conversation. Generally, I do not think that people were looking for that kind of confrontation. I think I might have heard rumors behind my back but nothing to terrible upfront and I think a lot of that is because I had that rank privilege on me. There is a certain code among officers where people will not talk to you that way upfront. Certainly in the officer’s rank its a higher socioeconomic status thing and with that comes a lot of talking behind back talking rather than in front of them. That is just the picture I got from wealthy culture where everybody is kind and polite to your face but behind closed doors, they tell people what they really think. I guess I got lucky.

In the beginning, when I was in college going through training, that was the golden age because it was at the height of Iraq and Afghanistan. Patriotism was through the roof and in the Reserve Officer Training Corps. you had kids from high school who wanted to join the military and become officers. You also had enlisted people who wanted to become officers and get an education. So you have high school students mixed with people who have already been in the
military all together in the same program. So some of these people who have already been in for five or ten years already have seen combat or at least been to combat zones. You are in there with them, learning with them, training with them and they are the ‘cool kids.’ Not only that, but they are generally the top of the top because the people who signed up for the ROTC are screened heavily and they only let the best ones through. So when I was in training, I was seeing a very select slice of the Marine Corps. and they were by in large, really, really good. They stuck to the ideals that I loved. Most of them were physical specimens and they had this revealing aura of respect. They gave us young kids tough love because they were teaching us how things are; they showed you respect and when you earned it, it was awesome. I remember when I was a junior and a senior and had I gone through all the hard training. I had not yet gone through my ceremony but I remember that it was so cool to hang out with these enlisted members because at this point you finally earned their respect. Seeing that cream of the crop and being in school with them for four years really spoiled me. Many of them even told me the whole way through that “When you get out to the Marine Corps. it is not going to be like this. You are not going to be working with people like us because everyone else is going to be average or below average and we are a representation of the top slice.” I was always very skeptical, “Yeah, yeah, yeah but at least it will be the Marine Corps.” So during my college training, they were who I thought the Marine Corps. was. When I graduated from the ROTC, I still had another year of training to do where I learned basic infantry training and my specialty school. That was when I started noticing that people were letting that standards slip until I finally got into the real Marine Corps. I had finally started to figure out that why people had said “Training sucks. It is the worst but the real Marine Corps. is the best.” I had been feeding into this hyped up, fairytale ending that I was imagining so that I could get through my training, go to my duty station and end up in this
promised land. While I was going through training, it did suck. I had assumed that, “Man, the Fleet is going to be awesome.” They called it [the Marine Corps.] the Fleet. I thought “The Marine Corps. is the best because this sucks” and when I finally got out there, I realized why they said that. Basic training is where everything is really hard. That is where all the standards are held to a tee: if you do not meet them, you lose points or you get kicked out. So you are always being watched and you have to uphold, or at least try to uphold the highest standard. When I finally saw the real Marine Corps., that atmosphere had totally disappeared. It was all on you, the individual, to uphold that standard which means that people just let it slide. So I soon learned that people out there did not stick to those basic commandments of honor, courage and commitment. They did not uphold their integrity. They did not treat people they way they wanted to be treated. They did not work their asses off to be the best that they could possibly be. I had started on such a really big high and then I just plummeted as I finished my training and entered into the Marine Corps. because people did not have to work as hard and you could honestly get by doing the minimum. You can make a twenty-year career of doing the minimum and people knew that.

In, late February of 2013, I was just getting to my first duty station and I was eagerly waiting for it to be awesome; I was ready and it was what I had been waiting for all this time and then it just was not what I was lead to believe. For the first couple months, I was really angry and really, really, upset because I saw people cutting corners. People who just did not want to work out or were slacking on their standards. The whole honor, courage and commitment thing was missing and I did not see a lot of my bosses behaving like mentors or trying to teach me things. I saw them trying to tell me things and I saw them trying to please their bosses; but I did not see them investing any time in me or in any of their other active subordinates. I saw a lot of brown
nosing and I just did not see that people cared to uphold the standards that they said they would when they raised their right hand and swore in. I was very upset with how things all started to pan out. I even took the core values, and their definitions, and pasted them on my wall. I said to myself, “Know them; live by them” because I was getting militant about them which is funny because I was already in the military. I was getting militant about them because I did not feel like anybody gave a shit about them. Some of my co-workers would tell me “Why do you have that crap on your wall?” and I would say “Uh … this is what we say we cared about. Do you not value them the same way I do? The way we all should?” And they would simply say “Ah, you are just being a zealot,” or “This is crazy. You are being too much.” For me, this is what I thought this was supposed to be. As the first couple months began to fade into memory, I just could not put my finger on why I was miserable. My fellow officers would drink and drive and then their subordinates would drink and drive and some would get caught. They would get DUI’s and their commanding officers would not go easy on them. None of the commanders ever treated them with any empathy like “Hey, I have been there and done that too.” They would slam these kids and they would give them as much punishment as they could. It was never treated like “Hey, maybe this kid has a problem. Maybe he needs some help.” It was more like “He is a shit bag. Get him out of here.” So there was no compassion, even for the people you are supposed to love and mentor. I was really miserable but luckily I had been seeing a therapist from 2010. Any time I had switched bases or changed locations, I would talk with somebody because once I started I realized that it was helping me work through things and it was making me a better person.

When I got to my last duty station in the South Pacific, I started being miserable again. I began to see a new therapist and I was trying to work through the problems that I was having. I
started seeing her in March, about a month after I got there, and I was working through my unhappiness. These feelings got progressively worse and worse as I saw more people doing stupid things. For example, I was living with a roommate who was in the infantry. This guy was one of many who trained people and would take them into battle. I was in Logistics so I would not have that responsibility unless things were really bad. This guy, however, was in the infantry portion and he would tell me stories about dating prostitutes; he would drive home drunk and engage in all sorts of things that you are not supposed to do. I had this particular expectation of conduct because, obviously, this was about being moral and ethical but nobody seemed to care. He lived like a pig and he was just a horrible, horrible person so I was just miserable on so many levels. Everybody and everything was disappointing me. I had been working through this for a couple months and in October of 2013, I brought up conscientious objection for the first time while talking with my therapist. We talked about it for some time and I even went to talk about it with the chaplain in my unit. We all kind of agreed that I was not quite ready for it yet because I had been in a position that was in the staff section. That meant I had three or four people working for me and. as a Logistics Officer, you have a lot of different jobs. It is typical to start at the staff level and, after about six months, you become a platoon leader. So I had been waiting my whole life to become a platoon commander and to have about forty people under my command to mentor, teach, and really get that sense of camaraderie again. So I had not had that opportunity and I wanted to hold off on filing for CO status until I began working my platoon. Maybe that might have changed my mind. In October, ironically, I did get that opportunity and I became a platoon commander. I had become so busy and was having such a good time with my Marines that I forgot about a lot of the issues that were bothering me because I was learning about them and not focusing on myself. I remember sitting down with each of them and I had a notebook
with two pages for everybody. I wrote down their names, their birthdays, their likes and dislikes and their hobbies. Really anything they wanted to tell me. That took about two weeks to do but I was having so much fun learning about them and being able to love who I was working with. I thought, “This is what it is all about.” After being a platoon commander for a couple months, that shiny feeling started to wear off. The bullshit started to get to me again and I had bosses that wanted to please their bosses and encountered the people who would not listen to my suggestions. I was trying to tell them that this is what my Marine’s think we should do. They are the experienced ones! They are the ones who know what to do but no one cared. We would come up with solutions to some complex problems and the Command would respond with “We are going to do it this way. We have always done it this way.” The bullshit peaked for me sometime between when I had picked up my platoon in October of 2013 and March or April of 2014 when I went on an exercise in South Korea called Ssang Yong.

Ssang Yong is a massive exercise, held every two years, where units from California, the South Pacific and Japan, South Korea and some Philippine and Thai units there as well. All these different militaries converge on South Korea and they have this big training exercise. I thought that maybe my problems with the Marine Corps. were just located to my unit and I just had a bad experience. At least that is what some people conveyed to me during our conversations, “Oh wait till you go to your next one before you make any decision.” When I got there, I saw the same bullshit and in some cases, it was worse. There was one particular Captain, who had a different unit in California, but during this exercise he was really nice to all the officers and prided himself on the fact that he would read his Bible every night before bed. During the day, however, he would terrorize all the people that worked for him; even the enlisted people. He would just demean them and curse at them all the time. Even people who did not directly work for him or
the people that just met. He would just totally wreck them for nothing. I began to see, on a much bigger scale, that people who were in high ranks were desperate to please their bosses at any expense; even if it meant ruining the lives of the people that worked for them. So I hit this high point of misery there in South Korea and when we got back, I took ten days of leave to go home to New Jersey to just decompress. Ssang Yong was only a month long exercise mind you, but it felt a lot longer. I still was not even thinking about conscientious objection yet. I had not mentally pushed myself to get there yet. I had come home for ten days and I was talking with mom and with whom I am very close. I was constantly thinking and waiting; waiting and thinking and I was reading a lot of books on ownership and responsibility and even spirituality. About three days after I got back to my duty station, I had this very vivid dream. It is a hard dream to describe but it felt like I was just floating in the universe; or I was the universe; or I was part of it. The dream itself did not really have any feeling to it. I didn’t see or feel or smell anything. I just felt totally calm and peaceful. It was almost like I was dead but it was very weird. I woke up and I had this feeling, like I had said before, “I am not a Marine. I am **** and I can do whatever I want. I do not have to be this person. I am in control.” I told myself, “I am filing for conscientious objection. That is it.” I remember telling my chaplain, “It is no longer a question of when. I am going to start writing my application. I am going to do this.” I think I came to this point where I was in such existential pain and everything was so not the way it should have been and was so wrong. I referred to this rejection of that pain as “satori.”

It is very easy, as a civilian, to hate your boss or hate your job or hater your culture. You can just quit and it’s not even a big deal because you are simply collecting a paycheck. In the military, when you hate your job, you are still stuck supporting an organization that kills people.

95 In the Zen Buddhist tradition, satori refers to the experience of "seeing into one's true nature" or an enlightenment.
You are supporting an organization that actively ends lives and the onus is on you to do something about that. You cannot just sit there and say, “Oh, I hate my job.” Maybe you can but that starts to slow eat at you when your job involves murdering innocent people. I was in such incredible, mental pain that it finally crystallized one day and I knew I had to do file for Conscientious Objection. Even after I decided it, I woke up in the middle of the night, of the following day, and said, “I have to do this.” That morning, I partook in my usual morning ritual where I would make French press coffee. I had a white board and I just reached out and wrote on the white board “Going to be star dust soon. No time to waste.” It just came to me and I realized that filing for CO status was something I had to do now. This is my life and I can do anything I want. There is no point in wasting any more time on something I have no interest in doing. So it was kind of an epiphanic moment. After that, I filed for CO status. At first, people were like “Okay…” and then I would have to explain to them that I was not some crazy lunatic. I was still the same person.

During the first part of the process, they assign an investigator to your case who has to evaluate what you have written in your package. They check your sources because you have to write this application, which involves statements of character from friends and family or co-workers to say, “Yes, I believe he is this way.” You, the applicant, also have to write a huge explanation detailing your beliefs. You have to get an evaluation from a psychologist, an evaluation from a chaplain, then you have to get interviewed by the investigating officer and then you finally submit that whole package. The investigating officer then reviews that package again and that takes a while. That is just the part of the process, which happens at the battalion level. I had filed in June 2014 and I don’t think it got to my commanding officer of my battalion till October 2014. From there, your battalion officer looks at the application; then the regimental
Commanding Officer has to look at it. So it went from a Lieutenant Colonel, to a Colonel and finally to a General. The first level, my Lieutenant Colonel, rejected the application. He did not agree with me because he felt that “I did not feel that way [I was not sincere] because I had only been that way for a year, so my views might change.” My Colonel did not even really write a reason. He just said, “I agree with that guy, no.” The General gave a really detailed response, or at least his office did, and said, “He meets all the requirements and criteria. We say yes.” From there it got forwarded to the headquarters at the Marine Corps. level and it sat there for an additional four months before they finally said yes. It got to the headquarters of the Marine Corps. sometime in December or January and they finally approved it in March of 2015 and I was out a few months later in May.

