

Volunteerism in the U.S. Armed Forces: An Interpretive Study

by

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B.A., Thomas Edison State University, 2010
M.A., Kansas State University, 2013

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Leadership Communication

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2025

Abstract

The modern United States military is populated by service members who choose to serve voluntarily. The All-Volunteer Force is celebrated in modern America, touted as a cultural achievement in that the nations' warfighters are altruistic citizens. While individual motivations may vary greatly, many active-duty service members embrace the notion of serving their country as a civic duty. Military service is seen by many as the ultimate form of community service and volunteerism, honored nationally and in local communities. Yet, within the ranks of the US military some service members go beyond voluntary military service, choosing to volunteer locally with community and nonprofit organizations. In a study on volunteerism of OEF/OIF veterans, 70% of survey respondents stated they had volunteered while serving on active duty (Yonkman & Bridgeland, 2009). The benefits of volunteerism are well established in research and literature particularly in studies on veterans, communities, and volunteers in civil society (Usbeck, 2018; Spera, 2015). These studies focus on civilian contexts and experiences of veterans, not those still serving in the armed forces. Why is this important to study? There are many programs and organizations in communities that benefit from veterans who participate, and those veterans in turn benefit from continued service. Can the benefits of volunteerism be turned back towards current service members? Service members gain knowledge, skills, and abilities through military training and experience that are valuable outside of military service. In a review of the literature, studies on the benefits of volunteerism for veterans are well established, especially for successful reintegration into society and countering suicide. Ideally, volunteerism can provide an outlet to practice and adapt leadership and communication skills for transition back to society while normalizing community connections and reducing isolation.

United States military leaders in nonprofit organizations: Volunteerism for enhanced
transition success

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Acknowledgements

Words cannot fully express the depth of my gratitude to the many people who have supported me throughout this journey. Several individuals played a decisive role in my success, and I have come to understand that a doctoral dissertation is not a solitary pursuit but a collective endeavor. I simply could not have reached this goal without the help of so many in my life. This section, therefore, is an opportunity to formally thank them for their invaluable contributions to this academic milestone. I will begin by acknowledging the academic and professional pillars that provided the project's foundation, before turning to the peer and personal relationships that sustained my spirit throughout.

Navigating the intellectual and practical complexities of doctoral research requires a robust network of academic and institutional guidance. The support I received from my committee, university staff, and funding bodies provided the essential framework upon which this entire project was built. I am deeply grateful for their expertise, patience, and commitment.

To my committee chair, Dr. Trisha Gott, I offer my most sincere thanks for your masterful guidance. Your combination of deep knowledge, practical experience, and infinite patience was indispensable. I could not have asked for a better supervisor. Your invaluable wisdom directed me at every step of this process, and your feedback was a constant source of support that shaped this work from its inception to its completion.

I am immensely grateful to the members of my defense committee, Dr. Susan Yelich Biniecki, Dr. Briana Goff, and Dr. Mary Tolar, who generously provided their knowledge and expertise. Your wisdom was instrumental in helping me chart the course for this research, and your insightful contributions significantly enriched the quality and depth of this dissertation.

This endeavor was also made possible through the foundational support of several key institutions and individuals. The staff of Hale Library, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. From tracking down books and arranging for interlibrary loans to the kind gestures that made all the difference. Especially to Laura Bonella, whose guidance and insight were invaluable.

The leaders, soldiers, and civilian staff at Fort Riley were essential for this study. Your support helped me follow the proper steps for a student involving active-duty service members. Thank you to the Fort Riley Garrison Commander and staff for believing in the values of this work!

Lastly, I would be remiss in not mentioning my family, especially my spouse, Wendy, and my son, Logan. Their belief in me has kept my spirits and motivation high during this process. I would also like to thank my dog for all the walks and emotional support.

Dedication

Dear Wendy,

I love you.

Dom.

Now We're Free

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Military service in the United States is the chosen vocation of a minority of Americans. Those that volunteer to serve on active duty are fully immersed in a military community with cultures, values, and experiences very different than civilian communities. Those that join are acculturated to military life founded on national service within a total institution that has its own laws and justice system, rules for behavior, leadership hierarchy, and training to support a war fighting mission. Sometimes the people within the military institution choose to volunteer again, donating time, labor, and leadership in their local communities in the United States and overseas. Volunteering is encouraged by the armed forces. Individual service members who volunteer are recognized and rewarded with certificates of appreciation and awards. The Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal is presented to any service member for sustained volunteer service to the civilian community. The MOVSM is presented once per duty station at the most but may be awarded repeatedly over the course of a career.

The purposes of military service and community service seem on the surface to be incompatible. The U.S. armed forces rely on volunteers to join willingly, and American society relies on the willingness of its population to help one another through voluntary activity. The intersection of military service and community service is most visible in nonprofit organizations for veterans like the American Legion and the VFW. Community organizations and government institutions like the VA help veterans reintegrate and respond to veterans in crisis. This reflects the American civil-military social contract for the national defense and promote volunteerism (Usbeck, 2018). Returning veterans are required to process through a transition program as they separate from the military. The Transition Assistance Program is mandatory once service

members are 12 months from separation. It introduces veteran benefits, career planning, and administrative support.

The transition program has been reviewed by congress, industry, and academia and found it does not meet the needs of all service members in transition. Failed transitions persist and can lead to difficult post-military living conditions and affect the wellness of veterans. Volunteerism as a social tool for reintegration has not been investigated, nor is active-duty volunteerism represented in literature. My experience in the Army and as a volunteer led me to questions about volunteerism in the military as an experience that could assist transition preparation and success. This study I perceived a connective tissue between these quite different facets of American society, leading to this study on service members who do both military and community volunteer service. I intentionally sought out current and former service members to get a before and after perspective of service and civics and how the volunteerism effects the transition from U.S. military culture back to the civilian world.

The Profession of Arms

Experiences, culture, and values create a military identity within the profession of arms. The profession of arms itself is unique as a profession because it is difficult to define. The U.S. Army defines the Army Profession as a trusted vocation, comprised of two communities of practice: the Profession of Arms and the Army Civilian Corps. For the Army, the profession of arms is not a specifically defined concept, but the three components: regular, reserve, and guard forces. Soldiers and Army Civilians, owning collective expertise that is ethical, serve under a civilian authority, and “entrusted to defend the Constitution and the rights and interests of the American people” (Army Publishing Directorate, 2019, p. 1-2).

The Army defined the profession of arms white papers published in 2010 and 2012. The papers defined the profession of arms as a unique vocation consisting of professional soldiers who are volunteers working within a culture of altruism, selfless service, and ethos and the profession is based on shared culture and values (Army Training and Doctrine and Command, 2010; Dempsey, 2012). The apparent difficulty in arriving to a definition may have led to the abandonment of the conversation and stating the profession of arms is “no longer a formally defined term” (Army Publishing Directorate, 2012, p. vi). In a later publication, the Army specified the knowledge, skills, attributes, and behaviors of the regular and reserve armed forces as components of the profession of arms (Army Publishing Directorate, 2019; Army War College, 2020).

The Army perspective on the profession or arms, volunteerism, and values is especially relevant to this study as most of the interview participants have service in the Army. A personal commitment to the values of the profession of arms are enshrined in the oaths of enlistment and office (Army Publishing Directorate, 2019, p. 1-13).

Oath of Enlistment

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States, and the orders of the officers appointed over me. So, help me God.

Oath of Office

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or

purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So, help me God.

Background

Military service members and veterans are often sought after for their “nontechnical skills, such as leadership, decisionmaking, persistence, and attention to detail” (Hardison et al., 2017a). Technical knowledge and skills from military jobs transfer directly to civilian careers. Military-specific skills, particularly those found in the combat arms, are not replicated in civilian careers, leading to a skills gap after transition (Davis & Minnis, 2017; Hardison et al., 2017a; Kirchner & Akdere, 2019). Franke and Franke (2012), referencing the multidimensional transfer model proposed by Yelon and Ford (1999), define technical skills as closed skills that follow a prescribed function and are invariable. Open skills are nontechnical knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA’s), gained through leadership training, and increased levels of responsibility, carrying some flexibility and autonomy. Attributes of open skills include responsibility, teamwork, communication, and management (Franke & Franke, 2012; Yelon & Ford, 1999;). Other terms for open skills are nontechnical skills (Hardison et al., 2017b), and soft skills (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

The KSA’s and leadership experiences from military service are hard to articulate to employers (Hardison et al., 2017b; Kirchner & Akdere, 2019; Moody, 2021). Participation in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is a requirement for all separating service members. TAP offers training and courses for job searches that align with military experiences and an introduction to VA benefits. There are limited opportunities to gain experience with new skills relevant to the civilian workforce beyond military training for active-duty service members. Building non-military, civilian skills and experiences through outside employment is constrained

by military culture and obligations. The option to engage in civilian employment may not be available until they enter the last 30 days of their military careers (House of Representatives, Congress, 2023). With constraints on civilian employment while serving on active duty, the ability to adapt known experiences and skills to non-military contexts is a good practice for career transition (Kamerāde & Paine, 2014). The challenges of military-to-civilian career transitions are well documented in the literature (Boatwright & Roberts, 2019; Liongosari et al., 2023; Usbeck, 2018; Yonkman & Bridgeland, 2009).

Challenges in articulating KSA's to civilian jobs have been reported by employers (Kirchner & Akdere, 2019), identified by research on wounded veterans (Haynie & Shepherd, 2011), and specified to female veterans (Reppert et al., 2014). Kirchner and Yelich Biniecki (2019) reported “many veterans have never been tasked with identifying KSA's for a non-military job and often struggle when asked to articulate their qualifications” (p. 29). Leader development in the military is so embedded in the culture that Army veterans were unable to explain it, even though they had observed and performed leadership (Kirchner, 2018). “The intentional development of soldier leader competencies was so deeply ingrained in training that the veterans did not notice they were participating” (p. 82). New veteran hires have valuable soft skills, but they need to be adapted to the specific context of day-to-day work in a civilian environment (Franke & Felfe, 2012; Stone et al., 2018).