My choice to become an objector was definitely an epiphany. A lot of different things fed into my decision but it was very much a feeling of enlightenment. I saw the way the gay community was being treated in the military and I worked really hard to make that better. Early in 2014, which also contributed to my misery because no body seemed to care, I tried to get my regimental unit to recognize Pride month, which is in June in the US. They would not recognize it because I was asking nicely even though Department of Defense and the President had already formally recognized it. You know, the people who WE WORK FOR. Even though they recognized it, my boss responded to my request by saying “Well, my Commanding Officer has not directly told me to do.” So I took advantage of this procedure called “Request Mast” which means my problems or requests are getting resolved and I want to speak directly with my Commanding Officer. If he or she cannot solve the problem, then I want it to go to their Commanding Officer and up and up and up until either I get an answer or they find a way to fix whatever the problem is. So I did just that. I requested that I would like Pride month recognized
because it is recognized federally. It was simple for me but seemed so complicated for them and it ended up working; I got Pride month recognized. But what was most troubling about it all was the fact that I had to fight tooth and nail, just to get my boss to do the right thing. It was mentally exhausting because it just seemed to mind bendingly easy to me. That whole incident was yet another event that solidified my conscientious objection for me: if we do not have compassion for our own people, for our own marines; and, if we cannot do the right thing when it is that simple then how are we going to go to a different country, with a different culture, who speak a different language and have different values —— how are we going to go over there and treat them like human beings if we cannot treat our own people like that? So when I finally asked myself that question, I realized that “Oh my god. We are not doing these things.”

Another formative moment of this whole process was earlier in 2013; I had watched a documentary about Buddhism. I was really blown away because of things that this “Buddha guy” said. I really agreed with his sentiments regarding religious tolerance, equality between the sexes, racial equality, etc. He was talking about all these things that were really a millennia ahead of his time but one thing he said that I will not forget is that: “Violence is a cycle.” If you are in the military then you do not believe that; you believe, on some fundamental level that, violence solves problems. I could understand what he saying about everything else but this I would have to deal with later. I started to research world wars and the historical context for why they happened. I realized that World War 2 only happened because of World War 1 and World War 1 only happened because European super powers had built all these crazy alliances. All these things related to one another and World War 2 ended with the creation of the nuclear bomb, which instigates the beginning of what would be the Cold War, which creates the Korean War, Vietnam, all these things. Violence creating more violence and I just sighed and thought,
“If violence creates more violence, does that make us the problem? And if that is the problem, do I want to be a part of the problem?” So I had all these things coming together and, just the general ignorance of my command structure that I could no longer trust. That extended all the way to the top. These feelings were combined with the way Edward Snowden was being treated. He was revealing some truly illegal stuff and here is the President, my Command in Chief, going after him like he is a war criminal. So I did not and could not trust anybody at that point. I had lost faith in my command structure that extended all the way to the President. I believed we could not treat our own people ethically and therefore certainly could not treat foreigners ethically which we clearly had not been. The Iraq war being illegal definitely weighed on me and I did not quite make sense of it on a simple level even if it was illegal and we went in there for the wrong reasons then why are we still there? What are we still doing? The whole “violence is a cycle” just really started to materialize in everything I was doing. I did not want to be part of the problem and that is certainly not why I joined; I joined to make things better, not worse. All these feelings of misery, loss and heartbreak combined with some spiritual readings, about how we are all connected, I started seeing that violence does not just hurt the person being shot; it also damages the psyche of the person who is doing the shooting. I was seeing my fellow soldiers come home with PTSD and these men and women were so mentally and physically damaged. It should be no surprise that the suicide rate skyrocketed so dramatically. So literally nothing was telling me that being a part of the military was a good idea anymore. It was certainly an awakening and it was certainly an epiphany but it was like this symphony of religious and philosophical studies, personal experience, and extrapolating small circumstances into the larger picture that really culminated in my conscientious objection. Honestly, it was like being in an existential, nuclear explosion. Truly.
Before I really was able to all articulate this to myself, I had kind of developed this passive personality in the military. It sounds kind of weird but it seemed like my life was happening to me. I would tell myself “The military sucks. My job sucks but what am I going to do? I hate this but it is not like I have control.” There is this weird passivity that I developed and that was what that dream reminded me of. It reminded me that “Absolutely not. I have control. This is my life and it is my only life so why am I going to waste it, and my time, being so miserable and not do what I want.” So it definitely reminded me of that but it also reminded me that I do not like being a mean person. I never did and being a marine requires that. If you are going to send people into combat, it requires them to do bad things. As an Officer or Commander, you have to, some degree, not care about the well being of your subordinates. The Command can say troop welfare is important but in the end, you are sending them into bullets and bombs. That is not really good troop welfare. And it is such a misogynist culture and a homophobic culture that wreaks of racism boiling beneath the surface which is almost everywhere; but more so in the officer culture because it is so wealthy and so white. Being an Officer is like an express ticket to the Boys Club and the top of the socioeconomic ladder. I just did not like any of it and I had to try really hard to do it. It did not fit well and it never did but I wanted to fit in. I think that has been kind of a theme of my life and I wanted to fit in with the good ol' Boys Club. I wanted to fit in with the “cool kids.” I did not like it though and it never felt natural. I always just defaulted to being a nice guy rather than being a dickhead or being an ass. So I just got more and more comfortable in acknowledging that and saying “I do not like this” but for a while I just could not admit that I did not like this job. I hated it. I could say I was unhappy but I could not say I hated this job. It is a bad job but it is hard to admit that when you are taught your whole that it’s so honorable, it’s patriotic and there is nothing better you can do to serve your
country or that you are a hero for doing it. To turn around and say you hate it is kind of weird. For me, it was like admitting failure and I got comfortable with it but I did not like being that way. It is not who I am. I would much rather love everybody than hate them. I do not want to kill people. I think that I forced myself into it because I wanted that identity; I wanted the experience and I was willing to possibly kill people or be killed myself even though deep down I did not want to do that just to get the experience. It was weird, so weird. But all of this definitely put into perspective how weird this all had been and how unnatural it all felt. I was just more comfortable with being a sensitive, emotional, nice guy that I have always been. I was just more comfortable living life like that and saying, “This is not for me. I do not like this.” I had kind of forgot that was an option; that the military was not for me and I did not have to like it. I just got so used to forcing myself because of the training. I did not want to quit so I kept forcing myself to do the stuff that I hated. It was just so horrible and I fell into that pattern that I forgot I could say I do not like it.

One of the more formative books I read was called The Four Agreements96. The Four Agreements is just this simple premise that there are four things you should do to lead an authentic and happy life. The first one is: be impeccable with your words. So say what you mean and mean what you say; the second thing is: do not take anything too personally. The idea being that, you have a totally different experience in life that flavors everything you do and how the world is; I will have a very different experience in life; you and I are different people and it is like that with everybody so everybody lives in their own special reality. When I treat someone poorly, it is not necessarily a bad thing; it is about how I feel at that very moment so it is not necessarily personal. For example, if I say something mean to my mom, it is probably because I

am cranky or because I just got some bad news or feeling insecure about something. It is not really about her. The point is that you should not take everything so personally when someone does it to you because it is not necessarily about you. It is something more personable about them. The classic example is, if someone is bullying you then it is probably because they have been bullied before. So that is the second one: don’t take everything personally. The third one is: do not make any assumptions. The easiest way for me to explain that is if I got cut off by someone in traffic, it is easy for me to say, “Look at this asshole. Look at the way he is driving.” This person could be having a heart attack, going to the hospital or they could be late for an important appointment. Then you need to turn that on yourself. Have you ever driven like a dickhead before too? So do not assume anything and just try to approach everything with an open mind and hope for the best if you are going to assume. The fourth one is: try your hardest in everything you do. So I read that in Korea when I was at my most vulnerable because I was miserable and it really stuck with me.

Another book I read was called The Wise Heart,97 which was written by a psychologist and Buddhist. The book is basically about loving and holding people with compassion; holding them in the light. So if you have somebody you hate, if you have somebody you are struggling with — hold him or her in compassion. Feel sorry for them; feel love for them; want their lives to be better but do not waste your energy hating them. I had come to the realization that, “Yeah I’ve been a mean person to people. I have bullied people and I do not want them to hate me. I know people do not need my hate; they need my love to make things better.” So this book was teaching me to be compassionate especially towards other people but also yourself because you are the most important person in your life and we so often forget that. It is important to cut

yourself slack, be understanding and give yourself a break when you need it. Acknowledge that there are some things you cannot do and just be compassionate with yourself. Those were the two books that were really important. I also read some other stuff on existentialism, which those books really helped solidify the idea that really just existing is really cool. That just being here is a really cool experience when you think about the odds of you actually being here are much less than you not existing. If you think essentially of your conception, with all the different sperm and eggs and, here you are. All the events that had to have happened to make sure your Mom and Dad were together to make you in the first place. Just being here and experiencing life, is a really cool thing. It is also very temporary! We are on this crazy rock, shooting through space at 20,000km/h, going God knows where or how things are out there; if there is life out there and it is just crazy. We did not exist for billions of years before and, when we die, we won’t exist for infinity. So the existentialism really helped me appreciate the weirdness and the uniqueness of it all and I think that all definitely combined into who I am today. There is no need to take this rare gift of life from anybody. I do not want to kill anybody; I do not want it to be taken away from me. What is more is that I do not want to be wasting my energy hating people because everybody is hurting; everybody has their own problems; everybody has their own complex situations and I do not know anything about them. So I just went on the assumption that if I know somebody well enough, I would love them. Even the people who I may have hated before, once I truly know them I will love them. They are good people. Generally the people you hate, are the ones you know the least. So I just skip that hating part and go right to the “They are probably good people, I just do not know them well enough.”

After I had submitted my CO package, the Lieutenant Colonel who had said “no” to my package, said that he still really respected me for speaking my mind and being honest. He also
read my application so he saw how articulate I was and how well thought out it was even though he still said no. So he had this weird thing where he respected me for standing up for myself, which I was regardless if anyone would care because he was used to people telling him what they thought he wanted to hear. He was used to the brown nosing and for him and it was refreshing but he did not care about that. He once said that he wanted to have discussions with me and wanted my opinion on some thing. We had these discussions for about a month or two before they stopped happening. We tried talking about war and politics once and we got onto this discussion about Hiroshima. I recall talking about Iraq and Afghanistan and the hundreds of thousands of people that have died on a fabricated cause and he did not agree with me on the reasoning for why we went into Iraq. That was interesting but he turned the discussion to talk about World War 2 because everybody loves talking about World War 2 and conscientious objectors because it is so cut and dry. It is very easy for the conversation to turn on someone by asking, “So you would not have fought Hitler? You would not have gone after him? What if we were all speaking German now?” They love doing that because it such a simple argument. I decided to shift the conversation myself and we got onto Hiroshima, “Well, sir, I just do not think it is moral to bomb civilians. I think it’s against the Geneva code and I think it has always been immoral to do that but we did it. Not only did we nuke the civilians, hundreds of thousands of them, but this was after we had already fire bombed hundreds of thousands of civilians who burned alive; that we specifically used fire bombs because they all lived in wooden structures that would burn. We did this with 60+ cities and then we nuked them twice.” He retorted with this argument that “Yeah, but it ended the war quicker. We saved lives by doing it” and I think this is what really got him. I said, “Yes sir, but the lives we saved were American military lives and the lives we killed were Japanese civilians. And that is immoral. If we had invaded Japan
and more American military members died, number wise, I would be okay with that because they are military lives and that is what the military is there for. I do not think its okay to sacrifice civilians of another country for our military. It does not make sense and it is immoral.” We politely agreed to disagree but we did not have any conversations about that kind of stuff anymore. It was funny because he made a big deal about wanting those conversations. Eventually, we spoke about enough things that those conversations stopped happening and not just about war and stuff but just procedurally about the way we were doing things on base. He had cancelled some of our meetings, which was great, because the military has this awful meeting culture where you are just sitting in more meetings than your are not. So he had cancelled some of them, which was wonderful. The team was ecstatic and said “Awesome. Thank you very much.” Not only did those meetings come back but also there were more of them. I sat in one of those meetings and someone was talking to him about adding another meeting and he responded with “That sounds like a good idea.” I stopped the meeting and I asked, “Why are we doing this? You got rid of two of these meetings and now we have four extra ones. Why are we doing this? We are not getting anything done because we are spending all of our time in meetings.” And it turned into one of those “Thank you for opinion Lieutenant ***. We are really glad you have these differing opinions” but nobody wanted to hear it anymore.

During the final months of my career, I was the designated Safety Officer. In the military we do a lot of dangerous stuff and we operate heavy machinery so the Command wants to make sure people are done things safely and while we are home people and abroad so that people are not needlessly getting killed. Nobody cares and it was just interesting to watch people pay lip service to the Safety Officer and then try to get things done but nobody would care to do it. I
remember one thing that really scared the hell out of me was when in my office with another
Sergeant who occupied it with me. It was just a small office and the Sergeant had a buddy who
used to visit him. I guess both of them had been to Afghanistan together and I recall sitting there
and they had begun talking about ISIS. This was in July or maybe August of 2014, so ISIS was
just big news. So the conversation entailed talking about going back to Afghanistan and Iraq if
they had to and this particular enlisted member emphatically said, “Hell yeah, man. Hell yeah I
would go back.” And I was just at the point of topping my belligerence when I turned around to
and said to him “Why would you want to go back? Why would you want to do that?” He
responded, “Well, sir, there are less rules out there.” I countered with “Less rules like what? Why
is it better our there?” He proceeded to tell me that “Well you can kill people for one,” and I was
thinking “Great, so you want to kill people.” He continued on by saying “Well, sir, when I was
out there I think that they all wanted to kill us. I learned they all want to blow us up.” I
responded with “Well is that not what you are there to do? To kill them? Of course they want to
kill you. You are in their homeland” and this conversation went on. So I finally asked him “Do
you even know why we went into Iraq in the first place?” He said, “We are liberators, sir. We
liberated them.” I countered again, “Liberated them from who? From ISIS?” He said “No, no,
sir. Saddam Hussein.” I began to press him more and more “No. That is not the point; that is not
why we went there. Even if we did ‘liberate’ them from Saddam Hussein, I bet if you asked them
now if we were liberators, they would not tell you that. I think their opinion is the one that
counts.” Then he began talking about how we needed to go back and how we needed to give the
Syrians weapons to arm them. I reminded him, “You know that we armed Osama bin Laden and
the moudjahidine in the 1970’s and they used that training against us?” “Yes sir” he said. I
responded, “Okay, so do you think that giving more weapons and arms to the Middle East is a
good idea? Do you want to see this go bad for us again? Or do you realize how ISIS was created throughout the Iraq war which was illegal?” This soldier essentially knew nothing. He knew nothing about the current situation and or even about the past situation but I realized that it was not just him. It was almost everybody. Nobody actually thought critically, dug deep, or really understood the context or the history of what was really going on over there; at least nobody below a significant rank. That was just terrifying. Of course, we are going to repeat the same mistakes when nobody knows the history; nobody knows what we are doing; nobody knows why ISIS exists; nobody knows why the Middle East is falling apart; nobody cares. Our own people just think we are liberators! “We are heroes! Let’s go back!” somebody once said, when I asked them why they wanted to go back. One enlisted member said to me “Well you can make a lot of money when you are deployed. You are not spending any money and you are earning bonus pay.” To them, that makes sense. To me, what I heard was “I am willing to kill, or be killed because I can make a lot of money.” To me, that sounds a lot like a mercenary and that was so crystal clear to me but to them it was the common lexicon. It was so easy for some of them to say “Yeah man, that is just we do. I made good money going to Iraq.” I was just terrified because these were not extraordinary stories. They were the common stories. So at that point, I was like “How do I dismantle the military before I get out?” which obviously I could not do but I had this first hand look into this awful killing machine filled with people who had their head in the sand; these people did not know their history or did not care too. Even worse was that the people in charge were not trying to educate them. There was no emphasis on education. There was no emphasis on people being taught about current events. It was more like “Just get the training cycle done. Make sure those vehicles are running. Go on resupplies. Do the daily draw.” Nobody cared about really educating why we do what we really do and what we have done in the past. It
was like nobody cared. Nobody cared and these are the people who are going to go kill. It was just too much; just too much.

The day I was finally discharged was on May 15th, which, ironically, is International Conscientious Objector Day. It’s not a huge holiday but it is a real thing. So that was super cool. I spent the next two months in the South Pacific just to kind of run out my lease and enjoy the island without having a job; it is a beautiful place and I had a lot of alone time and I did a lot of hikes where I did even more introspection than I had before. I lived close to the base, which was situated on a peninsula. When I went onto the beach where I lived, the peninsula, which housed the base, stuck out in front of me. I would sit on the beach and stare at the peninsula where everybody I knew was still working and things were going on as if I had never been there. I looked at it and I just could not remember what I had done. I could not remember being there. I had totally disassociated from it and it was a scary feeling because I felt like I was forgetting it while I was sitting out there on that beach. I had already been out for a week or two and I was like “What the hell was that?” I just could not figure it out and I am still confused and still very much bewildered. I feel like I am kind of twenty one again but really I am twenty seven because I feel I have disassociated about six or seven years of my life. I just do not understand or identify with those years when I went through training, when I was in the military, when I was stationed on that base. It was like “Who was I?” and “Where did I go?” When I was doing my cross-country road trip, from L.A. to New Jersey, I went from San Diego up to Seattle, across to Montana, down to Houston, all the way up to D.C. and back to Tennessee. So I had done a ton of driving but during the drive I was struggling with that question. Was it a fugue state that I was in? Who was I and, again, that question keeps coming back: what the hell was that? It was so weird. I just cannot identify with the person who would make that decision; who would decide to
go into the military, feeling the way I feel now and looking back at the way I felt in high school. It is just crazy that I could feel that way and still convince myself that I needed to do this. But I had to see it from the inside to really know what it was about. I knew when I signed up for the military that part of it was that I was going to college and I did not know what to do with my life. Part of me was like “Well the military will help me figure that out and if I do not like it, I will do something else.” So in a funny way, and not in the way I had expected, I did not like the military. I did figure out what I wanted to do with the rest of my life and I am going to do something else. So my time in the military did definitely help me clarify that. Just sitting on that beach, looking at that peninsula … I just felt so far away from and it was just right there. It was just bizarre; totally bizarre. The night I got out, I just sat on my couch all night long and listened to classical music, which I never do. I was just listening to classical music and just thinking, kind of smugly, “I really did it. Holy shit. I did it. It is over.” I remember in high school when I was like “Oh my god. Here we go” and I pushed the button like “Aaaaah, here we go.” And then fast forward seven years and I am out. It was like everything in those few years just flew by me and I was now sitting here thinking “Whoa, holy shit. That was fast.” It was just weird and it was really such a bizarre thing because it was like driving through something that you do not really see till you are passed it. So I am finally getting perspective on a lot of things and it was just funny having the military been my life from when entering the ROTC to getting out almost eight years later. Civilian life has not gotten old yet. It is so great! It is so great to not worry about shaving; to be able to act however I want; to treat people however I want to treat them; not having to worry about things that I do not want to do. I have agency, I can do whatever I want! You know “whatever I want” but I think the most unsettling part about all of this, is that when I made my about face in the military, my brain said “Nope. I do not want to be a part of this. I do not want to
kill people. I want out” and I thought that was pretty radical. This has totally changed my perspective on everything and now I am diving into feminist literature; I am diving into racial equality and social justice literature and I can see some things are just getting worse. I am just now seeing how things are and it only gets worse and worse. It is not just bad because of the military, it is bad because of the way men have treated women badly for centuries; it is bad because of the way slaves were brought over here and that segregation still exists; and, then there is police brutality. There are all these horrible things that I am reading about and it is like life is just a stinky onion that I keep pulling more layers off of. I keep reading more books, watching more movies, talking to more people. It just gets worse and worse and worse. So my struggle now is battling these feelings of “I didn’t want this kind of America” and when I was raised, I was taught, “America was the best” or “We respect freedom and democracy.” We had all these high ideals and we certainly were not “racist”, or “mean”, or “misogynist” but now I am finding that we are all those things. And it feels like I did not want to be born into this. I did not want to be born into a caste of society as the “straight, white guy” whose group of people is responsible for some of the worst things to happen in this country. My struggle now is that when I was in the military, I could conscientiously object out of that but I cannot conscientiously object out of being an American. I want to make things better but my struggle is that in order to make things better, you need to learn about how bad it is and that is a big bump. So now I am just trying to re-educate now because I thought the military was the hardest part but now I do not think it is. I think the most difficult part is this marathon of hard work for the rest of my life. Hard work but fulfilling work but its just the beginning.
Analysis of Craig’s Narrative:

A continuous theme thus far has been that 9/11 was a catalyzing event that compelled many of the participants to enlist. Like the comment made previously by Mike about the connectedness of humanity and tragedy, Craig describes a similar process happening when the attacks on the World Trade Centre towers occurred. In this passage, he describes exactly the interconnectedness of core “American” values and the American military identity (Ivie 2012),

For a brief couple days after 9/11, the America that you would read and hear about, like the really good one where everybody was kind to each other, had finally come to the forefront as people came together in this great tragedy. People were not honking horns as much; everyone was eager to assist another and there was this really incredible feeling of brother hood. There was also this looming feeling of “Why?” Why would they hurt us? We are such good people!…I was told “They hate us for our freedom.”…9/11 reinvigorated this common identity among all Americans: we were victims. (149)

This feeling of united victimization and galvanized the U.S. citizenry and prompted individuals like Craig to enlist with the military.

I joined the military because of this strong foundation of honor, courage and commitment; you respect everybody you work for; you salute the people you work for; the people that work for you salute you; and there is all this tradition that you are apart of and all this discipline…you are getting into this very rigid structure, where everybody is looking out for each other, you are serving your country and fulfilling your ‘duty’. (151)

During his time in the military, Craig began to witness discrepancies in what he thought the military was when he compared the expectations placed on him as a military personnel. It was during this process of realization, that his objections to the military began to take form as he recalls a portion of his officer training,

I have a memory of when I was in the early stages of officer training and during the instruction they showed us this pyramid or hierarchy of when to not follow an order. It asked some fundamental questions like: “does it violate your morals?”,”does it violate laws?”, “does it violate this.” The pyramid detailed when it was appropriate that you should say “no” to an order but it was incredibly vague considering they train you to follow orders and to instruct others to do the same. So they kind of gloss over this point of “…and if it is really bad, do not follow an order. Next.” (155-156)
During the Nuremberg Trials that followed the second World War, Allied military forces ‘recognized’ the need to have provisions for resisting ‘illegal’ orders. What prompted this change were the testimonies provided by the German soldiers who argued that they should not be held accountable for their actions, or war crimes, because they ‘acted under orders.’ Obedience to the chain of command is an integral lesson that all military members learn however objectionism shows that resisting orders, ‘illegal’ or otherwise, stands in direct opposition to the organizational structure of the military that demands unquestioning obedience. Relatedly, Craig recounts a moment where he recognized this contradiction between the expectations of duty and the moral obligations he was instructed with during his officer training,

So the command really beat this idea of unquestionable obedience. You just follow orders because it is the statue quo there. Now that I am able to look at it from an outside perspective, it begins to look so eerily similar to what the Nazi’s did. I am not saying anyone I was with committed a war crime but there is this weird mentality that is so similar to what we heard during the Nuremberg trials: “I was just following orders.” But in reality, that is exactly the mentality that they drill into you: you follow orders. Even as an officer, you are not supposed to repeatedly question your authority or challenge the plans provided by Command. (156)

As Craig became more untrusting of his role and responsibilities in the military, the ‘mission’, and the abilities of his commanding officers, he turned to conscientious objection,

When people first found out that I was applying for CO status, a lot of people were either confused or scared. I had done nothing to give them that impression because they assumed my position was “I don’t want to kill them” but really it was “I don’t want to kill anyone.” (157)

In sharing on his struggles with his experiences as an objector, Craig, like Mike and Jess, faced skepticism over the sincerity of his claim to objection(Navin 2013). One major claim made against is objectors in volunteer militaries is that: if you against the expectations of duty—specifically killing—then why did they join the military in first place? The ability for the individual to change and grow is often overlooked. Craig articulates this position when he states that,

So everybody is familiar with this concept of growing old and changing but they are just
confused about it in the context of the military. Nobody ever asks a divorcee “Well why did you get married in the first place?” Those who ask know exactly why but they do not really connect that with being a CO in the military. (160)

Although Craig concedes to never seeing combat, his time and experiences as a Logistics Officer within the United States military helped him to reaffirm parts of his identity that he believed to have forgotten during his training and belief that the institution of the military was accomplishing ‘good things.’ Recounting a conversation he had with an enlisted member sparks an interesting contrast between the core values that the military espouses and the behavior of some military members. Moreover, it highlights a point made by Mike where he juxtaposed what the military is “literally doing” and “ought to be doing”,

One enlisted member said to me “Well you can make a lot of money when you are deployed. You are not spending any money and you are earning bonus pay.” To them, that makes sense. To me, what I heard was “I am willing to kill, or be killed because I can make a lot of money.” To me, that sounds a lot like a mercenary and that was so crystal clear to me but to them it was the common lexicon. It was so easy for some of them to say “Yeah man, that is just we do. I made good money going to Iraq.” I was just terrified because these were not extraordinary stories. They were the common stories…Nobody cared and these are the people who are going to go kill. (179)

In describing the components of his philosophy to objection, Craig describes his process of inquiry into objectionism as multi-faceted. Reading texts on Buddhism, existentialism, spirituality, and social theory, below he describes his journey of conscientizing:

It was certainly an awakening and it was certainly an epiphany but it was like this symphony of religious and philosophical studies, personal experience and extrapolating small circumstances into the larger picture that really culminated in my conscientious objection. Honestly, it was like being in an existential, nuclear explosion. Truly. (171)
6.5 Robert: “The important thing that people need to understand is that the desire to love humanity is not confined to the precepts of religion or a belief in a deity.”