When service members and veterans volunteer in the community they are acting as private citizens. Their military KSA's and experiences are useful in nonprofit organizations (Der-Martirosian et al., 2019; Matthieu & Carbone, 2020; Yonkman & Bridgeland, 2009), civilian organizations (Carter et al., 2017; Franke & Felfe, 2012; Kirchner, 2018), and higher education (Diamond, 2012; Ryan et al., 2011). Since these capabilities are transferable and

adaptable, community engagement through volunteerism and nonprofit organizations can begin the transition process. Participating in volunteerism while serving in the military is an avenue for transition success (Karre et al., 2024).

Studies investigating active-duty volunteerism experiences are rare, with only one study addressing volunteerism revealed in the literature review. Volunteerism was a component of the Air Force's "whole person concept" where it was "group coordinated, induced, and sometimes even compelled" and integrated into promotion criteria (Dolch et al., 2017, p. 3). After leadership received push back from the ranks the Air Force "readjusted the enlisted evaluation form to better place volunteerism in context" ending the practice within the promotion management system (Lyle, 2015, para. 8).

Each organization within the Department of Defense is supported by Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) programs meant to improve quality of life for service members. A quality-of-life approach includes "all those concerns that can directly or indirectly influence morale, living environment, personal growth, and development" (Department of Defense, 2011, p. 25). Though each branch of the military has its' own version, the single service member program always includes three foundational components: 1) enhanced quality of life that positively influences morale, living environments, personal growth, and development; 2) community service through volunteerism; and 3) recreation and leisure activities.

The US Army's' Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS) program notes volunteerism provides "valuable experience, skills, and a sense of community pride and ownership" (Army MWR, 2022, para. 2). Soldiers in the BOSS program often work with existing organizations with community clean up, education, and feeding communities (Lisle, 2016). When active-duty service members volunteer, they can adapt their open skill set and build

experience in a non-military workforce while they accumulate additional personal and professional qualities employers value (Spera et al. 2015). Volunteering also builds social and human capital and “useful skills and knowledge” (Spera et al., 2013, p. 6).

Context

“Given its potential personal costs, some would argue military service is the ultimate form of civic engagement” (Flanagan & Levine, 2010, p.171). Military service is civic participation at the highest levels. Krebs and Ralston (2020) investigated motivations for why service members enlist and how Americans perceive enlistment. They identified four ideal types of service members (p.29):

- the Patriot (internal identification with the values of military service, high pressure to enlist due to economic/social constraints on choice)
- the Good Citizen (internal identification with the values of military service, low pressure to enlist due to economic/social constraints on choice)
- the Employee (seeking external material and nonmaterial benefits, high pressure to enlist due to economic/social constraints on choice); and
- the Desperate (seeking external material and nonmaterial benefits, low pressure to enlist due to economic/social constraints on choice).

The researchers noted these motivations can be internal to everyone, holding either a high or low imperative, or external based on economic pressures. Their study also found disparity between reasons service members typically enlisted (economic) and their family and friend’s perceptions of the reason for enlistment (patriotism). Americans in their study tended to “subscribe to an idealized image of soldiers and officers as self-

sacrificing patriots” (p. 42) and families preferred to view military service as patriotic rather than economic.

Service members practice active citizenship, reconfigure military experiences to fit community needs, and are more attractive to employers when they volunteer (Matthieu et al., 2021; Nesbit & Reingold, 2011). Volunteer bridging, or “volunteering as a bridge to an employment destination,” improves employment opportunities for people transitioning back to civilian life from time away at college or serving in the military (Hochberg, 2013, p. 3). Skills-based volunteer bridging helps job seekers “build their skills and leadership capabilities” (p. 1) and using their professional skills to strengthen their community (Marshall, 2016). Service members who volunteer in community nonprofits are more likely to have a successful transition back into society long before they process through TAP (Usbeck 2018; Yonkman & Bridgeland, 2009).

The Transition Assistance Program

All branches of the U.S. Armed Forces provide the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) on most military installations (Reed et al., 2021). Service member participation in TAP is mandatory (DoD TAP, n.d.-a). TAP is primarily in person, though there are online modules that supplement in-person briefings. During transition active-duty service members are shifting from an environment of total support to no support. Those that retain support through disability or retirement benefits experience a system of limited and episodic service through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). For most separating service members government support ends at their End of Term of Service (ETS).

VA administrative and healthcare support begins on the day after ETS, when a service member becomes a veteran. Access to VA education benefit is the exception (U.S. Department

of Veterans Affairs, 2023). The DoD and VA systems are independent from each other so the tools to transfer from service-member to veteran occur through TAP briefings, training, and appointments. The ETS date for each individual service member is set in their enlistment contracts, but can be altered by voluntary reenlistment, involuntary separation, and involuntary extension, also called stop-loss. The purpose of the TAP is to help service members leave the military, get jobs, and integrate them into VA systems, if eligible. Research on veterans' TAP experience indicates the 12-month or less timeline is insufficient for leaving the service (Alonso et al., 2021; Finley, 2022; Hogan, 2016), especially for women (Albright et al., 2019; Breland et al., 2017).

Major life transitions can be an experience of crisis for adults who are unprepared for change (Schlossberg, 1981). Post-military support for veterans is VA-provided if they are eligible for benefits. Traditionally, civilian communities are the agents for reintegration, primarily through nonprofit veteran service organizations (101st U.S. Congress, 1990). These VSO's form in response to the need of veterans through advocacy, services, and support. Examples of VSO nonprofit organizations are the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Team Red, White, and Blue, and Team Rubicon, though there are others across the country (House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, n.d.). The VA, VSOs, colleges and universities, and employers connect with service members through the TAP.

The elements for successful transition are present but the condensed timeline of TAP and formal access to VA support puts pressure on individual service members. Programs that engage transitioning service members with civilian careers such as the Army's Career Skills Program (CSP) and DoD Skillbridge, are limited to the last six months prior to ETS. The CSP is further limited only to at-risk soldiers (18 – 24 years old, first-termers, medical separations, and

involuntary) leaving other groups and retirees out (U.S. Army Installation Management Command, n.d.).

Constraining TAP to 12 months or less negatively impacts transition success for many veterans with negative impacts on self-worth (Angel et al., 2018; Usbeck, 2018), time to adjust (Finley, 2022; Whitworth et al., 2020; Windmueller, 2022), suicidal thoughts and actions (Castro & Kintzle, 2014; Pease et al., 2015), cultural adaption (Ackerman et al., 2009; Albright et al., 2019), identity (Grant et al., 2025; Kleykamp et al., 2021; Schultz et al., 2022), skills articulation (Boatwright & Roberts, 2019; Ward, 2020), and family health (Maguire et al., 2022; Romero et al., 2015). Schlossberg (1981) notes prior experience with a transition of a similar nature helps with major life transitions. Volunteerism as a bridge for transition can prepare service members for the civilian world. Veterans are civic-minded and those who volunteer are more successful in their overall transition experiences (Albright et al., 2020). Veterans who volunteer are likely to experience a successful reintegration, maintain their personal health, and have a successful family life. They have lower rate of PTSD, depression, and isolation (p. 388). Conversely, veterans experiencing social isolation have higher rates of mental illnesses, depression, and detrimental to overall well-being (Grenawalt et al., 2022).

The negative impacts of military transition can be mitigated by service members through a volunteer bridge for transition success. Preempting TAP may develop new leadership and communication skills (Costanza, 2018; Franzgen, 2020; Gardner, 2018; Hernandez Ortiz, 2021; Marshall, 2016). Military service and community service are value-laden institutions, but differ in missions, goals, organizational structures, leadership approaches, cultures, and norms. Since the DoD encourages service members to volunteer and awards many with the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal (MOVSM). This study explores the experiences of active-

duty military service members who volunteer in community nonprofit organizations and the capacity of volunteerism to enhance transition success.

Problem Statement

The lived experiences of active-duty service members who volunteer in nonprofit community organizations has not been the subject of research in the literature. The effect of active-duty volunteerism on transition preparation and success is also not represented in the literature. Highlighting the benefits of volunteerism in preparation for transition could help active-duty service members prepare for the transition to civilian communities, careers, and colleges. Members of the U.S. Armed Forces volunteering in community organizations is a long-established activity in communities near military installations. When they transition from active duty to veteran status many service members experience a failed reintegration potentially leading to suicide (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Angel et al., 2018; Castro & Kintzle, 2014; Shue et al., 2021; Usbeck, 2018). DeGroat (2013) determined the Army is not doing all it can to support transitioning service members. He determined the military has an “institutional responsibility to adequately prepare its departing veterans to enter into productive civilian life and employment at the conclusion of their time in uniform” (p. 1). With the benefits of volunteerism identified for veterans, a closer look at the experiences of active-duty volunteers is merited.

Volunteerism as an early reintegration practice could address challenges with successful transition from service to society. Voluntary activity is encouraged and rewarded with the MOVSM when service members perform community support over time in a “sustained, direct, and consequential nature” (Department of Defense, 2024, p. 43). The MOVSM is approved by unit commanders and awarded no more than once per duty assignment. The medal is displayed on military dress uniforms and contributes to promotion among the enlisted ranks. Volunteerism

in the military is generally encouraged but not required within military culture and those who do not volunteer do not face negative actions. U.S. military installations world-wide are supported by community volunteer organizations run by civilians, spouses, and veterans. In turn, communities adjacent to military installations benefit from military-civil partnerships and volunteerism. Active duty, national guard, and reserve installations “provide critical services” to their local communities “well beyond the support [the communities] give military families and veterans” (Yonkman & Bridgeland, 2009, p. 19). Military installations are crucial economic drivers for host communities. The unpaid labor of military volunteers in local economies can be counted in millions of dollars (Crowley et al., 2018). Local impacts are published by installation commanders within annual economic impact reports. The Fort Riley, Kansas FY 2023 Economic Impact Survey (U.S. Army Garrison Fort Riley, 2024) included a summary of volunteer services for 2023. In 2023 Fort Riley volunteers worked over 73 thousand volunteers contributing nearly \$2,275,000 in unpaid labor/cost avoidance to local communities. Volunteers at Fort Riley “contribute a vast amount of volunteer service both on and off the installation” (p. 41). Co-located military-civilian communities rely on each other in public-private partnerships for mutual benefit (Bolden, 2017). Volunteerism and community nonprofit organizations play a large part in that healthy relationship.

Building strong communities through mutual support is a long-established practice in the U.S. Armed Forces. Active-duty units may be called on to support civilian communities in emergency disaster relief on official orders directed by the Department of Defense (Usbeck, 2018). Service members responding on official orders are eligible for the Armed Forces Service Medal (AFSM) and Humanitarian Service Medal (HSM) for participating in humanitarian relief or disaster response operations (Army Publishing Directorate, 2024). These operations are

activated by official military orders, are limited in time and scope, and are controlled through military commands.

Volunteerism, on the other hand, is based on an individual deciding to participate, off-duty, without scope or time-constraints, and may occur once locally or could extend to multiple locations and organizations over a military career. The Volunteer Management Information System (VMIS) was created to assist the Army Volunteer Corps (AVC) to track volunteer hours and oversee official awards acknowledging volunteer contributions for service members, families, and civilians through service to the local community (Army Publishing Directorate, 2010; Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness, 2018; 1st Infantry Division and Fort Riley, 2022). The use of VMIS to track and verify service member volunteer hours was expanded after the creation of the MOVSM by President George H. W. Bush in 1993, though volunteer hours are chronically underreported (Crowley et al., 2018). Volunteerism within active-duty communities is a long-standing cultural phenomenon that the armed forces have come to rely on for daily and perennial success. Volunteers on military installations are essential for museums, community events, recreational activities, traditional and historical reenactments, unit family support groups, thrift shops, educational scholarships, religious events, youth sports and clubs, and many more activities (Department of Defense, 2019a). Aside from activities that are unit focused, on-installation community engagement mirrors off-installation civilian activities on civilian communities. Civilian community organizations near military installations welcome military volunteers and volunteerism helps veterans reintegrate and adapt positively into communities (Crowley et al., 2018; Spera et al., 2015; Wilson, 2012).

There are five government agencies partner with the Department of Defense to support transitioning service members: U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs,

U.S. Office of Personnel Management, U.S. Small Business Administration, and the U.S. Department of Education (DoD TAP, n.d.-b). The Transition Assistance Program continually fails assessments by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) shows it to be an imperfect system (Reed et al., 2021). VSOs are an integral part of community support for active-duty military members transitioning out of the service and The DoD and the VA rely on community organizations and VSOs to reintegrate service members back into civil society. There is no provision for national or community nonprofit organizations to partner with TAP, yet reliance on social safety networks like VSOs at every community is part of military reintegration planning (Santella, 2020).

Service members stationed at Fort Riley and veterans recruited locally and through referrals were asked to participate in interviews for this study. The volunteerism environment was developed using data collected through document analysis of VMIS, TAP, and related policies, publications, practices, websites, and awards. This study investigates the experiences and the benefits of volunteerism in the military and if that experience is helpful for transitions back to civil society. Data for the study was coded to deepen the understanding of adaptive practices in communication experiences, leadership, KSA's, and transition experiences of military personnel who are currently volunteering and veterans who volunteered during their active-duty service. The literature review did not reveal prior research into this phenomenon.

Purpose and Research Questions

Through a qualitative research approach, this study was designed to investigate the experiences of military service members who volunteered at community nonprofit organizations and asked how those experiences impacted transition readiness. Active-duty soldiers and veterans were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. To participate in an interview,

respondents must have participated in volunteerism while serving on active duty in any military branch of service. Fort Riley was conveniently located for my study, so all active-duty service members interviewed are serving in the US Army. The veteran respondents had a more diverse military background, but all volunteered when they served. Interview questions were oriented around adaptive communicative and leadership practices, nonprofit activities, motivations for volunteering, the benefits of volunteering, and connecting volunteerism with transition success. A document analysis of VMIS, military programs and policies, and the MOVSM was completed to provide the social and organizational context that enabled and encouraged interview participants to volunteer. Interview participants for this study were a subset of military personnel engaged in volunteerism, not the wider population. This narrowed focus limited scope of findings to service members who chose to volunteer in community organizations.

Potential outcomes from the study may contribute to research in adult transition theory, military transition theory, communication theory, veteran studies, military studies, leadership studies, volunteerism, and engaged citizenship. Accommodative communication strategies, social skills development, skills transference, and adaptive leadership styles in non-military contexts were discussed during interviews. The study and associated findings explored the possibility that volunteerism can enhance the military-to-civilian transition. There are two primary research questions.

Q1. How do active-duty service members experience volunteerism?

Q1.a. What are active-duty service members experiences in the areas of transferable skills and abilities, self-worth and identity, and reintegration into civil society?

Q2. How does volunteerism impact transition readiness?

Significance

The study contributes to a greater understanding of the experiences of U.S. military service members who engage in volunteerism. An extensive literature review in the following areas framed the conceptual approach to this study: veteran studies, adult transitions, military transitions to workplace, college, and communities, military culture, leadership, communication, nonprofit organizations, volunteerism, military policy and regulations, military awards, the DoD Transition Assistance Program, community engagement, impoverished language, mental health and suicide. Data collection included qualitative semi-structured interviews with 19 participants, all of whom served in the military and volunteered at that time. A qualitative document analysis investigated the institutional backdrop of military service and volunteerism.

The study informs the potential to evolve military transition policies and practices, support suicide intervention programs within the DoD and VA, inform impoverished languages, and enhance volunteerism in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Assumptions

Based on my personal experience as a soldier, veteran, retiree, and nonprofit organization leader I knew Fort Riley had support agencies in place for volunteer management and coordination through military-civilian partnerships and tracking volunteer activity using VMIS. I assumed that volunteer activity coordination and tracking volunteer hours was an efficient and comprehensive process. The Army Community Service (ACS) Volunteer Coordinator works with the Organizational Point of Contact (OPOC) at each unit to account for all volunteer hours per individual. Volunteer hours are collected by the OPOC and submitted to (ACS) to be counted towards the MOVSM and public recognition. I assumed military volunteers did not track or report all volunteer hours or consider some activities as volunteerism.

Limitations

The active-duty interview participants were located at Fort Riley, Kansas, limiting the participant pool. However, the Fort Riley community produced a manageable number of interview participants for the narrative inquiry. Data collected through interviews, analysis of documents, policies, and programs for this study are all connected to this sited context. Veteran interview participants were localized at Fort Riley and surrounding communities. Referrals to interview participants who could not meet in person were interviewed online using Zoom technology. Unlike the active-duty interview participants, veterans were not constrained to any military installation. Only veterans who had volunteered while serving on active duty were qualified to participate in interviews. This limited scope aligned veterans and active-duty interviewee qualifications and enabled a before-and-after comparison of experiences centered on the shared act of volunteerism.

Delimitations

I received approval to interact with active-duty military service members and government data systems. My request to the Army and Fort Riley Garrison Command was approved on condition that I would use little to no government personnel to administer the study. I continually reassessed my approach to account for time and scope to conclude this study in a reasonable timeframe for a dissertation project. I decided to change to qualitative research from mixed methods, removing an expansive survey and field observations from the methodology. My request to interview current service members was approved by the Army Human Research Protection Office (AHRPO) which also included permission to conduct an Army-wide survey. However, a survey on volunteerism Army-wide would have required administrative support and

extended the time for this research beyond my current time constraints and approval from Fort Riley. This is a recommendation for future research.

The active-duty service member population at Fort Riley consisted primarily of Army soldiers, with a small contingent of Navy and Air Force on site. Additional approval from each branch of service to interview the small contingent of Air Force and Navy personnel. Active-duty military interviews were limited to Army soldiers stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas, to focus on one military culture at one military installation. Veteran interviews were open to any respondent that met the specified criteria of having volunteered while serving on an active-duty status in the U.S. armed forces. Combined, the qualitative interviews and document analysis provided a thorough baseline for the scope of this study. The investigation, sited at Fort Riley, allowed me to collect and analyze experiences to build a deep and rich understanding of active-duty volunteers in a shared community context and veterans in a post-service context. Active duty and veteran participants volunteered on and off military installations within their careers. Appendix A provides a detailed timeline of the study that highlights the steps required to include active-duty participants. Chapter Four includes a discussion on the process I followed to get permission to interview Department of Defense personnel. Key words and acronyms are in Appendix B.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Current research relating to the intersection of active-duty service members and nonprofit volunteerism falls into five categories: military transition assistance programs, veteran transition to civilian life, veteran transition to a career, veteran transition to college, and veteran volunteerism. Volunteerism activities and experiences of active-duty service members are underrepresented in academic and professional literature. If and how volunteerism helps veterans before they transition from the service to careers, college, and back to communities is not captured in research within military transition studies or veteran studies disciplines.

Franks (2020) asked what role philanthropy has in democracy. She concluded that philanthropy, interpreted as the love of humankind, is an “essential ingredient of democracy” (p. 2). Philanthropy is foundational to democracy and helps to build a “vibrant democratic system” (Hooks, 2020, p. 97) which, through nonprofit organizations, “maintains a strong civil society” (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004, p. 138). Volunteer motivations influence social action, identity development, skills articulation, career exploration, positive self-worth, and enacting social norms and altruism for the betterment of others. Categories for research on transitioning veterans include critical theories, disability research, research on women veterans and research on minority veterans. Active-duty service members participate in community engaged volunteerism within their host communities but are disconnected by their military identity. The active-duty service member experience has not been included in studies among the various disciplines, though military service has been described as the ultimate form of community service. A brief discussion of what transition is for service members as described in practical and theoretical contexts begins with definitions.

The literature review for this study was expansive and in-depth. I began with searches for prior work under a few categories then followed the trail of further supporting literature through book and article reference lists and notifications of new or relevant publications through an alert I established through the university library. Though I am still responding to relevant publications that arise during writing of the dissertation the main effort ended with a review of 1,526 articles, books, and other references. I organized the literature into 82 categories broken down to 28 folders and 54 subfolders. The largest folder collected 426 publications on military transition. The remaining high-count folders were 364 publications related to research theories, practices, and methods, leadership with 233 publications, 93 nonprofit articles and books, democracy with 81 publications, military and adult transition with 55 articles, engaging community with 45 articles, 39 Army publications, communication with 39 articles, and mental health with 30 publications. Folders with the lowest count for publications found were Fort Riley with 1 publication, 2 on policy, military-civil relations with 3 publications. The literature review summary table in Appendix C provides a detailed breakdown of categories and organization.