My story starts with how I was raised in the inner city of Columbus, Ohio in a low-income environment. The military would specifically target in that environment, due to a lot of us lacking opportunities. The “American Dream” was not too prevalent. A lot of the inner city individuals, including myself were looking for a way out of this impoverished life. I was raised in a broken-home as many Americans are nowadays and the recruiters would come to our high school in the Columbus Public School system and promise bonuses and large sums of money to increase the desire of poor inner-city children to join the military. A lot of inner-city people are focused on short-term monetary gains and the military offered that – it can help you financially right now – education was a pathway that offered the hope of long term monetary gains, but that did not put food on the table so the military always stood out as a great way to exploit the poor to accomplish the military's mission. While I was growing up in the inner city, I would sneak to the library and study subjects in order to make it to college. I did not have a desire at the time to join the military. My mother would yell at the recruiters when they would call the house and tell them to not call back. It made me more curious – however, I did not decide to research any details about it and was dead-set on making it into college. On another day in high school, the school forced us to take the ASVAB, which is the standardized testing for the military to determine the specific jobs you qualify for in the military – it was an indicator of potential capabilities of each prospective candidate. The interesting factor is that you can score high on the ASVAB and the recruiters might not want to fill a slot for that high score military occupation specialty, due to them looking to meet a quota for a more dangerous job, such as EOD (Explosive Ordinance Detonation). This allows them to use the quota jobs to offer bonuses and large sums of money,
which ultimately inner-city people are more attracted to, due to the money. No one is really thinking about the implications of what the military involves because a lot of us are being exploited with money and other factors that potentially improve our lives – especially if you grew up in a terrible environment. After high school finished, I was accepted to Bluffton University, a small Mennonite school in Bluffton, OH. I studied Political Science and then ultimately transferred in 2007 to Ohio State University, due to losing some friends in a bus crash on the baseball team. 2007-2011 were the years that I attended OSU. My senior-year of university was when I started to decide what I was going to involve myself with career-wise. I started seeing more advertisements to become a Marine Officer and it was attractive with the way it was being framed. I started fantasizing over the prospects of being one of the “best,” a Marine Officer. The ads pitched the notions of “nobility” and “heroism,” a lot of the key things the American system glorifies to continually attract people to the military.

There is a notion that because the military is volunteer, the military harps on that a lot, so if you volunteer, the notion is that “you're part of the one-percent that decided to sacrifice or give up your freedoms to join the military and protect the country.” This claim is really used to amplify that joining the military is this noble and heroic decision that ultimately makes questioning the notion of joining the military pointless. There is so much propaganda and glorification of the military – bad opinions are negated and not showcased, resulting in this positive image of military service in all facets. How many people say bad things about the military machine? I went to a Marine Officer recruiter and this program consumed me. We exercised with each other, conducting military physical fitness tests, studied the history of the Marine Corps – it felt like a cult, a cult that you wanted to be a part of. I was selected to attend
Marine OCS in Quantico, VA and this was back in 2012, but it was one of the most exciting moments of my life to be selected to be one of the best. I was hurt during training so I left, but I knew I wasn't finished with the military – I was only motivated to continue my quest of being in the military. I was in a training environment with the Marine Corps so I did not know what I was involved with at this moment; in fact, I was more conditioned to the military because of the training environment that is structured to indoctrinate you. I went to physical therapy when I made it back home and started speaking with an Army recruiter. I was recommended to enlist first by a Marine Major that was training me daily as he was an enlisted infantryman during his first term and then he transitioned over as an Officer. The Marine Major told me that the Soldier's will respect you more since you have been in their footsteps – you know what it is like.

So I went and spoke with the Army recruiter and completed the ASVAB testing and scored high – giving me a choice in the job I wanted. I decided on becoming a Medic, also known as Healthcare Specialist/Combat Medic. I liked the aspect of being a Medic because I could help people and because it is a really respected position in the military and a lot of people depend on you – sometimes only you. The goal was, then, to gain a few years of experience and then transition over to the officer side and serve a full twenty years in the military. That is sort of the brief understanding of why I chose to join the military. I did not need college paid for and I did not accept any benefits to joining. It was the mere thought that I was joining an organization that protected this country and helped people abroad. That is the thing about American culture – when you talk about your time in the military or the thought of joining the military, everyone respects you 100% and says “thank you for your service,” but no one goes around calling you nefarious names as they did in Vietnam. The switch from conscripted military to volunteer was strategic and allowed the military to avoid a lot of the contempt and negative resentment towards
the military since no one has to worry about their numbers being called to go to war. Less people know what is going on and could care less since they are not potentially involved. This positive glorification is what led me to join the military without question.

When I think about my time inside of the military, I would say there is a huge aspect of diversity, which is what I was used to coming from the inner city. There are lower-income Latino's, African-Americans, whites – it is like a melting pot from the inner city and since the military heavily recruits from the inner city, it is no wonder that the diversity is abundant. A lot of the Soldier's have not attended any universities – most joining directly out of high school or with a G.E.D. It was a bit different for me to be around that environment, as I had a quality university B.A. degree when I enlisted in the military.

Some of the things I liked in the military, from the outside perspective, was the aspects of nobility and heroism, “serving my country,” there was this on-going war from the events of 9/11/, and the military needed bodies and I was young and could not join when the devastating attack happened, so I felt like I now had the opportunity to be a part of this organization that sacrifices for our country and freedom – you know, democracy. All these big trigger words that they pushed throughout the media, literature, and history. I think one thing, in particular, I noticed was when you are young, you pledge allegiance to the flag. It is kind of a forced thing and you do not have much of a choice. Or even in modern days, you attend a sporting event and they play the National Anthem and you stay seated, while everyone else stands and pays “respect” to the flag and country, and everyone looks at you and you are considered a terrible, unpatriotic person if you do not conform to this glorified image that everyone else has prescribed to. When you are growing up in America, you get the brainwashed version of military service all the while they are covering up the grotesque images of war and negative things that pervert these
organizations because they want to continue to recruit people for this military industrial complex. Some of the things I did enjoy were the sense of camaraderie – you know, the brotherhood.

When I was in college, I stuck to myself for the most part, attempting to make good grades, so that I would not fail and go back to the inner city. The bond in the military is deep for the most part because the person next to you becomes the person that may save your life in combat or garrison. When I made it into the military, particularly in Korea, near the DMZ on Camp Casey/Camp Hovey, I started noticing a particular trend of Filipino women directly off post of our U.S. Army bases in these bars. Each base in Korea has a sector outside of it lined up with bars – I mean over forty to fifty bars on a strip. It is absurd. Filipino women were told that they were going to be performers and singers. They all have amazing voices so they leave the Philippines to escape poverty and move to Korea, where they soon realize they were bamboozled and now are forced to sell their bodies to U.S. Soldier's for drinks. Soldier's call them “Juicy Girls,” but to their children and family, they are more than these degrading and dehumanizing terms that Soldier's mark them as – noticeably, due to the dehumanizing culture of the military – Soldier's do not often notice that they are degrading these women to lessen the guilt of involving themselves in a sex-trafficking trade that the U.S. Military refuses to shut down. The sad part of this all is that these bar-owners take these Filipino women's passports leaving them stuck and forced to comply or face punishment. If the women do not sell a significant amount of drinks to the incoming military personnel, they are forced to take out a bar fine, which means full on sexual services with a Soldier in order to make the money. I'm sure many Americans do not know about this trade going on and they probably would not suspect that the U.S. Military perpetuates this vicious trafficking ring. Why? Well, because we continue to glorify the notion of military service and the industrial complex and avoid talking about the things that are destructive
and grotesque in nature. The military speaks of values when you join and you go through a system of value-based indoctrination on the integrity of the military branch you joined and you soon realize that those values, while they may sound good, fall far from any branch in the military. In fact, most of the values are the opposite when you join. How can I enjoy participating in an organization when I see members of the military, enlisted to high-ranking military members involving themselves in this exploitation of Filipino women? It disgusted me.

I've confronted the issue several times while I was in Korea and found out that the reason they leave those businesses alone and allow this stuff to continue is because the businesses will protest the gates and that can cause political instability within the region – so for the higher-ups, apparently political stability in a region is more important than how we treat women.

That was one particular issue I had with things not equating to values and morals that I thought this organization was founded upon. I also had issues in the military with certain “leaders” getting upset when you question a particular order, etc. Questioning is frowned upon and considered an act of “disrespect.” You are told to follow orders and to not ask questions. Once I started to wake up to the delusions of what I was involved with – I became more skeptical of everything and wanted to question the intent of what I was doing. The big questions came when I overheard two NCO’s [Non-Commissioned Officer] discussing their war stories in the clinic. There were two medics who had deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq. They started to discuss innocent people being blown up via bombs, drone strikes, etc., by US forces. These were things they personally got to witness and when they informed me of this, I went home and started to investigate some of the innocent causalities that had been killed. I found some sites that were impartial and did their best to document the amount of innocent people who had been killed and even included descriptive efforts of how and when it happened. I started investigating other wars
that the US was involved in and then I looked at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, when we dropped “the bombs.” I looked at how people were affected and how many today are still affected with “Agent Orange” or radiation from the bomb and I was disgusted. I was let down. What if I am not the hero and I am the reason for continued resentment and terrorism in the world by participating in this organization? We have hurt so many people with our occupation. There are so many innocent people. I started to question the role of terrorism and I began to think about 9/11 where we lost twenty-nine hundred Americans and I said to myself, “Why is it not terrorism when we kill innocent people? Why is there always a justification for it when we do it? How can we kill innocent people and tell their mothers and fathers, or their sons or daughters, that we are sorry, but we killed your loved one; it was not intentional and that is it.” For me, it did not add up. I started reading Noam Chomsky – I found him via a Google search on war, I did not particularly look for him, but he came up and I can see why I did not know much about him. He provides a critical ear against US policy. Anyone who dissents against the government seems to be silenced, or treated as an unpatriotic person. The first book I read of Noam Chomsky’s was “Understanding Power,” which was a great book because it questions all aspects of US policy and interventions. As children, we are taught literature that frames all US history as pro-America as opposed to looking at the grim realities of how we truly were in many wars and how we conducted ourselves under different policies. Super Bowl Monday of 2014, I said, “I cannot do this anymore.” I realized I was in an organization that recruited me on fluff and this glorified image of heroism and patriotism. I read a book on recommendation from M.S. at The Center on Conscience and War, called “On Killing,” by Lt. Colonel David Grossman. I thought back to basic training, where Grossman talks about the on-accuracy fire rates from the previous wars and how it is now close 90%, due to the shift to silhouette targets. It used to be significantly lower
when the military used circular targets, but the shift made it more life-like, allowing military members to void their conscience to complete a mission. There I was, joining the military to become a Medic and help people, lying in prone on the range shooting at a life-like target, enjoying it and seeking the thrill of becoming an expert marksman. I realized that all of these incentives offered subvert you from thinking about the unnatural act you are preparing for – I did not think of taking a life, I thought of hitting 36/40 so I could get an expert badge, more promotion points, and a three-day pass. It is exploitative and dangerous conditioning. That is how effective the conditioning is – here I am, attempting to help people, not kill people, and now I am slowly bridging the gap of being turned into a killer. Some of the cadences we would sing – indoctrinate violence and consume us with reactive, drone-like mentalities. Granted – I get that I joined a military and not a peace organization, so I understand that some of this stuff is happening for a reason within this organization. However, I have problem with taking away someone's humanity, their ability to question the things around which has significant impacts on a returning Soldier's life back to the civilian world where they try go back to a state of semi-normalcy. But my issue, in general, is with the wars and the fact that we kill innocent people in these wars and I believe that when we kill innocent people – we are creating terrorism and spiking up these groups that want to endanger us. The easiest way to stop terrorism is to stop participating in terrorism.

I would say that being a Soldier requires being proficient at your job – however, it comes with the concept that you should not be smarter than what your job requires. What I mean is that you should not question the scope of what you are doing or ask questions to spark discussion about orders, etc. Be smart enough to do your job – that is it. In my opinion, being a Soldier is not about being intellectual per say – it is more about having courage/bravery, being submissive
to those above you without question. I do not mean this in a way to condemn the act of being a Soldier – but there are expectations of what it entails. If you do not comply – you face an Article 15 (punishment), potentially go to a military brig, are court-martialed, lose pay/rank, etc. That is how they keep discipline within a unit: through the use of fear. I cannot tell you the amount of times I have watched Soldier’s become pissed off and talking about the stuff they despise with each other, serious stuff – but it stays silent and does not get addressed to senior leaders because you are just going to be sent back to the job and nothing will change. It is a terrible way to live life honestly. The military life, for me, was even more terrible once I had applied for Conscientious Object status.