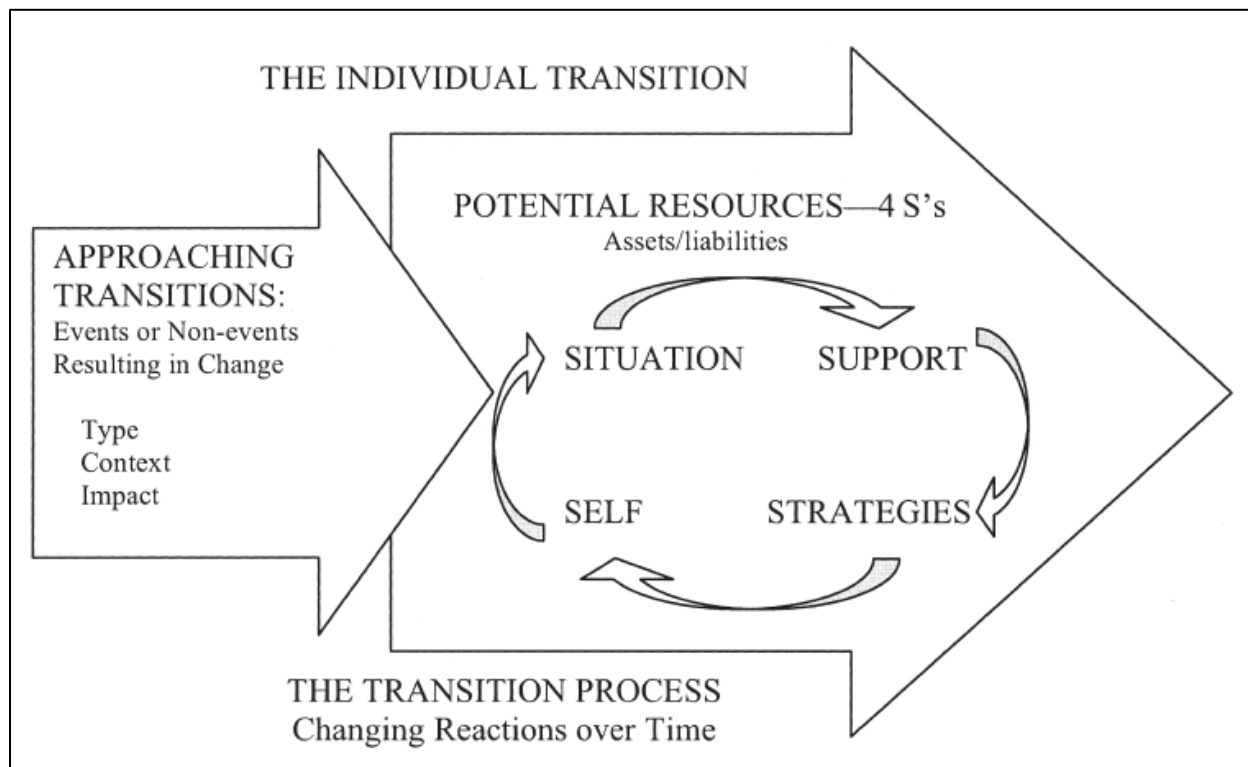
Adult Transition Theory

“Virtually all theories and models of military transition draw on Schlossberg’s model of adult transitions to some degree” (Kleykamp et al., 2021, p. 373). Schlossberg’s adult transition theory (as cited in Schlossberg, 1981) is built on prior research in chronological age (Levinson et al., 1977), individual idiosyncrasy (Neugarten, 1979), life-course theories (Baltes 1979; Brim & Kagan, 1980), adult development (Erikson, 1950; Gould, 1978), adaptive processes (Lieberman, 1975), crisis in role change (Lipman-Bluman, 1976), responses to stress (Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1975), psycho-social transitions (Parkes, 1971), and life management (Zill, 1974). Three sets of characteristics influence human adaptation to transition events in Schlossberg’s

model: the transition event, pre- and post-transition environments, and an individual's personal characteristics. How transitions happen to individuals as anticipated, unanticipated, or non-events that affect the human adaptive response. A transition occurs when "an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships" (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 5). This definition of transition grew from crisis theory where an individual experiences disequilibrium from the norm and "anxiety, fear, guilt or shame, a feeling of helplessness" (Moos & Tsu, 1976, p. 13). Schlossberg saw the term "crisis" holding negative connotations, focused on the dramatic, and excluded non-events and less obvious events. Her preference was a more inclusive "transition."

The Transition Framework. At its origins the framework was created to analyze adult transitions and formulate possible interventions (Figure 2.1). The transition model has three parts: approaching transition (transition identification and transition process), the 4S system for taking stock of potential resources, (situation, support, and strategies), and taking charge by strengthening resources by developing and using new strategies to manage the transition (Goodman, et al., 2006, p.35).

Figure 2.1. The Adult Transition Framework



Note. From *Counseling adults in transition: Linking practice with theory* (p. 33), by J. Goodman, N. K. Schlossberg, and M. L. Anderson, 2006. (3rd ed.). Springer Publishing Company.

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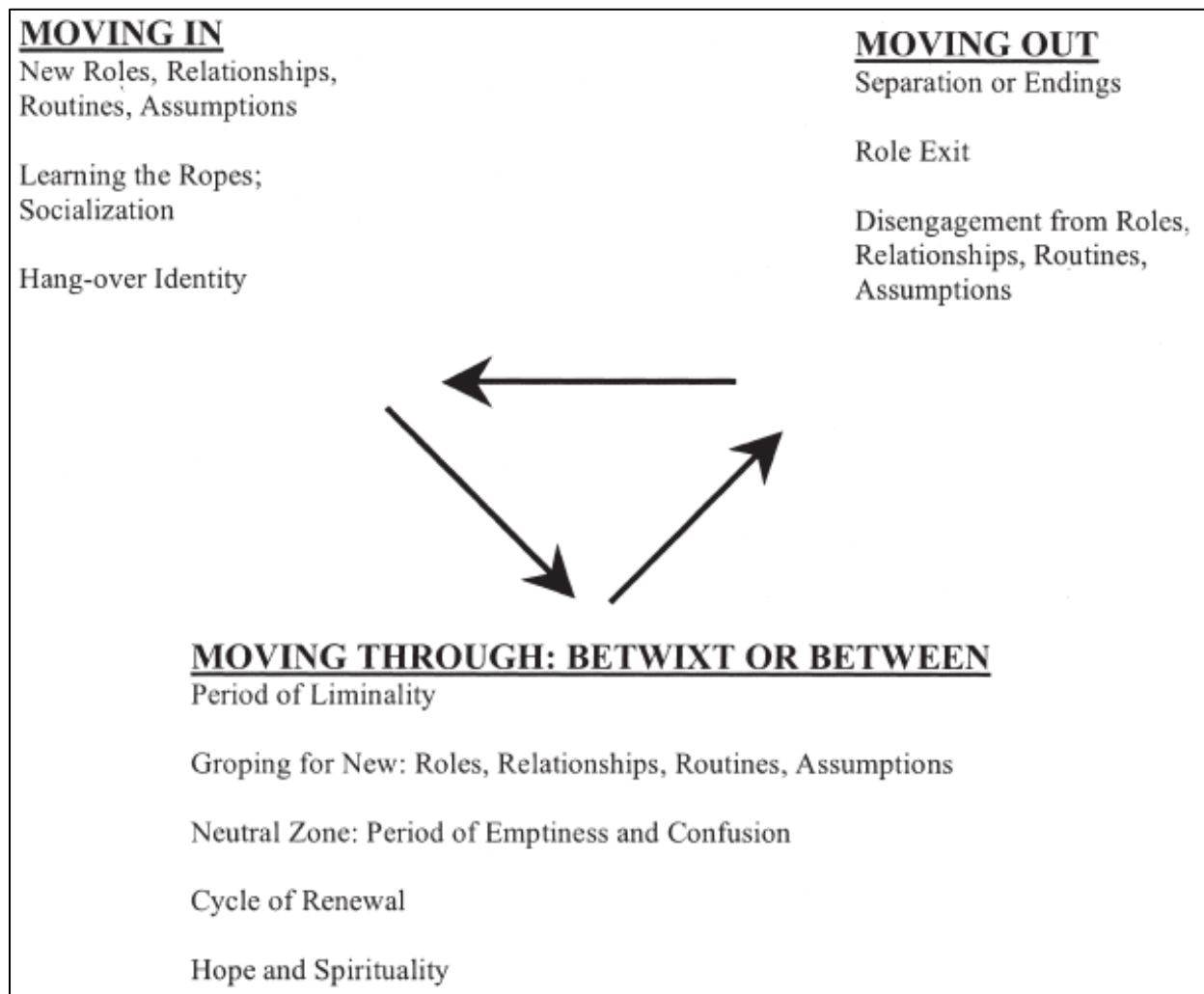
Approaching Transition. A transition is an event or non-event that leads to change. Once a transition is identified by an individual the transition process begins. A transition can be positive or negative and it can be a major life change or a minor adjustment that nevertheless is impactful.

Transition Identification. Transition identification is the type of transition that is about to occur for adults facing a major life transition. Adult transition experiences can be anticipated, unanticipated, or non-event transitions affecting major life events (Schlossberg, 2011). Anticipated transitions are retirements, childbirth, and career changes. They are known and expected, though not necessarily without stress. Unanticipated transitions are “often-disruptive

events that occur unexpectedly, such as major surgery, a serious car accident or illness, or a surprise promotion or factory closing” (p.159) unexpected military separations, and unplanned career changes. Non-event transitions are events that are expected but do not occur. This may be service members planning for separation but staying in the military. It may also include stop-loss decisions by the military such as forcibly keeping service members on active duty when they approach their ETS date. Non-event transitions also may bear stress. The critical point is that transition alters a person’s “roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions” (p. 159) regardless of the type of transition that occurs.