After I had applied for Conscientious Objector status, I encountered several instances when they tried to informally punish me and make me lose my mind in order to make me act out so the command could spin me as a bad person because I was an objector. For example, there were some people in my unit who overheard that I applied to get out of the military because I was a Conscientious Objector and apparently that kind of stuff gets around and people start talking – none of them really know what it means, but the notion that someone is objecting to US military policy/war, instantly brings out that indoctrinated jargon that makes them instantly despise someone not in agreement with them. I found out that I was being called immature names, such as “faggot, hippy, coward, and traitor.” None of this was said to my face and not once was I spoken to by these people making the claims – a clear, prevalent issue of judgment without inquiring about how someone came to their beliefs and the idea of what conscientious objection is and how it is not a bad thing. I had a squad leader that came and spoke with me in private and informed me on how a particular platoon Sergeant would make me complete every detail (job duties after hours, for long periods of time). He asked this platoon Sergeant why she
insisted on doing this when there were other Soldiers to share in completing the duties and she said, “he is causing too many issues by being a conscientious objector.” When I heard that, I realized that this particular person was not a credible leader as she was claiming she supported me to my face and yet she is demeaning and taking away all my time on the side behind my back. So I was working on weekends in the dining facility for the entire day – throughout the week and completing many different duties. It was taking away from my time to study and research more about development of my beliefs. My squad-leader informed me that he could not do much about the senior leader, due to the rank difference and because the senior-level command was supportive of her efforts to stigmatize the process so that other Soldier's did not start to question the morality of war. When I informed the two NCO's that discussed their war stories and the collateral damage that I was a Conscientious Objector – they were not shocked. They were actually supportive of me. Once I told them, we talked for a good four hours and I was told that the senior command would be informed of this and more would follow. Later that day, I was told I needed to go meet with the 1SG [First Sergeant]. I was escorted by this particular platoon Sergeant that was putting me on the numerous extra duties and she sat quietly while the 1SG listened to my eleven-page application of my Conscientious Objection packet. After I read it, he said, “it sounds good, but you are a Soldier and you are going to continue doing everything.” I asked him if I could be on rear-detachment for the field exercise in the coming month and he remarked, “No, you are going and you are going to participate.” All of this was in violation of the military regulation, but what could I do? Refuse orders and be punished? This was the type of “leadership” that permeated this command that neglected Soldier's issues. Later that day, I left and was informed that I needed to go to the CSM’s [Company Master Sergeant] office. This time the 1SG was my escort and he sat quietly while I stood in the middle
of the room at parade rest and listened to the degrading speech from the CSM about how I was making an “un-American” decision. He started to remark, “you are wasting your time. No one has ever been approved. I am going to tell the senior-officer that your claim is bullshit so he will deny it.” At this point, this CSM pulled up the G.I. Rights website (which is a website for Soldier's to look up information and support for CO claims and many other issues). The CSM then claimed that I was looking up “bogus ass beliefs and reciting them to the 1SG to sound educated.” This CSM was attempting to scare me into foregoing this process and continue participating in this organization – I told him, I am going to apply for CO status because that is what I stand for and believe in. This regulation fits what my current issue is. The command wanted to silence this issue as much as possible – because anytime you have a Soldier that dissents against orders or the military's policies – you have to shut it up and keep the positive image floating on the surface. No sane command in their right mind wants to have others think their troop morale is low or the discipline levels are off. Not a single command. No command wants a Conscientious Objector. It is all too funny because most of the CO's in the past have been some of the best soldiers. My Company Commander and Medical Officer recommended me for Green to Gold. I had extremely high physical fitness marks and I was never in trouble. If you follow the media or search sites and you look up Conscientious Objection, you will see that it always ends up as a terrible, terrible situation. It ends up with lawsuits or the soldier ends up going AWOL or faces a court martial. It generally ends up negative because of what the stigma surrounding conscientious objection is and you do not want soldiers questioning the legitimacy of the military.

So I had that discussion with the CSM and I left in tears because I was a good soldier with no negative marks and I figured they would help me and act as leaders are supposed to do
when soldiers have problems. I instantly became the pariah in the unit. After going to the field and participating in duties that were in conflict with my prescribed beliefs – I finally had a meeting set up with a Chaplain from another unit. The conscientious objection packet has 90 days to make it to HQDA [Headquarters, Department of the Army] in Virginia at the Army Review Boards. The Army Review Board has a sector, known as DACORB [Department of the Army Conscientious Objector Review Board], which is the final determination of discharge. Unfortunately at the point of being scheduled to meet with a Chaplain, nearly 60 days had already passed. I started to educate myself on regulation Army Regulation 600-43, which is something you should not do because the leaders do not like when the soldiers are able to defend themselves with the regulation – it undermines their authority if you are attempting to be too smart.

So I went out to the field (range, war-time scenarios, prep for war, etc.), and conducted many duties that violated regulations and my moral and ethical beliefs. It was a traumatizing experience because I was forced to comply, but the regulation was supposed to protect me, but because the leaders did not care about conscientious objection regulation or the effect it had on me mentally and physically, they continued to subject me to participation in all aspects. So I eventually met with this Chaplain from another unit and I knew it would be rather difficult being that I am an Atheist. Essentially, you are hoping that the Chaplain is reasonable enough to separate his personal view on war and religion to conduct a proper interview that is fair. According to the regulation, the Chaplain is supposed to be provided a copy of the application I submitted before I arrive for the meeting – unfortunately, this did not happen so I had to provide the copy and reschedule a meeting with him after he had the ability to formulate questions based on my application. Once I was able to meet with the Chaplain again, we discussed my beliefs,
the crystallization of my beliefs and such. I informed him that as an Atheist, I do not have the
thought of redemption – so if I do something morally/ethically wrong after realizing that it is
wrong – then I have no ability to be forgiven, so ultimately it is increasingly important that I
follow my conscience immediately. The Chaplain asked me questions about participation in
paintball, violent video games, etc. I told him that I believed that paintball provided an
indoctrination and brainwashing towards war – a favorable perspective on war by emulating war
in a “fun” manner. I also elaborated on how games like Call of Duty incentivize that act of
killing by rewarding you with medals/rank increases, etc. This in turn diminishes the realness of
the act you are committing so it becomes easier to see the actual act of war as just another event.
It desensitizes you. The Chaplain is forbidden to make a recommendation as to whether someone
is an objector – but their task is to determine if it is grounded in religion, morality or ethics and if
it is sincere. The Chaplain recognized my sincerity and expressed how my beliefs are
incompatible with the military and how this has profound impact on my well being if I continue
to participate.

A bit later, I had an appointment with a psychologist as part of the process to determine if
I had a mental condition/illness that warrants discharge as opposed to the conscientious objection
case. I always found this portion to be a silly addition, as it seems that they are indicating that
you have something wrong with you if you are peaceful or anti-war. Anyways, I met with this
psychologist and told my story again and was apparently diagnosed with an “adjustment
disorder.” This is a term used by the military to downplay the real issues that the Soldier is going
through. After the meeting with the psychologist, I was informed that I was cleared from that
portion. The next portion in this process is to wait for the Brigade Commander to appoint an
Investigative Officer from another unit to conduct a full questioning of members of my unit and
myself to figure out my ‘sincerity’ and then ultimately make a recommendation on my case. This is supposed to be a big portion of the process in terms of the weight given once it reaches headquarters. Due to the command neglecting my case for several months, the 90 day deadline passed and they began scrambling to fix the issue. The S-1 shop (administration/human resources) command attempted to make a small error on my DA4187 (which is the form to start a process, in this case, my conscientious objection claim). This would allow them to try and make me sign a new form with a new date – I knew exactly what they were trying to do. This Captain was the OIC of S-1 and she wanted to make herself look good when she failed to utilize her job duties and responsibilities for a Soldier and wanted to cover it up by acting like I was dumb enough to sign a new DA4187 with a new date literally four months later. If there was an error on my DA4187, why did it take four months for the issue to be corrected when they had it in their possession the entire four months? They wanted to cover up their delay and failure in leadership and pass the blame per usual. I informed the Captain that I would not be signing a new date on the D14187 and she was upset and tried to express that they could not process it until I signed it. I told her I would sign a new form – only if the previous form was kept in the record. The remainder of this process, the entire command attempted to act like the start date of my application occurred four months after I first filed it.

One of the big issues that irritated me the most was that every regulation aside from conscientious objection AR 600-43 was enforced. If you do not meet the uniform/hygiene requirements, if you do not shave – punishment will ensue on you immediately. However, conscientious objection is not related to the mission as it is in opposition with the mission, so they just half-ass it. This bothered me because as a soldier, I was following the regulation that the Army implemented for people that had issues with their conscience, yet the command gave
no care towards an issue that was hurting a soldier morally and ethically, resulting in an increasingly dangerous depression and anxiety. Any time the command had a chance or attempt to violate the regulation and make me angry, they would do it. I was running out of options for recourse. I was told I should attempt to see if JAG would aid me from a hostile command hell-bent on making my life terrible. I have to say that I was extremely lucky on that front as the Captain I met with at the JAG office was my biggest advocate and most influential helper while I was going through this process. She made herself available to me at all times and she was swift to email my Company Commander when the 1SG and CSM was violating regulation. She saved me from falling into a pit while I was in Korea. She was disgusted with the way the command was handling my case. She wrote several emails to the command, filed an IG (Inspector General) complaint on my command, and helped me with the process of notifying congress/senate. On top of the support given from this particular JAG attorney, I started the beginning of this process by reaching out to The Center on Conscience and War. The people that aided me with moral support and processing of my application was M.S and B.G.\(^9^8\). They are incredible people. M and B know a lot about the regulation as they have had many CO’s before reach out to them for assistance. It is a great organization that has an important part in society, particularly for me, as the Army wasn't supporting me or many other soldiers that have these issues.

So fast forward – after repeated attempts to find out where my application was and why an investigative officer was not appointed, I decided to continually ask this CSM from my unit (who always mistreated soldiers) on status updates. The CSM would tell me he was checking on the status and would ultimately fail to relay any information for a few of the times he asked. After a while, he started to actually change the way he was projecting his attitude towards me. I

\(^9^8\)Names withheld.
do not know if he just got tired of challenging me and realized that I am serious and I will not deter from this or what happened to shift the way he acted towards me. It is possible that the amount of IG complaints filed by soldiers and myself was to blame for his shift. Eventually, the Brigade Commander decided to appoint an Investigative Officer. As I waiting for the IO to finish his review of the case thus far and set up a meeting, I found out that the SCO (Senior-Commanding Officer), a LT. COL, decided to make a decision on my case before the case was even finished and all of the evidence was present. The SCO denied my case on the recommendation citing an opinion. Even if we were to claim that his recommendation was allowed before evidence was submitted, it shows neglect in his decision to be a leader and give the soldier the due diligence that he/she deserves – and the regulation specifically states to make a recommendation after the evidence is complete and to base it on fact and not opinion. The SCO's recommendation was opinionated and consisted of one line. The Company Commander informed me of the IO investigation and told me it would be held at the company meeting room. Once entering the room, I met the Captain conducting the investigation and it consisted of many soldiers in my unit, along with the 1SG, and the Company Commander. The interview started and the Captain asked me several questions about my CO status, etc., and then asked information about my sincerity/integrity and every person interviewed from my command testified that my sincerity/integrity was spotless. I was labeled as a quality soldier with high physical fitness scores and a great heart. A couple of the Soldiers even testified to the organization I created in Korea to help the homeless. I would take Soldiers out into the city and we would buy kimchi and rice and feed the homeless community. This was not a function through the Army – as I didn't need the Army to reward me with a volunteer medal for the acts I was involved with – it takes away the meaning of the act of helping others when you are rewarded for it in my opinion. After
the Investigation was conducted, a week later the Captain who conducted the investigation produced 46 pages of a report. He was quick, efficient, and accurate with his report. I was recommended for approval and he stated that it was clear that I was a conscientious objector. He also told me, “he admired the courage I had to go through this process and that it is no one's right to tell me what to believe.” I can say that I feel happy knowing soldiers have someone of his character in a command position. Empathy is a trait that a lot of leader's tend to forget about. So at this point, the Chaplain, cleared by the Psychologist, vouched me for recommended for approval by the Investigative Officer, and all of my peers. In addition, I had four recommendations from Soldiers in my unit that testified on paper to the transition of becoming a conscientious objector and the way it affected me. One of them was my roommate who noticed how much this affected me every day. He also noted how the command was attempting to make my life hell because of my conscientious objection beliefs by being unfair to me and punishing me for what I stood for.