Transition Process. “The transition process locates where the adult is in the transition” (Goodman et al., 2006, p.32). Transitioning adults are entering a new transition process (moving-in), moving through the transition process (moving-through), or coming out of a transition process (moving-out) demonstrated graphically (p. 56) and included below (Figure 2.2). The moving-in stage of transition is when individuals encounter new changes (roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions) and must learn new practices and skills but initially resist adopting a new identity. Once adaptation to the new circumstance begins with learning new skills, understanding new roles, initiating new relationships, adopting new routines, and establishing new assumptions about the world an individual has entered the moving-through stage. The moving-out stage ends the transition process as an individual becomes accustomed to the new conditions, and the new role is incorporated into self-identity, exiting the old role. The transition process is a fixed framework cycle but is not tied to a fixed time. Each person goes through the transition process differently depending on individual experiences. In the integrative model of the transition process adults must incorporate new identities, readjust family and work relationships, and rebuild social and financial capital takes time.

Figure 2.2. Integrative Model of the Transition Process



Note. From *Counseling adults in transition: Linking practice with theory* (p. 50), by J. Goodman, N. K. Schlossberg, and M. L. Anderson, 2006. (3rd ed.). Springer Publishing Company.

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Taking Stock of Coping Resources: The 4 S System. The 4 S system represents “four major sets of factors that influence the ability of the individual to cope during the transition” (Goodman, et al., 2006, p.55). These variables in the transition framework (situation, self, support, and strategies) are group conditions that influence coping with change. Based on the

type of transition the factors may be assets, liabilities, or irrelevant that are constantly being assessed by individuals in transition as potential resources.

Situation. Each person's transition experience is initiated by some situation encountered. The situation has a triggering element, unfolds within a person's life cycle, and a person may control aspects of the transition. The situation may indicate a pending role change and may be permanent or temporary. The situation may be new or feel familiar if an individual has gone through a similar experience. Prior experience helps reduce stress effects among various elements of the transition. Prior experience and personal characteristics affect if "the individual views the situation positively, negatively, or as benign" (Goodman, et al., 2006, p. 60).

Self. Personal characteristics factor in how elements of the self can influence how people perceive and assess how military transition impacts one's life. Personal characteristics include demographic variables and socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, age, life stage, health, culture, self-efficacy, values, and resiliency. Service members entering transition have multiple intersecting identities and go through both a role gain and role exit concurrently. Socioeconomic status is also in flux as they change from military status to veteran status with attendant cultural challenges when transitioning to a career, college, and civilian life. Self also includes whether an individual in transition retains a sense of self-worth and finds meaning and purpose to work toward.

Support. Types of support "are classified according to this source: intimate relationships, family units, networks of friends, and the institutions and/or communities of which the people are a part" (Goodman et al., 2006, p. 75). Support functions to bring affirmation of love, respect, and value. They function to affirm correct behaviors. And support is a source of aid in the form of information, time, money, things, and entitlements. Maintaining relationships when

transitioning from the military is inherently difficult as service members are purposely separated from their military social network, professional community, and priority for care and support from their organizations. At the same time, they enter a new world devoid of similar social structures and relationships. Relationship support may continue for military families, but single service members may lose most of their local social network, being alone during the move-through, and move-out stages of transition. Wherever they transition to will require re-engagement with old pre-military friends, family back home, or entering a new social environment with no connections. Losing access to the functions of support interferes with a successful transition.

Strategies. Strategies for coping with transition are the final factor of the 4 S system. Coping strategies are how individuals deal with the stresses of transition. Challenges encountered during a transition such as not finding a job, not getting into college, losing expected veteran benefits, other than honorable discharges, medical retirements or separations, and living with disabilities can affect identity and self-worth. The three types of coping strategies modify the situation, control the meaning of the problem, and manage stress: a strategy to modify or eliminate the situation causing stress, a strategy to control meaning through selective ignoring, and a strategy for manageable suffering (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978, p. 6-7). Coping effectively requires individuals to be flexible and utilize the coping strategies when and where they fit best.

Taking Charge: Strengthening Resources. The third part of the transition framework is individuals taking charge of their transition by strengthening their resources, the 4 S's (situation, self, support, strategies). They develop new strategies to control what they can as they pass through the stages of transition. The impact on an individual undergoing transition can be

measured by the alteration of their daily life. The bigger the impact of transition, the more an individual's life is altered, and the more coping resources are needed. Counseling can help build psychological resources and strengths, but financial and material resources may be limited by an individual's ability to provide more on their own or may not have extensive support networks to rely on. Moving from the individual perspective of transition to an environmental one, the next section examines the necessary collaborative effort practiced in support of transitioning service-members. Service members who may have expressed suicidal ideation in the past may be likely to attempt suicide within a short time and need specific resources when transitioning (Herberman et al., 2021). with a prior ideation of suicide When the TAP fails to meet their needs a community of family, veterans, civilians, and formal resource persons may be networked (Alonso et al., 2021). Military Transition Theory addresses the psychological challenges of transitioning military veterans, particularly on military suicides and the contributing factors that lead to isolation and depression.

Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication accommodation theory (CAT) is a wide-ranging theoretical approach to communication studies and interpersonal communication strategies. Originating from speech accommodation theory (SAT), social identity theory, and attribution theory, CAT expanded the study of communication accommodation to include people of different social identity backgrounds and the paralinguistic non-verbal and body-language elements of conversations (Giles, 2019; Kircher & Zipp, 2022). In the original theory (SAT) speakers would either converge on their utterance styles, becoming more alike or interlocutors can diverge in utterances, increasing communication difficulty as a social distancing defense (Soliz & Giles, 2014). Giles later evolved SAT to CAT to include differences in perceptions of accommodation

among groups instead of individuals. Now, CAT is used for research in intergroup dynamics, accommodative behaviors, and identity.

Soliz and Giles (2014) created four categories of CAT based behavior taxonomies in the research (p. 109). Accommodation is when one or both communicators who “enact (or are perceived to enact) positive-oriented or conversationally appropriate behavior (e.g., appropriate topics of conversation) toward the other person” (p. 110). reflect convergence between communicators, easing the experience. Non-accommodation is either underaccommodation or overaccommodation. Under-accommodation is sharing of too much information or inappropriate information from one speaker to another. Over-accommodation is patronizing and mocking behavior using slow simplified speech in a demeaning utterance. Reluctant accommodation is “based on the norm of respect, obligation, and/or social hierarchies” (p. 110) and does not construct positive relationships. Official military communication practices fall into this category. Avoidant accommodation seeks to quickly end the conversation due to discomfort with the other speaker’s biases, or historical experiences. Kirchner & Zipp (2022) identify seven main tenants of context, strategies, and tactics in CAT (p. 68-69):

- Sociohistorical context: societal norms and conventions; power relations.
- Interpersonal context: relationship between interlocutors over group attitudes.
- Initial orientation: goals of the speaker; motives.
 - Accommodative stance: default orientation towards positive attitude/convergence.
 - Counter-accommodation/divergence, over-accommodation, under-accommodation, exploitative accommodation, avoidant accommodation.
- Immediate context: location, place, space, embodiment.
- Sociolinguistic strategies:

- Approximation strategies: interpretability strategies: adapting for children, elderly, etc.
- Discourse management strategies: taking turns.
- Interpersonal control strategies: mitigating power differentials.
- Conversational tactics: response to speakers' behavior.

Since “all communication is engaged to some degree” (Shockley-Zalabak, et al. 2017, p.807). It follows that community disengagement fosters communicative impoverished linguistic practices. Service members experience impoverished language when communicating in cross-cultural contexts that arise during transition. “Language and practices become impoverished when they no longer help us attend to the world in broadly useful ways, and when mechanisms of reproduction and protection keep them from organically growing in relation to changing human needs and life circumstances” (Deetz, 2008, p. 292). Service members face impoverished language events when the phronesis of military culture and language fail to include civilian conditions in practical daily and mundane activity.

Military competency and daily functionality at any level of experience is rendered impoverished and distantly mechanical in the absence of opportunities to practice adapting linguistic applications to new contexts (Carroll et al., 2008). Military leaders are trained to practice creative thinking, to build on previous experiences and lessons learned, and to be innovative (Cojocar, 2011). Yet, adaptation to the civilian world translates to a struggle to communicate military leadership, knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience to new employers, in college classrooms, and among communities. Critical military workplace attributes like leadership, communication skills, problem-solving, and diversity are difficult to transcribe to civilian workplaces even when these attributes are valued by employers. The military-civilian

gap is demonstrative when impoverished language and articulation of skills inhibit civilian hiring marketplaces (Boatwright & Roberts, 2019; Liongosari et al., 2023).

Communication strategies and preparation opportunities are not embedded in military transition assistance programs. Active-duty service members are generally forbidden from civilian employment while on active duty. However, all military branches encourage volunteerism, awarding the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal (MOVSM) for substantial volunteer service to local communities. Howe & Shpeer (2019) suggest “one possible way to reduce culture shock may be to have military members interact with civilians prior to exiting the military” (p.216). Volunteering in community organizations facilitates this recommendation.

Leadership-as-Practice

Leadership-as-Practice (L-A-P) is a dynamic approach for understanding leadership that decentralizes leadership processes away from the individuals but recognizes how individuals engage in and are influenced by leadership. Raelin (2016) defines leadership as “occurring as a practice rather than residing in the traits or behaviors of particular individuals” (p. 1). The L-A-P paradigm views leadership in everyday activity as social and material and co-constructs a reality within dynamic interpersonal social relationships. Leadership emerges in “activity rather than through the traits and heroics of individual actors” (Raelin, 2011, p. 195). L-A-P focuses on “moral, emotional, and relational aspects, rather than rational, objective, and technical ones” (p, 195). It is a lens to understand emergent leadership and communication skills within the military community where every service member has at least rudimentary leadership training, experience, and a culture built on heroic leaders.

The mundane and routine regimented daily practices of leadership and communication within a military context are rigid, indoctrinated, and functional. Within the military culture, a formal leadership structure based on laws, regulations, and orders is reinforced by an informal leadership practice of mentorship, influence, congeniality, domination, relational power, and referent power. Both the formal and informal leadership practices are routine, resulting in high efficacy, mission achievement, and leader development. A continually reenforced military identity is developed and immersed in service members through training, mentorship, modelling, and reward. With military identity is an ingrained value-laden culture. Those values include relational validating, self-replicating, and re-enforcing cultural norms of obedience and structure. Daily affirmation of indoctrinated behavior drives service members to evaluate and make sense of their competencies and to identify gaps or shortfalls on behavior and competency “that compels them to act or adjust their identity” (Jansson et al., 2021, p. 560).

Leadership competency and experience, communication strategies, discipline, decision-making, and social skills are difficult to articulate to employers. Brian Ward Sr., retired Air Force Master Sergeant, wrote that transitioning veterans face “misconceptions and misunderstandings by civilian employers” and to “gain the skills needed to succeed in non-military work settings...it is useful for the veterans to acquire new knowledge and skills for civilian-related employment” (Ward, 2020, p. 63). It is within the practice of military skillsets and daily operations that the essence of L-A-P is discovered. Military knowledge, skills, and abilities (Kirchner, 2018) and the Be-Know-Do of leadership model (Campbell & Dardis, 2004) reflect the character and tenor of L-A-P in military contexts. Hardison et al., (2017b) note that the difficulty of translating technical military skills into civilian career settings is a major challenge for both veterans and employers. The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is meant

to resolve transition difficulties. TAP is a mandatory program all service members must participate in when leaving military service. The Department of Labor (DOL), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the DoD are mandated by congress to work together in TAP to ensure service members successfully find jobs or attend higher education. TAP was established by congress in 1991 yet problems with the effectiveness of the program persist due to the civil-military divide (Binkley, 2022; Carter et al., 2017); insufficient information (Ward, 2020); required time and additional effort (Windmueller, 2022); has limited program evaluation and assessments by congress (Bascetta, 2002); and has limited access at small remote locations (Reed et al, 2021).

A L-A-P framework for military research may seem counter-intuitive in a military context for experienced L-A-P researchers. However, Raelin clearly states the purpose of the theory is to break from traditional concepts of leadership and to reframe the idea of leadership as emergent in practice and a practice of collective action (Raelin, 2016). Military service members volunteering or leading in nonprofit organizations may bring their military competencies with them, but they can learn to adapt to a practice approach. Through volunteerism and community engagement service members can rebuild a civilian identity and actively accommodate to relational constructs (Carroll et al., 2008). The civic practice of volunteerism develops new competencies and collaborative agencies in new contexts and can act as a rehearsal for the transition from military to other environments.

Cooperative leadership enables nuanced experiences for military volunteers as they encounter translational and transitional difficulties. The L-A-P “moral, emotional, and relational aspects” (Raelin, 2011, p. 195) forefront service members’ informal leadership roles and experiences in preference to contemporary rational, objective, and technical ones. Leadership

activities in L-A-P outlined by Raelin (2016) are accomplished only through cooperative relational interactions. A group identifies essential resources that refine, support, or simplify and contribute to sensemaking. Signaling a willingness to work together to accomplish a specific task. Groups weave together networks for cooperative work, developing complex meanings and purposes. Assessment and feedback on activities contribute to stability. An inviting environment allows everyone to contribute and encourages people who typically hold back to be more active and participative. These activities unleash the potential of practiced leadership in dynamic environments.

L-A-P is a dynamic process that is decentralized by individuals but still influences them. Leadership is a collective activity, situated in material things and spaces, and is embodied (Raelin, 2016; Sergi, 2016). The materiality of the environment and physical space influences human activity, identity, behavior, and daily practices (Ropo & Salovaara, 2018). L-A-P is considered an embodiment of leaders, meaning “their physical presence, appearance, identity or bodily gestures” (p. 3). Sergi (2016) asks “what is leadership made of” (p. 110) rather than thinking about who is leading. As an integral part of the practice of leadership, materiality in mundane spaces entangles human memory, emotion, time, and the rhythms of everyday life (Pöyhönen, 2018). Liminal spaces are ambiguous, they don’t entail clear ownership and are “absent of the usual norms, routines, and social expectations” (p. 590). Liminal spaces as places at the threshold of normality and exist as objective knowledge, are physically present, and have shape, color, and content.

Whereas spaces are more experiential and subjective, “a product of mental powers and imaginations” (Ropo, et al, 2013). The embodied aspect of L-A-P accounts for the contribution of living bodies in a defined space as integral to that space creating leadership in practice.

Uniformed service members introduce military authoritarian influence on a L-A-P paradigm within civilian spaces. An example of how L-A-P can be seen in this case is military uniforms. Uniforms, when service members participate in nonprofit organizations, have an embodied influence on the dynamics of emergent and co-created leadership. In the ways that L-A-P emerges in practice, communication accommodation occurs in and is influenced by relationships, locations, places, spaces, embodiment and mundanity.

Qualitative Interview Studies

The qualitative approach to research is preferred when researchers seek to understand the complexities of human lived experiences described by those who lived them. Qualitative interviews dig deep into experiences using probing questions, and in-depth, open-ended interview sessions to gain detailed knowledge from participants about phenomena, experiences, or events (Bhattacharya, 2017; deMarrais, 2014; Weiss, 1994). Weiss (1994) offers a user's guide to qualitative interview studies, from conceptualization from the initial researcher envisioning a qualitative research project to creating a research design to create the final report.

Qualitative interviews position the interview as the primary mode of inquiry. Interviews are the main source of data, but other sources may supplement as appropriate to the study. Various research purposes and theoretical perspectives influence which interview studies methods are used for a particular study. Interview respondents reflect in detail allowing the researcher to “discover the essence of the structure of the experience through an interpretation of the rich, textual data provided by participants descriptions” (deMarrais, 2014, p.57). My choice to use qualitative interviews gave me access to deep experiences of the interview respondents through an open-ended discussion guided by an interview guide. Respondents are guided by the researcher but the conversational flow if the interview allows each interviewee the freedom to

tell their own story. In this way I avoided preconceptions and personal biases to gain detailed knowledge from each participant about their unique experience (Bhattacharya, 2017; deMarrais, 2014; Weiss, 1994).

Interviewing with a qualitative bent differs from the quantitative questionnaire or survey, which is formulaic and replicative to vastly different contexts. Qualitative interviews produce data that the interviewer interprets in a retelling of the participant's stories, and it helps when the interviews are conducted in relaxed settings because it helps to build rapport and trust with the researcher. To assist with building this environment an interview protocol or guide can keep the interview focused and on topic, predetermined questions address specific talking points essential to data collection and serve as a reference point for probing and exploratory engagement. Staying close to the prepared questions drives interviewing but there needs to be space allowing for follow-up questions based on participant responses. Some freedom to wander in the conversation helps with deeper engagement that gives permission in the moment for deeper explorations and thoughtful reflections of lived experiences. Interviewing is a technique for collecting data through open-ended, probing, and prompting questions to encourage participants to share their stories in rich, thick detail. Participants are experts in their own experiences and are allowed to take ownership of the interview. Meanwhile, the researcher becomes the learner-listener to the original storytelling of lived experience. Research questions and an interview guide develop short and clear questions that ask for a more specific detail in recollection, and longer questions that are broad and open-ended (deMarrais, 2014).

Bhattacharya (2017) groups qualitative interviews into four general categories. Formal semi-structured interviews are consistent across all interviews with prepared questions. For this approach, the interviewer mostly stays close to the prepared questions and asks the same

questions of all participants. In-depth open-ended interviews reduce the number of prepared questions and open the interview to deeper exploration. In-depth and open-ended qualitative interviews dig deep into the interviewee's experiences seeking to push past surface explanations toward deeper meaning-making, understandings of the participants' reality, and interconnectivity of shared/similar experiences among selected participants.

Qualitative Document Analysis

The qualitative document analysis (QDA) research method is a misleading term since more than printed resources fall into this research method. QDA is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating already existing information that has been recorded outside of the research study. Documented information is written, visual, and physical material that reveals our complexities as people and societies. Documents reveal the ways we represent and organize ourselves, how we strive to make sense of our past and inform our future, and they influence our processes of sense-making (Wood et al., 2020). Documentation may be gathered from previous studies, social media, physical documents, images and artwork, and even advertisements. Collecting and analyzing information through this method is typical for researchers preparing to initiate data collection from research participants. Analyzing documented information helps researchers begin a research project with a baseline of empirical data. Data collected using this method are "social facts, which are produced, shared, and used in socially organized ways" (Atkinson & Coffey, 1997, as quoted in Bowen, 2009, p. 27).

The emergent process of qualitative document analysis is integral for data convergence and corroboration, helping to establish triangulation. QDA is often included with mixed-methods research to support qualitative and quantitative data (Morgan, 2021). Combining document analysis and semi-structured interviews yields richer data and increased the quality and

credibility of the research (Berndtsson, 2017). Document analysis may also serve as a stand-alone qualitative method. Bowen (2009) lists five functions of documentary material:

- to provide the context of participant experiences.
- to contribute to question/instrument development.
- for supplemental information to the research data.
- to track change.
- for verification.