The next portion of the process is to send the entire packet through the command levels from the Company Commander to the SCO, Brigade Commander, Staff Judge Advocate, and the General. For anyone that thinks this process is for fun or that think people are bullshitting when they go through this process are absurd and know literally nothing about conscientious objection. This process is dehumanizing, degrading, and unfair in all ways. So my packet made it's way to the Company Commander – of which I had two partaking in the recommendation because one was there halfway through the process and another Captain replaced him. I was recommended for approval by both of the Captains that have the most interaction with me. Once it reached the SCO, that's when all of the fishy things started to happen. The SCO that made a decision before any information even came to him, denied me again stating the same opinion – violating the
regulation that requires looking at all the evidence and making a factually based claim. Then it goes to the Brigade Commander and his Staff Judge Advocate recommended that he approved my application because it met the burden of proof, however, the Brigade Commander still denied it. Then it went to the Staff Judge Advocate where they are to write a memorandum on why the application was delayed past the ninety days along with a recommendation. Of course, as you would expect, the command at the higher levels like to deflect wrongdoing on to someone else so it does not hurt their evaluations and promotions so they attempted to blame me for the delay. The SJA also recommended denying my case and provided no basis in fact to deny me. My JAG attorney was awaiting the decision from the General and was told that it would be made on a certain day because it was already significantly delayed. We called the General's office and found out that he went on leave instead of making the decision as he informed us that he would. Therefore, I sent him an email informing him that I was going to file an Article 138 (remedy for soldiers who are experiencing reprisal, wrongdoings, etc.) and it is a very powerful tool to use on a negligent command as it can end up on their permanent record. No General wants to see a Specialist in his email box, but he responded immediately and informed me he was making a decision now. Of course, he stayed in line with the SCO, and Brigade Commander, and denied me with an opinion instead of a factually based claim on the record.

After receiving a copy of my entire application record, I noticed that a Division Chaplain, who is buddies with the General – they go to church together, decided to weigh in on my application even though I never met with him and the regulation has no place for his opinion. This was set up to increase the weight of denial, due to the lack of evidence that the higher-ups in command did not have about my conscientious objection claim. This Division Chaplain wrote in a letter that “I was angry at God” and although I claim to be an Atheist, I speak of the value of
human life. He was attempting to make a statement that I cannot be an Atheist and care about human life – as it is only possible as a Christian. He did not even read my application. I saw him in person after my application was finally sent to HQDA and informed him of his ineptitude with weighing in on a case that he was to have no part of and for failing to meet or read my case record. I told him he lacked the true concept of a leader. I watched him walk into the building and hand off coins to higher ranking individuals pandering to them, while he is screwing over soldiers under him. A common theme in the military – leaders concerning themselves with their rater's instead of their Soldiers.

At this point, my application arrived at the Pentagon as I sent emails to the HQDA, along with my JAG attorney checking on the status. At this point in time, I connected with James Branum, an attorney in Oklahoma that often helps with conscientious objectors in the military, but also plays a role as a mentor through the Joy Mennonite Church. He was an excellent resource and friend to have providing a support system for me. As I was going through a tough time with depression and anxiety, he was attempting to reach out to the board after we found out that the board made a decision on my case, yet we heard nothing about the determination. He sent a few letters to ask them kindly to please release the information as this 90 day process was nearing a year and five months. It gave me a sense of hope, although the letters seemed to be ignored because my mental state was in despair and I was still on the fence of refusing orders because everything seemed hopeless and I just thought about how I followed this regulation to a tee and I was still being screwed over.

I slowly began to contemplate going AWOL. Absolutely. One hundred percent. It was a consideration because my mental state was so horrendous at the time and I was still continuing to participate and the delay of this process coupled with the mistreatment from the command made
it an unbearable dilemma. I was overseas in the beautiful country of South Korea, alone with a moral and ethical dilemma that no one else seemed to be facing. It was a moment of solitude and despair. The reason I did not go AWOL is because I did not want to run away from my problem and let the military win – I was worried about the precedent it would set for other Soldiers who may have came across an issue of conscience. I did not want other Soldiers to go through this miserable treatment. Finally, the HQDA responded – well, the Army Review Board has a sector called DACORB (Department of the Army Conscientious Objector Review Board) and they sent thirteen pages of their board meeting. I read the twelve pages from the board and this section was important because the board, according to the Army regulation is the “final determination” on all discharges based on conscientious objection. The results stated, “SPC ******** proved with clear and convincing evidence that he is a conscientious objector and warranted discharge.” I was happy. The board looked at the evidence and ignored the uncaring leaders who failed to look at the evidence and used their own personal justification of support for the war/military to degrade my belief system. But wait... Twelve pages all overwhelming information discharging me from the military – final determination. That additional page was the kicker – F.B. the Deputy Assistant Secretary decided to countermand the final determination of the board citing, “while the board has found that SPC ******** has clear and convincing evidence warranting discharge, I disagree with the decision. He is to go back to regular duties.” She showed no basis in fact, showed no legality on why she could countermand a final determination. She showed zero regard for this long process that I went through and could not even give a reason for denying my case. Absolutely nothing. This is the type of leadership existing in high office that permeates the military leadership and politicians. This lackluster care towards soldiers is one of
the reasons that there are still 22 veteran suicides a day. This needed, and still does need, to change.

So M.S. and B.G. from The Center on Conscience and War had utter disbelief at what happened. This is the first time that we know of where a conscientious objector case was approved by the board and then countermanded by one person who overstepped the board. What is the point of the board if one person that has more power than the five-plus people on it can countermand it? M.S. said my case was one of the “strongest” she has ever worked on during her time with CO’s. During this process, based on the overwhelming evidence for my case, Maria believed with near 100% certainty that the case was going to be approved. I kept telling her that it would not be approved because I noticed the way the higher ranking leaders were ignoring the evidence, did not read the regulation and provided a one sentence line to deny me using opinion instead of fact – what makes me have any hope in the HQDA if a General is neglecting his duties as a leader. At this point, I was livid. I knew I was now faced with a scenario that I did not want. The refusal of orders and the AWOL considerations started becoming more prevalent again – I knew at this point, I either push myself down a further decline mentally/physically or just take off. I found out that I was being sent back to the States, specifically to Fort Campbell, KY, which is not too good of a place to be if you are anti-war. I saved up a solid thirty days of leave, which was extremely helpful to figure out what I was going to do. M.S./B.G. & J.B. got in touch with some great lawyers, Karpatkin, Goldberger, Spitzer, and the ACLU. The plan was to file a habeas corpus\footnote{Habeas corpus is a legal action or writ by means of which detainees can seek relief from unlawful imprisonment.} petition – because the Army had no legal basis to countermand my honorable discharge. The only issue was that I could not afford the potential cost of the case. That is where these attorneys and the organization Courage to Resist, ran by J.P. came to the rescue. J.P. is a
great friend of mine and helped me significantly by raising funds, asking for funds from the
target list that donates to help CO's in the military. We raised a good amount of funds and this
allowed the case to be filed. Once I arrived at Fort Campbell, the panic attacks started to
increase. I had to go through a replacement company, which processes you into the way of life at
Campbell and gets you ready to go to your unit. I told the leadership at a replacement company
that I needed to seek mental health services immediately and they allowed me to go see
someone. This was the start of my weekly and sometimes twice a week meetings with a
psychologist. It was a rough experience as the goal of mental health services in the military is to
medicate the issue and send you back out to complete your job – but what happens when your
job is the cause of your mental health decline, along with the harassment that you dealt with for a
long period of time? I spoke with the 1SG at the replacement company about my problem and
issue and he might have been one of the most supportive people I met that resembled quality
leadership material in the military. He went above and beyond to make sure I was taken care of
and reduced the amount of stress that I was facing. In fact, because I had such bad leadership
with the previous command I was shocked to find a leader that actually concerned himself with
taking care of Soldiers. Of note, that same CSM that I had in Korea spoke to me directly before I
left to transition to Fort Campbell, KY and he apologized to me. He said he was attempting to
challenge me and that I was a great Soldier and that about seventy-five percent of the soldiers
showing up to formations did nefarious things, but I never did anything to cause trouble and he
could trust me. He also said it was absurd to send me to Fort Campbell with my beliefs. I did
forgive him for his treatment towards me and he worked to get me placed in the hospital section
at Fort Campbell to make up for the mistreatment.
So back to the replacement company, the 1SG informed my leadership that I was having these issues and about my lawsuit against the Secretary of the Army. This immediately alerted the highest personnel – the head attorney at Fort Campbell, along with the General. They informed the command to treat me respectfully and be kind in how they approach me about things to minimize the risk of this situation exploding. The NCO from my unit and I had some issues at first because he did not understand much about conscientious objection, but he became one of my biggest advocates down the road. He supported me, made sure I did not have to interact much with soldiers or people. He did not cause any issues with me seeking mental health services, and was just an overall decent and fair leader. He was an E-7 SFC [Seventh-Enlisted, Sergeant First Class]. He spoke to me personally several times and we had a lot of deep conversations about war/religion and peace and he told me I was one of the best soldiers he had and wished I would stay in the Army. I informed him that I appreciate his comments, however, I am a conscientious objector and I need out of this organization. I was a wreck mentally and physically. The only thing that kept me going throughout most of this process was the four hour-long workout sessions daily. I still continue them to this day. My Company Commander was a great guy as well – he met with me and was doing everything he could to help me get out because he could see the high levels of anxiety/depression I was facing and he knew how it would feel to be a conscientious objector in an organization that is in opposition with those beliefs. Ultimately, I was referred to a psychologist for anxiety/depression, due to the long-term mistreatment and moral injury I was suffering, along with the flashbacks I was having of this process and the Deputy Secretary countermanding a final determination. Ultimately, I ended up being administratively discharged with an “Adjustment Disorder,” which is what they do to avoid medically boarding you to pay you VA benefits for depression/anxiety or whatever your
issue is. This allowed them to discharge me quicker than if they medically boarded me for
disability, which I had no choice, but to take it because I was on the fence of refusing orders so I
took the adjustment disorder with my honorable discharge so that I could get out of the
organization without causing damage to my personal record. This is the first time I've actually
spoken about this in more detail.

For me, again, a lot what happened and what pushed to me to become an objector goes
back to the idea of having redemption. As an Atheist, I do not get the chance of being forgiven
and once I woke up to the delusions and propaganda that placed me into the military, I had to
immediately withdrawal from the organization to maintain my moral/ethical integrity. Books,
videos, and other forms of media played a huge role for me in defining and improving my belief
structure, much in the way that others use religion to develop their beliefs. I was continually
watching videos on YouTube by the sadly deceased Howard Zinn. I have a deep respect for
Noam Chomsky and his work – I own literally every book of his. I like to read from the
perspective of Gandhi, Father John Dear, and I also enjoy the activism of people such as Daniel
Ellsberg, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning, Jeff
Paterson, Ann Wright, Cindy Sheehan, Jake Bridge, and many more. All of these people and
many others have inspired me and motivated me and taught me so much about the peace
movement. One person that had a significant impact on me was Pulitzer Prize Journalist C.H.,
who published a well-received article on my conscientious objector struggles and he also sent me
over eight books that I finished reading – some of his work and others that would aid me in my
time in the military as I went through the process of getting out as an objector. He also inspired
me with information about transitioning to a vegan lifestyle – which is my ultimate goal in the
future. I watched Muhammad Ali videotapes of when he resisted the Vietnam War and was
stripped of his title – many people did not know he was a conscientious objector. The important thing that people need to understand is that the desire to love humanity is not confined to the precepts of religion or a belief in a deity. The decision to be a conscientious objector is not one of being a traitor, or a person that hates America – it is simply someone who believes that choosing to live a life of nonviolence is a more beneficial path for all Americans and the betterment of this country. If I had not joined the military, I would not have learned the truth. I have a lot more clarity on the reality of things now. I am more skeptical of stuff and I learned a lot about who I am.