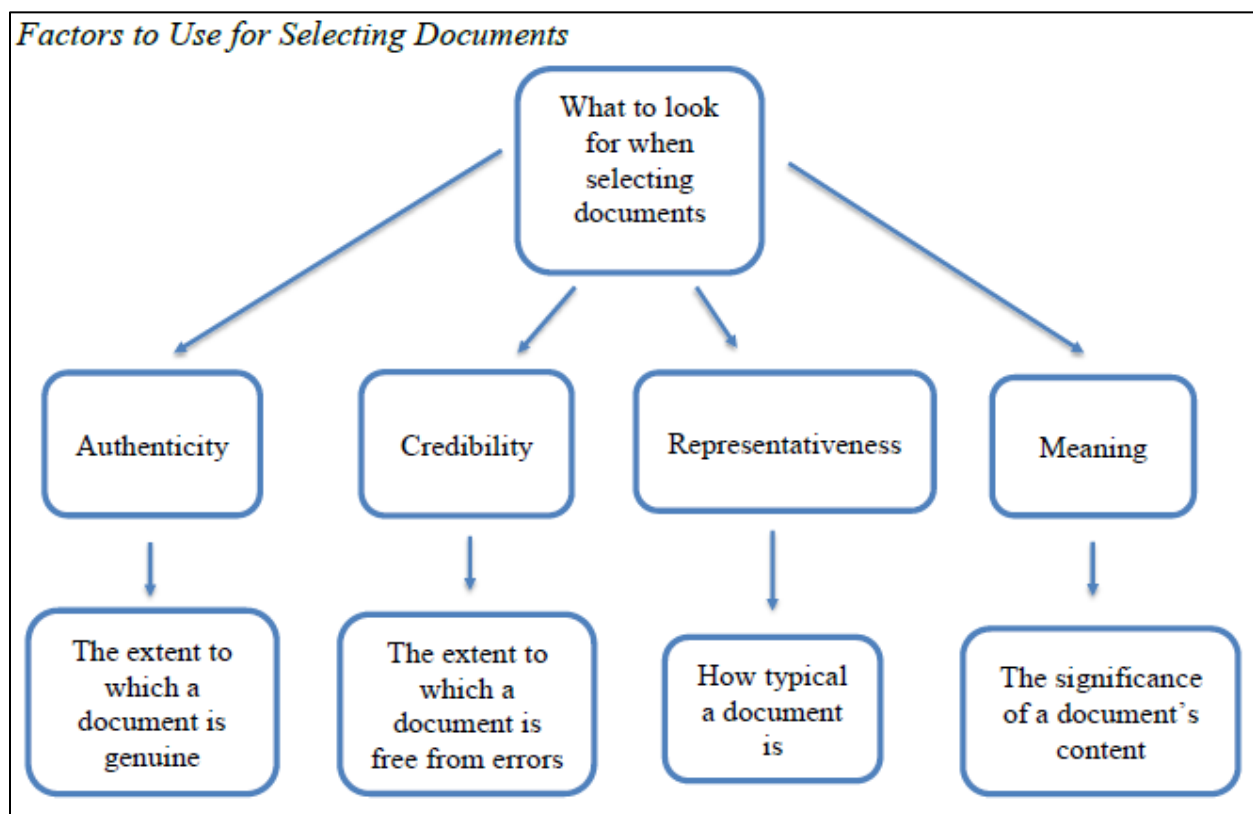
Document analysis has several advantages including efficiency, availability, cost-effectiveness, unobtrusiveness, stability, exactness, and broad coverage (p.31).

The analytic procedure for QDA is finding, sorting, and selecting materials, and then coding for emergent themes and artifacts. Combining the recommendations of Bhattacharya (2017) and Wood et al. (2020) the QDA iterative process should follow this order: 1) build a corpus of relevant documents needed for the study using a first pass screening to remove redundant and irrelevant material, 2) note why each document is important for the study and initiate initial open coding to identify broad topics followed by thematic coding for relevant phenomena/themes that emerge, 3) connect codes and themes to literature and empirical data, 4) discuss the document list with potential participants, add recommended missing documentation, and repeat analysis, 5) publish the QDA process with the study to get specific feedback from peers and to share the process.

Morgan notes the four factors are authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning (Flick, 2018, as cited by Morgan, 2021, p. 70; Kridel 2015; Scott, 2007). These four factors for document selection are then configured into a model by Morgan (p.71) shown below in Figure 2.3. Authenticity is established best by ensuring that as much as possible the document

is a primary source. The credible document is error-free and uses reliable sources. A representative document is typical in comparison to other documents meaning it is not unique. A document is meaningful when it is clear and understandable, and its literal meaning is related to the context in which it was created (Morgan, 2021). Document sampling techniques can align with participant sampling techniques when appropriate. Reaching redundancy indicated that the sampling size is large enough.

Figure 2.3. Factors to use for Selecting Documents



Note. From “Conducting a Qualitative Document Analysis” by H. Morgan, 2022, *The Qualitative Report* 27(1), p. 71 (<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5044>). CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

I reviewed multiple founding and regulatory documents, regulations, websites, and programs that established and regulate the systems for awards and recognition, volunteerism, and transition and retirement underlying the experiences of the military and veterans who were interviewed. I created three general categories of documents that support awards and recognition for service members who volunteer, the administrative system for volunteer opportunities and accountancy, and the transition lifecycle of veterans (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Qualitative Document Analysis

Awards and Recognition for service members who volunteer	
	Requested documentation from the George H.W. Bush Library on 26 May 2022 Founding documents on the establishment of the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal
	MOVSM vs the Humanitarian Service Medal (HSM)
	Government publications
Administrative systems for volunteer opportunities and accountability	
	Volunteer Information Management System (VMIS) website
	Army Community Service Fort Riley Coordinator policies and publications
	Family, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation events and publications for volunteer recognition
	DFMWR. Garrison approved private organizations authorized to operate on Fort Riley policies and publications
	Nonprofit organizations that coordinate with Fort Riley for active-duty military volunteers
Transition lifecycle for veterans	
	DOD Transition Assistance Program (TAP) website
	Fort Riley TAP Policies and publications
	Journey of Veterans Map
	Managing Your Transition Map
	Navigating Military Retirement Map

Awards and Recognition. The highest publication authority on military awards and decorations is issued by the Department of Defense (DoD). The subordinate branches of the armed forces then follow the DoD manual for awards when issuing their branch-specific directives. Established in 1992 by Executive Order 12830, the MOVSM was created by

President George H.W. Bush to recognize and promote service member volunteerism in local civilian communities (Department of Defense, 2024). The award is an incentive for individual service members to volunteer and a statement of intent that the armed forces are committed to local community engagement. The Secretary of Defense authorized each military department to establish standards for the time and hours of volunteer activity required to qualify for the MOVSM (p. 47). The MOVSM is not awarded for single acts but sustained community service. There is no specific time period or number of volunteer hours to qualify for the award, but it provides an example of 500 volunteer hours over three years completed in a community (p.38). In practice each service branch notes no specific time period or volunteer hours worked to qualify but the ambiguity led to differing example criteria among the service branch publications.

The Navy and Marine Corps Awards Manual (Secretary of the Navy, 2019) states all military departments “have established that a sustained period of volunteer service is normally 36 months” that may occur over time through successive tours” (p. 4-55). Air Force personnel are instructed that there is no specific time to qualify for the MOVSM, but an example in the regulation states 500 volunteer hours over a two-year period (Department of the Air Force, 2024, p. 50). The Army regulation on military awards mirrors the example provided in the DoD manual, 500 hours and three years. Yonkman and Bridgeland (2009), in their study on the all-volunteer force, included information on the MOVSM and its’ civilian equivalent, the President’s Volunteer Service Award. Their conclusion was that the minimum number of volunteer hours is left vague, but in practice there was about 100 hours for military and civilian volunteers, aligning with the DoD and military regulations.

Volunteerism

“Volunteering is a foundational block in the formation and sustainability of civil society across the word” (Hustinx et al., 2010b, p. 350). Volunteerism is work without pay and under no contractual obligations to any organization that has the aim to benefit another person, group, organization, or cause (Jäger et al., 2009; Whittaker et al., 2015) but may fall under the Fair Labor Standards Act depending on what is being done (Overgaard & Kerlin, 2021). This is one definition. The Oxford English Dictionary states volunteerism is either (1) “a system of having volunteer military forces,” or (2) the use of volunteer labor, especially in the social services” (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.-b). The second meaning is affiliated with a North American origin and further explored below. The effects of volunteerism on self-worth, transition readiness, motivation, and leadership can support successful service member reintegration into civil society (Angel et al., 2018; Usbeck, 2018). Volunteerism as an enhancement to promote military transition success as a bridge to cross the gap of readiness to new careers, college, and communities is a novel contribution to literature in a variety of disciplines.

Volunteer: Origins of the Word and Meaning

The quest for defining volunteers and volunteerism is an elusive task with “existing definitions focus on detailing what volunteering is *not*” (Hustinx et al., 2010a, p. 412). The first printed occurrence of volunteer, *volunte*, an adjective meaning “willing,” appears in the Middle English text *De Termino Phase Anno* (Anon., 1502, para. 4). The term “volunteer,” as a noun, was originally used to describe military service (Cnaan & Amroffell, 1994; Karl, 1984; Mateiu-Vescan et al., 2020). The etymology of volunteer (n.), volunteering (v.), and volunteerism (n.) in English is traced to the French *voluntaire*, meaning “one who offers himself for military service,” connecting to the Latin origin root *voluntaries* (adj.), meaning “of one’s free will”

(Etymonline, n.d.). With the addition of the *-ism* suffix, American usage changed volunteer and volunteering from the identity and activity of an individual into volunteerism as a system (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.-a). Volunteer, spelled *voluntiers*, did not appear as a noun in text until 1618 with Sir Walter Raleigh's' *Life and Death of Mohomet* (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The term was not applied outside of military or religious social contexts until 1896 when the American Salvation Army split from the British Salvation Army and renamed itself “Volunteers of America” (Karl, 1984, p. 499). Volunteer was originally a term for civilians providing military service during emergencies, but the definition has evolved. Cnaan & Amroffell (1994) reviewed the definitions of volunteer and categorized 10 facets of volunteer activity to add clarity for better understanding of what it is (p. 348). The 10 facets of volunteer activity are summarized in the table below (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Ten Facets of Volunteer Activity

Facet	Description
Who is the volunteer?	Characteristics and attributes of the volunteer: gender, age, education, and socio-economic status
What is given?	Volunteers may provide expertise, networks, influence, time, materials, and services
Formality	Formal vs informal. Formal includes regular organizational engagement. Informal include ad hoc support to organizations or individuals and neighbors
Frequency	A spectrum of time spanning one-time, ad hoc acts to routine or regular planned activities
Time per episode	Ranges from a short time or moment of support to a full day
Beneficiaries' relatedness	The relationship between the volunteer and beneficiary. Ranges from helping oneself to helping strangers
Beneficiaries' characteristics	The client population: Ranges from one person to the entire population. Four categories: age, need/social problem, gender, and race/ethnicity.
Who manages volunteers?	Four categories: formal volunteer coordinator or administrator, an organization staff member's additional duty, a veteran volunteer, and self-management of the volunteer group
Management activities	Tasks throughout the activity: recruiting, pre-service training, on-the-job training, ongoing supervision, recognition/appreciation, and termination if needed.
Volunteer rewards	Five categories: tangible/material (college credit, work experience, resume), internal rewards (positive self-image, religious fulfillment, self-actualization), social-interaction (social connection), norms and social pressures due to societal or family expectations (parents to youth organizations, children helping elderly parents, corporate managers contributing to communities, elites on boards for museums etc., and family traditions).