I do not regret anything about my decision to become a conscientious objector. I would not have went through the process any differently. I stood strong and I am proud of that. I did not falter and I did not let go. However, mental health is a serious issue that I am concerned about. I want to feel normal again. I am working with the VA and hoping that they can provide therapy to aid me with my depression – depression that resulted from this year and a half ordeal. I attend a lot of peace conferences, I speak out and I am currently planning on attending the SOA Vigil at Fort Benning to protest the School of the America's and continue showing my support towards Chelsea Manning – who I consider to be a hero, a modern-day Daniel Ellsberg. I also am working on a chapter for Veterans for Peace in Columbus, Ohio that I will be the President of. I am also a member of the organization Iraq Veterans Against the War and I encourage all to look into the new campaign and contribute, “DROP THE MIC.” This process I went through will never leave me, it has affected me tremendously. I wish I did not feel the way I do now, but that is the price of standing up against empire. I am just taking it day by day and hoping things come back together for me. It really is so nice to finally dialogue with like-minded people in person, especially the one’s who aided me and stuck their head out to make sure I was okay. I hope to in
some facet help with future CO's because I had an experience that could aid other soldiers who will go through this horrendous process. I wouldn't have been able to do it without the help of The Center on Conscience and War, Courage to Resist, friends, peace activists, fellow soldiers, and many other people! Thank you all.

Analysis of Robert's Narrative:

Unlike Jess, Mike and Craig, Robert begins his story by assessing an unsettling truth about United States military recruitment methods. Amidst the backdrop of the various seductive elements that recruiters would use, Robert presents a rather skeptical outlook on military recruitment and how they entice individuals to join,

...recruiters would come to our high school in the Columbus Public School system and promise bonuses and large sums of money to increase the desire of poor inner-city children to join the military...I started fantasizing over the prospects of being one of the “best,” a Marine Officer. The ads pitched the notions of “nobility” and “heroism,” a lot of the key things the American system glorifies to continually attract people to the military... There is so much propaganda and glorification of the military – bad opinions are negated and not showcased, resulting in this positive image of military service in all facets. (186)

Much like the unified victimization felt between Jess, Mike and Craig during the attacks of September 11, 2001, Robert attests to the fact that a similar bond is created when individuals enlist in the military,

The bond in the military is deep for the most part because the person next to you becomes the person that may save your life in combat or garrison. (190)

However, as evidenced in the narrative, Robert took particular issue with not being able to connect the values and morals that military espouse with the actions undertaken by his superiors. It was during this time that Robert began to ask serious questions about the nature of military duty in relation to the expectations that were to be placed on him as military personnel. His journey of conscientizing was the result of looking at his lived experiences and the historical legacy of the military in context,
What if I am not the hero and I am the reason for continued resentment and terrorism in the world by participating in this organization? We have hurt so many people with our occupation. There are so many innocent people. I started to question the role of terrorism and I began to think about 9/11 where we lost twenty-nine hundred Americans and I said to myself, “Why is it not terrorism when we kill innocent people? Why is there always a justification for it when we do it? How can we kill innocent people and tell their mothers and fathers, or their sons or daughters, that we are sorry, but we killed your loved one; it was not intentional and that is it.” For me, it did not add up. (192)

However, in Robert’s questioning of his actions, he prompts larger questions about the nature of the military, the appropriation of violence by the state (Tilly 1985), and the state of war making in the age of “the global war on terrorism” (Klein 2007):

That is how effective the conditioning is – here I am, attempting to help people, not kill people, and now I am slowly bridging the gap of being turned into a killer. Some of the cadences we would sing – indoctrinate violence and consume us with reactive, drone-like mentalities. Granted – I get that I joined a military and not a peace organization, so I am understanding that some of this stuff is happening for a reason within this organization… But my issue, in general, is with the wars and the fact that we kill innocent people in these wars and I believe that when we kill innocent people – we are creating terrorism and spiking up these groups that want to endanger us. The easiest way to stop terrorism is to stop participating in terrorism. (193)

In the latter half of the narrative, Robert places heavier emphasis on the questions regarding the nature of the struggles he faced during the process of his filing for Conscientious Objector status.

One major contribution to the literature is exposing the reader to the lived experiences of objectors in the face of their resistance to militarize and imperial activity of the state. Robert, in particular, faced intense scrutiny, where he describes one officer having said his choice to object was “un-American” (see Ivie 2012:87); likewise, his comrades called him names, such as “faggot, hippy, coward, and traitor” and that he had “become the pariah in the unit.” As he began to maneuver through CO process, Robert began to crystallize the key components of his philosophy to objection. In meeting with the battalion Chaplain, part of the CO regulations, Robert describes some key components of his philosophy to objectionism,

I informed him that I am Atheist, I do not have the thought of redemption – so if I do something morally/ethically wrong after realizing that it is wrong – then I have no ability to be forgiven, so ultimately it is increasingly important that I follow my conscience
immediately. I told him that I believed that paintball provided an indoctrination and brainwashing towards war – a favorable perspective on war by emulating war in a “fun” manner. I also elaborated on how games like Call of Duty incentivize that act of killing by rewarding you with medals/rank increases, etc. This in turn diminishes the realness of the act you are committing so it becomes easier to see the actual act of war as just another event. It desensitizes you. (198)

What is interesting about Robert’s position is a statement he makes answering a later question regarding the current treatment of conscientious objection in which secular reasoning comes under more scrutiny than those founded in the Judeo-Christian religion (Cohen 1968; Friedman 2006; Marcus 1998; May 2012; Navin 2013; Nehustan 2014; Robinson 2009; Capizzi 1996).

Here, Robert describes the influences that helped him to define his conscientious objection,

Books, videos, and other forms of media played a huge role for me in defining and improving my belief structure, much in the way that others use religion to develop their beliefs. I was continually watching videos on YouTube by the sadly deceased Howard Zinn. I have a deep respect for Noam Chomsky and his work – I own literally every book of his. I like to read from the perspective of Gandhi, Father John Dear, and I also enjoy the activism of people such as Daniel Ellsberg, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning, Jeff Patterson, Ann Wright, Cindy Sheehan, Jake Bridge, and many more… The important thing that people need to understand is that the desire to love humanity is not confined to the precepts of religion or a belief in a deity. The decision to be a conscientious objector is not one of being a traitor, or a person that hates America – it is simply someone who believes that choosing to live a life of nonviolence is a more beneficial path for all Americans and the betterment of this country. (209)
Chapter 7

Implications and Conclusions

7.1 Summary of Research and Findings

This research was prompted by exploratory, moral-philosophical and political aims. It was my desire to more thoroughly investigate not only the misunderstood nature of conscientious objection, but more specifically to highlight the experiences of the objectors themselves. During their time in the military, Mike, Jess, Craig, and Robert suffered greatly at the hands of an institution that claims to operate from the precept of ‘protection’ and ‘defense’. Acting on one’s conscience and being able to discern right from wrong is a feature of humanity that is often cited as a means to establish human exceptionalism. At a deeper level, however, morality ceases to be a binary relation between right and wrong, but is a philosophical problematic of determining and discerning interests – in other words ethics. Relatedly, Western nations, like the United States and Canada, profess that the cornerstone of any democratic society is a civically engaged, conscientious, and informed citizenry. However, within the stories recounted here, as well as in the CBC articles discussed in Chapter 1, it was clearly demonstrated that these men and women faced persecution, isolation and resentment for exercising the most fundamental requirements of contractarian civil society.

With this context established, my research sought to examine the views and experiences of individual conscientious objectors who were either still serving or recently discharged from the military. Through a series of in-depth interviews, I sought to explore the issue of objectionism through an analysis of the lived experiences objectors and how each individual developed their philosophy of objectionism. My aspiration was to offer readers an opportunity to reflect on where these life histories fit in the context of broader discussions about citizenship,
social responsibility and war making in the modern age. As the preceding findings and analysis suggest, each retelling is layered with complexities and is textured with nuances about the role and formation of the state, the purposes of the military and insiders' perspectives on the realities of warring. Despite the different path that each person took toward objection, however, the narratives coherently articulate considerable reverence for the sanctity and uniqueness of life and a disposition that questions the necessity of war.

The narratives that were crafted from each interview, for example, demonstrate that the rigid distinction between conscientious objection and conscientious selective objection evidenced in the scholarly literature is unsustainable. Objectors' motivations are not always clear and simplistic as the binary suggests (Nehustan 2014; Cohen 1968; Marcus 1998; Friedman 2006). In fact, each participant in this study illustrated a multifaceted and intersectional approach to objectionism that encompassed varying aspects of religion, spirituality and political-philosophy. Each participant, moreover, experienced an awakening, of sorts, to objectionism that arose from awareness of the explicit contradiction between moral and political values framed by the ideals of ‘duty’ and ‘patriotism’ on one hand. While on the other hand, however, each objector came to oppose the stated objectives of missions and the legitimacy of the command structure because of the perceived inconsistency with rationale for the goals of the war. Their journey into conscientizing is, therefore, more properly understood to be, in part, as a means of reflection and consideration of the existing tensions between conscience and ‘duty.’ Moreover, such tensions manifest when the objector comes to consider their role as a military member within the broader socio-historical and structural formations that characterize a given conflict within a particular epoch. The dynamics of such tensions are evident across all the narratives and
demonstrate the emergence of what Gramsci and Marx articulate as ‘critical consciousness’, or the transition between ‘common sense’ and ‘good sense’.

What we can glean from the narratives is that the dominant ideology or worldview, being buttressed by so many institutions and being so deeply embedded in the very structure of existence, has significant power to suppress counter-narratives or other ways of explaining reality. As I indicated in the theoretical framework, the concept of hegemony denotes more than a superficial influence on the political views of the subordinate groups. In fact, Gramsci maintains that, under capitalist relations, hegemonic forces come to encompass and circumscribe the subordinate class’s entire way of conceiving the world and of interpreting everyday experience. Jess acknowledges this in the following passage: “All of this, the quotes, the memorization, the tradition, it was just something that you do; you are, basically, participating in history, so to speak. It was about convincing you, to help convince yourself, that what you were going to be doing was right,” (104). In addition, an objector’s experiences and the meanings they ascribed to it are constituted through a matrix of social systems which denote that the language used to describe an individuals' ways of believing, knowing and ‘seeing’ are negotiated and ‘evolve’ over time. This means that consciousness and its articulation are an ongoing sense-making process that is subject to new vocabularies of explanation leading to transformative practices of social engagement. Jess, for example, remarks that she swore an oath to defend the U.S. Constitution but found that her military deployments were anything but ‘constitutional’ and did nothing to increase ‘liberty’ and ‘freedom’ at home or abroad. It would be this same positioning that led her to construct a secular moral, rather than religious, objection to warring. In the process of making sense of her decision and the emotions and knowledge that prompted her, she reflected the ethics of what constitutes “legitimate authority” and under what conditions
a citizen is obligated to follow commands without question. Rooted in a libertarian foundation, her understanding of such issues evolved and coalesced as she began to engage with various scholars, political figures and historic personalities like Murray Rothbard, Lew Rockwell, Thomas Paine, and Ron Paul. Her husband Mike echoes these sentiments with his reflections on the military. Mike initially believed in the goals and aims of the military, but came to realize that those goals were not to the benefit of the U.S. populace. As Mike came to recognize the contradictions of his occupation, he began an intense self-reflexive process that allowed Jess and himself to formulate their own philosophy of objectionism based on the Non-Aggression Principle. In like fashion, Craig cemented his position as an objector when he contrasted his military duties to the philosophic texts he had been reading (e.g. Buddhist teaching of violence as a cycle). As things began to crystallize for him, he points out that “If violence creates more violence, does that make us the problem? And if that is100 the problem, do I want to be a part of the problem?” Writ large, I suspect Craig’s ethical and moral confrontation with his role as a soldier, questioning whose interests he was serving and the perceived lack of congruence with the Constitution are fundamental issues all US objectors will come to ask in the process of their conscientizing.

In developing an appropriate radical framework for this project, the theoretical perspectives upon which I most heavily relied offer an account of how an objectors’ epiphanies, conscious awakening or ‘conversions’ are dependent on metaphors as framing devices. This project into conscientious objection makes a contribution to what Gramsci calls the “highest level of philosophy” (Gramsci 1992: 324), in that it critically traces and accounts for the origins of some of our most deeply held beliefs, such as nationalism and militarism. In other words, to

100 Emphasis added.
accurately account for the social psychological and linguistic processes that contribute to a conscientious objectors ‘awakening’, a critical reformation of their own stories and the ways in which these stories are told is required. Jess recounts a memory where she states that “I remind myself ‘You deployed eight times before you figured it out’ and not everyone is going to have the same experiences or reflections and reading that I did” (112). Because stories and storytelling are central to this project, the ontic focus of language (signs), discourse, and consciousness is paramount to ensuring theoretical and conceptual accuracy in compiling what Gramsci calls an ‘inventory’ of the historical traces that make us who we are. To round out my theoretical framework, I incorporate a materialist understanding of Michel Foucault’s work on how the body, especially those intended to be produced by regimes of discipline as ‘docile’, is a concrete site at which the struggle for ideology and consciousness take place. In commenting about her time during training, Jess remarks, “All these quotes, all these messages are just entirely geared towards pumping you up and getting you excited about going to war, essentially, and making it feel like that is a normal thing to do,” (103). Mike, for example, articulates similar sentiments during his training when he says, “…the fact remains that you are in a culture where your actual job is to break things and kill people. That is the stark reality of this line of work. So there is an inherent feeling associated with the military where you come to acknowledge, ‘This is what we do.’” (130). Indeed, Mike’s ‘acknowledgement’ of the way things are underscores the ‘processes’ by which docility is (attempted to be) produced, enforced or reinforced through “repetition” of the operant conditioning. Ironically, it is precisely the need to 'drill' soldiers into obedience to authority that, for some, reveals the ideological processes at play. As Craig eloquently puts it, the journey of conscientizing was a symphony of philosophical studies,
personal experience and the extrapolation of small circumstances (tactics) onto the larger stage of military theatre (strategy).

Likewise, as a reaction to the hegemonic discourses that comprise their being and as the subject of an awakening, or conversion, I suggest that objectors will come to experience and articulate their identities as more than stereotypes. They will in the process move toward a state of being that not only transforms or reaffirms their subjectivity and spirituality, but also forms a critical and moral consciousness. In the closing portion of Robert's story, he articulates such a position,

For me, again, a lot what happened and what pushed to me to become an objector goes back to the idea of having redemption. As an Atheist, I do not get the chance of being forgiven and once I woke up to the delusions and propaganda that placed me into the military, I had to immediately withdrawal from the organization to maintain my moral/ethical integrity….The important thing that people need to understand is that the desire to love humanity is not confined to the precepts of religion or a belief in a deity. The decision to be a conscientious objector is not one of being a traitor, or a person that hates America – it is simply someone who believes that choosing to live a life of nonviolence is a more beneficial path for all Americans and the betterment of this country. (209)

In broadly assessing the connection between ethics, politics and morality as an approach to explore conscientious objection, the narratives raise particular questions that may not be so easily answered within the confines of the prototypical objector debate. If defending one’s nation, and perhaps dying during the course of such an action is imagined as the highest fulfillment of the social contract, apart from obeying the criminal law, then can conscientious objection constitute a breaking of the moral foundation of that contract? In other words, if the price of freedom is to give over a portion of one’s own freedom to the state so that it may legitimately use force to defend that ‘freedom’, does conscientious objection constitute a moral derogation as some scholars suggest? If, however, the state is seen as an active moral agent, not simply a neutral arbiter of a higher morality, does the state violate its own end of the social contract by: (a)
waging war that jeopardizes life and the freedom of its citizens? and (b) by condemning/criminalizing those who have given over their right *not* to use force on others by using their conscience to determine whether and when they will justly violate the precept to keep the peace — as the narratives contained herein illustrate — is the state undermining the guarantees of a rational citizenry?

These are questions that no one person may have the answer to. Perhaps, these are questions without answers or can only be addressed in the context of certain historical events and societal or organizational formations. To my mind however, such ambivalence does not mean that as a society we should not strive to seek out new meaning in our existence or ways to think about both war and non-violence in our lifetime. In fact, I believe such assumptions suggest the exact opposite strategy should be undertaken. If we value our dignity, if we value our existence on this planet, then we need to address the oppressive forces that seek to undermine the stability of our species as social beings and threaten the very core of our existence. It is my contention that hearing the voices of objectors, who like the canaries in the mine, warn us of dangers and limits to the obedience to authority.

7.2 *Limitations and Possible Strategies for Future Research*

While I aimed to fulfill the goals of this project with thoroughness and rigor, there is a *limitation* of the research design that should be noted with consideration to future research on objectionism. That is the size of the sample group and how they fit into the broader discussions that I present in this thesis. As I mention in Chapter 5, my sample population was chosen through a form of non-probability sampling. This approach, however, was chosen with due consideration to particular research principles and parameters that guide qualitative research methods as well
as the intent of the research\textsuperscript{101}. I recognize that objectors are a diverse set of people constituted by differences in gender, class, race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and spirituality than has been documented in this study. To address this \textit{limitation}, future research on objectionism should collate the narratives of as many voices, and, from as many national jurisdictions as possible. This approach will be an active part of countering the tendency to isolate or confine the experiences of objectors to the militaries, or countries, in which they reside. Having a substantially larger sample from objectors around the world will aim toward a holistic understanding of the context of objectionism. It will open up conversation on the relationship between objectionism and they ways in which wars are waged, the larger debates surrounding the expansion of military forces (particularly the U.S.) and increasing tensions among major global powers, and their regional proxies. Therefore, it is imperative that further research on objectionism incorporate and unite the voices of objectors from different militaries to further expand this inquiry into the realm of praxis against the forces that threaten global stability.

\textbf{7.3 Personal Reflections}

This thesis has stood as a means to assess and critically engage with some of the elements surrounding conscientious objection in the age of the Global War on Terror. In conducting the interviews with Jess, Mike, Robert and Craig, it clear that their philosophies of objection were derived from ethical concerns where they observed, felt compelled to participate in, or could not prevent, systematic violations of their conscience during their time in the military. The caveat is that their respective violations of conscience were multifaceted and became more nuanced as they encountered and developed the discourses necessary to convey and articulate their objections. In short, the development of their ‘critical consciousness’ was the result of sincere

\textsuperscript{101}For example, the research project was designed so that I could explore the experiences of a small sample of objectors with the intent of not generalizing the findings to the broader population of objectors.
self-reflection and contemplation of their own biographies as military members within the broader socio-historical context in which they lived. Indeed, their process of conscientizing is entirely consistent with Gramsci's conception of a historical inventory that traces who we are in the world. As was seen in the narratives, some, in part, chose to apply, effectively, moral diligence to the decision to the ad bellum case and become objectors. Likewise, some, in part, also arrived at similar conclusions by comparing the officially declared objectives of the war with the perceived immorality of the conduct and decided that the latter was incompatible with the overarching moral and ethical framework with which they had been raised or adopted. While each participant’s journey into conscientizing was unique and personally motivated for their own reasons, we must not lose sight of what it is their journey is about. On one hand, their stories and experiences are a warning about the questions surrounding the nature of war and the tensions of conscience that arise during a given conflict. Their stories also prompt us to consider how we articulate and understand the experiences of objectors within the broader historical context in which these events are unfolding. By extrapolating the lived experiences of objectors, we see not just how conscientious objection, as a phenomenon is defined but how the discussions surrounding it are shaped by the institutional and structural expressions of a given community and society.

As Larry Minear comments, “Today’s objectors may prove to be the canaries in the coal mine for the next generation of America’s wars and warriors” (2014: 154). Indeed, with the emergence of new anti-war/ war resister groups and the push to highlight issues effecting veterans as well as those fighting abroad, it is becoming more incumbent on us to consider the meaning of the melodies that are being sung. Are they pointing towards a lack of substantive debate about war? Are the melodies found in this thesis consistent with the songs of other
canaries/objectors? How do the variations in pitch and tone speak to the complexities of experience? What happens when these melodies are no longer sung? I would argue that to honor these voices means that we honor a serious discussion about war and militarism. To do so means that we must propel the conversations of war and conscience beyond the minutiae of policy so that we can ascertain and judge for ourselves the meaning of objectionism both past, present, and future. I maintain that this thesis confirms the complexity and urgency of such unfinished business. To conclude this thesis, I leave off with a quote of the little girl in *The People, Yes*:

The little girls saw her first troop parade and asked, “What are those?”
“Soldiers.”
“What are soldiers?”
“They are for war. They fight and each tries to kill as many of the other side as they can.”
The girl held still and studied.
“Do you know …. I know something?”
“Yes, what is it you know?
“Sometime they’ll give a war and nobody will come.” (Sandburg in Lynd 2011: 167)
References


———. *Iraq Veterans Against the War*.http://www.ivaw.org


Murphy, Jim. 2015. “Conscientious Objection isn’t a legitimate posture for Britain in the face of ISIS ferocity.” New Statesman 144 (5285): 29.


Publications.


Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me a bit about how you initially became involved with the military?
   a. What is your earliest memory of the military? Would you say this had a meaningful impact on your childhood or upbringing?
   b. Was there someone in particular or a specific event that influenced your decision to become involved in the military?

2. In what ways is the military culture, that you experienced, similar or different from what you experienced outside of the military growing up?
   a. Can you tell me about the things you like and dislike about the culture of the military?

3. What qualities or characteristics has your time in the military helped you to develop or strengthen?
   a. Would you say that you identify more with yourself in uniform or outside of the uniform? Explain.

4. How has your involvement in the military shaped your understanding of what it means to be a soldier and act “under orders”?
   a. Did you feel pressure from your squad-mates, superiors, etc. to act in a certain way?
   b. Can you tell me about how your refusal to deploy affected your connection to your squad-mates?

5. Can you tell me a bit more about your experiences in talking to other men and women about your choice to refuse deployment, AWOL, etc. What are some of the stereotypes you feel you face as someone who refused to deploy?
a. How, and in what ways has your refusal to deploy affected your relationships with those in and outside of the military?

b. How, and in what ways do these stereotypes affect your own understandings of being a soldier? Your relations with others? (E.g., Masculinity/ Femininity, Gender, Race and Class

6. What were your initial thoughts and perceptions of the military in the early stages of your career? What about the middle and end?

   a. Can you tell me about your relationships with your squad-mates, superiors, etc.?

7. Tell me about your time in the military. Do any particular stories or experiences that influenced your choice to refuse deployment stand out to you?

8. How would you describe your choice to refuse deployment? Explain.

   a. Was there a specific moment or series of events that lead to or influenced this decision?

   b. How would you describe your influences that informed your choice to refuse deployment? (E.g., religious, political, belief that war is immoral. etc.)

9. I’d like if you could tell me about the few months leading up to your refusal of deployment.

   a. What happened after you refused your deployment orders?

   b. Can you tell me a bit about the attitudes and behaviors of your squad-mates, superiors, etc. within the barracks, on base, etc. and prior to deployment? After your refusal to deploy? What about your fellow soldiers who did not deploy either?

10. How has your history and involvement in the military influenced your choice to refuse deployment?
a. Has your choice to refuse deployment influenced your understandings of who you are as a person?

b. What were some of the more “philosophical” elements that contributed or influenced your decision to refuse deployment?

11. Can you take me through what happened in the following months, even years, after your refusal to deploy?

   a. Were they any specific experiences or stories that can you share with me?

12. Can you tell me about your life after your choice to refuse deployment?

   a. Are there things that you regret or wish you did differently?
Appendix B
Letter of Invitation for Participants

September 2015

**Title of Study:** Killing in the Name of...?: Examining Conscientious Objection in the modern military *(title as tentative)*
**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Tamari Kitossa, Supervisor, Faculty of Social Sciences, Brock University.
**Principal Student Investigator:** Anson Nater, 2nd year student in the Masters of Arts in Critical Sociology, Brock University.

I, Anson Nater, the principal student investigator from the Department of Sociology at Brock University invite you to participate in a research project entitled “Killing in the Name of...?: Examining Conscientious Objection in the modern military”

The purpose of this project is to explore the experiences of conscientious objectors in the modern Western military, given the context of volunteer enlistment. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete 1-2 interviews of approximately 1 hours each. The interview will be audio-recorded.

The expected duration of the research is between the months of September 2015 to October 2015

This research will provide participants the opportunity to have their voices and experiences heard. Researchers will benefit from learning about participant experiences.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics officer at (905) 688-5550 ext. 3035 *(reb@brocku.ca)*

If you have any questions, or would like to express your interest in participating in this study, please feel free to contact myself, Anson Nater (see below for contact information). Thank you for time and consideration of my request.

**Dr. Tamari Kitossa Anson Nater**
*Principal Investigator/ Thesis Supervisor*  
*905) 688-5550 ext. 5672*  
tkitossa@brocku.ca

*Principal Student Investigator / Graduate Student*  
an05db@brocku.ca

**This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University’s Research Ethics Board on September 16, 2014 - REB 14-005**
Appendix C

Letter of Request for Research Assistance (*sample*)

To whom it may concern,

My name is Anson Nater and I am a graduate research student in the Masters of Arts in Critical Sociology program at Brock University. I am emailing you today concerning research that I am working on currently for my Master’s thesis. The overall intent of my research project is to begin a discussion of how conscientious objection operates “morally”, socially, and politically in the modern Western military in the context of volunteer enlistment. This project is meant to explore the experiences of conscientious objectors in modern, all-volunteer force militaries.

It is my hope that (*insert organization name*) could assist me by helping recruit research participants through various means such as sending out letters via an email list. I look forward to discussing this opportunity more with you; thank you for your time.

Regards,

Anson Nater
Student Principal Investigator
Graduate Student, Masters of Arts in Critical Sociology
an05db@brocku.ca