Note. Adapted from “Defining who is a volunteer: Conceptual and empirical considerations,” by R. A. Cnaan, F. Handy, and M. Wadsworth, 1996, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 25(3), 364-383. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764096253006>. Copyright 1996 Sage Publications.

Adapted with permission.

The concept of volunteerism evolved within American philosophical activity of the mid-1800's to giving time or money based on emotional considerations, rather than rational ones (Karl, 1984). Karl found the earliest meaning of volunteering, without coercion and without compensation, was absorbed into the language of military service to distinguish between unwilling conscripts and willing volunteers. Conscripts were men coerced or paid to go into battle. The United States follows this application, albeit with a salary and benefits, in mandatory registration for the selective service of men between 18 – 25 years old (Selective Service System, n.d.). This law applies to both male citizens and documented or undocumented male immigrants (U.S. House of Representatives, 1948). Volunteers, on the other hand, offered their military service of their own free will. This is the status of the US military's' all-volunteer force in modern times.

The earliest printing of *volunteerism* was in the 1844 book by Phillip Harwood, "History of the Irish Rebellion of 1798" (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.-b). Harwood retained the military service connotation:

"That volunteer era was a blessed time for Ireland. Despite all her accumulated miseries and wrongs, she was hopeful, happy, and tranquil. As Hardy says, 'Ireland, in counting the years of her thralldom, might leave out those of the volunteer institution.' This writer thus describes the effects of volunteerism on national morals and manners" (Harwood, 1844, p. 26).

Volunteerism was diminished with the advent of professional social workers, state and local professional education and certification programs, public education, and philanthropic wealth in the 1880's. Oaths and entry to institutions providing self-contained educational systems, administrative control, and intellectual commitments of its membership were replaced by public,

private, and government institutions. In some cases, oaths and professional ethics continued into modern times, particularly in the medical professions Hippocratic Oath and the US military Oath of Enlistment (Karl, 1984).

Historically, military service in the United States was voluntary except for times of war. During the Korean and Vietnam wars, American polity struggled with the moral, economic, and effectiveness of conscripts in a free society (Mai, 2023). Nobel Prize winning economist Milton Friedman argued that conscription in peacetime was unjustified according to US governing principles and that conscription arrangements in place were “inequitable and arbitrary, seriously interfere with the freedom of young men to shape their lives and probably are even more costly” than recruiting volunteers (Friedman, 1962, p. 36). Friedman directly influenced a permanent change in the US military from the draft to an all-volunteer force.

Volunteering and volunteerism are no longer affiliated with professional military service alone (Cnaan et al., 1996). Volunteering embraces an array of activities and is “inherently a multidimensional phenomenon” (Hustinx et al., 2010a, p. 423). Volunteerism is an essential part of nonprofit charitable organizational structures and missions (Hernandez Ortiz et al., 2021) further discussed in the next section. Volunteering benefits individual workforce and career development with “skill development and to explore new fields of work” and for veterans “volunteering provides mental, physical and social benefits...in overall health, purpose in life, self-efficacy, perceived social support, and reductions in post-traumatic stress disorder and depression” (Habitat for Humanity, 2022, p. 4).

Volunteer Functions Inventory. Clary et al. (1998) created the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) to understand the reasons people volunteer from a functional theoretical lens. Considering volunteering as planned rather than spontaneous, they noted volunteers select how

and where to participate based on their priorities, capabilities, and interests. Volunteerism is a sustained ongoing helpfulness over extended periods of time rather than one-and-done episodic volunteering. The results of their analysis categorized six motivational functions served by volunteerism: values, understanding, social, career, protective, and enhancement. The samples of student interviews to test the motivation functions informed the analysis of participant interviews for this study. The table below groups motivations for volunteering into the six motivation functions from Table 2.3 of their report (p. 1520).

Table 2.3. Six Motivation Functions of Volunteering

Functions	Motivations to volunteer
Protective	No matter how bad I've been feeling, volunteering helps me to forget about it.
	By volunteering I feel less lonely.
	Doing volunteer work relieves me of some of the guilt over being more fortunate than others.
	Volunteering helps me work through by own personal problems.
	Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles.
Values	I am concerned about those less fortunate than myself.
	I am genuinely concerned about the particular group I am serving.
	I feel compassion toward people in need.
	I feel it is important to help others.
	I can do something for a cause that is important to me.
Career	Volunteering can help me to get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work.
	I can make new contacts that might help my business or career.
	Volunteering allows me to explore different career options.
	Volunteering will help me to succeed in my chosen profession.
	Volunteering experience will look good on my resume.
Social	My friends volunteer.
	People I'm close to want me to volunteer.
	People I know share an interest in community service.
	Others with whom I am close place a high value on community service.
	Volunteering is an important activity to the people I know best.
Understanding	I can learn more about the cause for which I am working.
	Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things.
	Volunteering lets me learn things through direct, hands-on experience.
	I can learn how to deal with a variety of people.
	I can explore my own strengths.
Enhancement	Volunteering makes me feel important.
	Volunteering increases my self-esteem.
	Volunteering makes me feel needed.
	Volunteering makes me feel better about myself.
	Volunteering is a way to make new friends.

Note. Adapted from “Understanding and assessing the motivations of volunteers: A functional approach,” by E. G. Clary, M. Snyder, R. D. Ridge, J. Copeland, A. A. Stukas, J. Haugen, and P. Miene, 1998, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(6), 1516-1530.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.74.6.1516>. Copyright 1998 American Psychological Association. Adapted with permission.

Volunteer Interest Typology. “Volunteerism is a prevalent and complex form of prosocial action” (Maki & Snyder, 2017, p. 6). Maki and Snyder sought to understand how differing types of volunteer behaviors were enacted based on an individual’s interests. To build their Volunteer Interest Typology (VIT) Maki and Snyder grouped volunteer behaviors under shared characteristics that were either interpersonal, skills-based, or political/donation behaviors. The eight types of volunteer behaviors were then sorted by personality (prosocial personality) and motivation (functional) constructs. They created eight types of volunteering based on how someone wanted to help distinct causes. Six of the eight types were grouped into two general categories: interpersonal volunteering and skills-based volunteering. The remaining two types are sometimes considered volunteering: political volunteering and donation behaviors (Table 2.4). Maki and Snyder linked volunteer behaviors to volunteer personality and motivational constructs to better understand “the similarities and differences between the eight types of volunteer behaviors” (p. 9). They concluded that:

- There are two volunteer types: prosocial personality and volunteer motivations.
- People are interested in specific types of volunteering.
- Volunteers who engaged in behaviors that matched their interests were happier.

Table 2.4. Volunteer Interest Typology

Category of volunteering	Types of volunteering behaviors	Volunteerism construct	Description (p. 7)
Interpersonal volunteering	Autonomy volunteering	Prosocial personality	helping someone arrive at a solution to a problem themselves, so they can address the problem if it comes up again in the future
		Altruism	
		Social responsibility	
		Empathy	
		Perspective taking	
	Dependency volunteering	Prosocial personality	offering someone an immediate solution to their problem, without providing the skills or insight necessary to address the issue next time
		Altruism	
		Social responsibility	
		Empathy	
		Perspective taking	
		Values	
	Animal volunteering	Prosocial personality	walking dogs for an animal shelter
		Altruism	
		Social responsibility	
		Empathy	
		Perspective taking	
Skills-based volunteering	Administrative volunteering	Prosocial personality	addressing the administrative needs of a nonprofit, educational, or government entity
		Altruism	
		Social responsibility	
		Career	
		Understanding	
	Built volunteering	Prosocial personality	building a disability ramp for an office
		Altruism	
		Social responsibility	
		Career	
		Understanding	
	Environmental volunteering	Prosocial personality	planting trees in a local park
		Altruism	
		Social responsibility	
		Career	
		Understanding	
Sometimes considered volunteering	Political volunteering	Prosocial personality	voting or attending a political rally
		Altruism	
		Social responsibility	
	Donation behaviors	Prosocial personality	donating blood or money in support of a social cause
		Altruism	
		Social responsibility	

Note. Adapted from “Investigating similarities and differences between volunteer behaviors: Development of a volunteer interest typology,” by A. Maki and M. Snyder, 2017, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 46(1), 5-28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764015619703>. Copyright 2017 American Psychological Association. Adapted with permission.

An analysis of the literature to identify the values held by people who volunteer resulted in the table below, which I used for reference and analysis of participant interviews and to compare with military values (Table 2.5). The table represents the main tenants of six articles for a framework of volunteer core values: basic human values (Schwartz, 2007), identity types (Grönlund, 2011), core human values (Hustinx et al., 2010a), the civil-military social construct (Usbeck, 2018), volunteer experiences that construct and disclose identity (von Essen, 2020), and volunteer motivation as a complex system, (Mateiu-Vescan et al., 2021). Like VFI and VTT above, this analysis was a useful reference for analyzing participant data.

Table 2.5. Volunteer Core Values

Volunteer core values			
Schwartz (2007)		Hustinx et al. (2010a)	
Ten basic human values	Power	Core human values	Altruism
	Achievement		Compassion
	Hedonism		Concern for others
	Stimulation		Generosity
	Self-direction		Social responsibility
	Universalism		Community spirit
	Benevolence	Usbeck (2018)	
	Tradition	Invoking the civil-military social contract	Altruism
	Conformity		Community service
	Security		Helping others
Grölund (2011) Identity types			Reciprocity
Moral values	Altruistic		Collective identity
	Humanitarian		Patriotic attitude
Influencer	Universalism	von Essen (2020)	
	Self-direction	Volunteer experience to construct and disclose identity	Altruism
Helper	Benevolence		Self-expression & free will
Community	Tradition		Doing good
	Conformity		Meaningful activity
	Benevolence		Friendship
Religious	Benevolence	Mateiu-Vescan et al. (2021)	
	Tradition	Volunteer motivation is a complex system	Altruism
	Conformity		Concern for others
Success	Power		Growth
	Achievement	Service	
	Security	Meaningful activity	

Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizational scholarship is a legitimate subarea of communication disciplines and engaged scholarship (Lewis, 2012). Nonprofit organizations “might be a better (or best) place to study many dynamics that organizational communication scholars are/should be interested in studying” (p. 187). Whether as an organizational leader or a volunteer, some active-

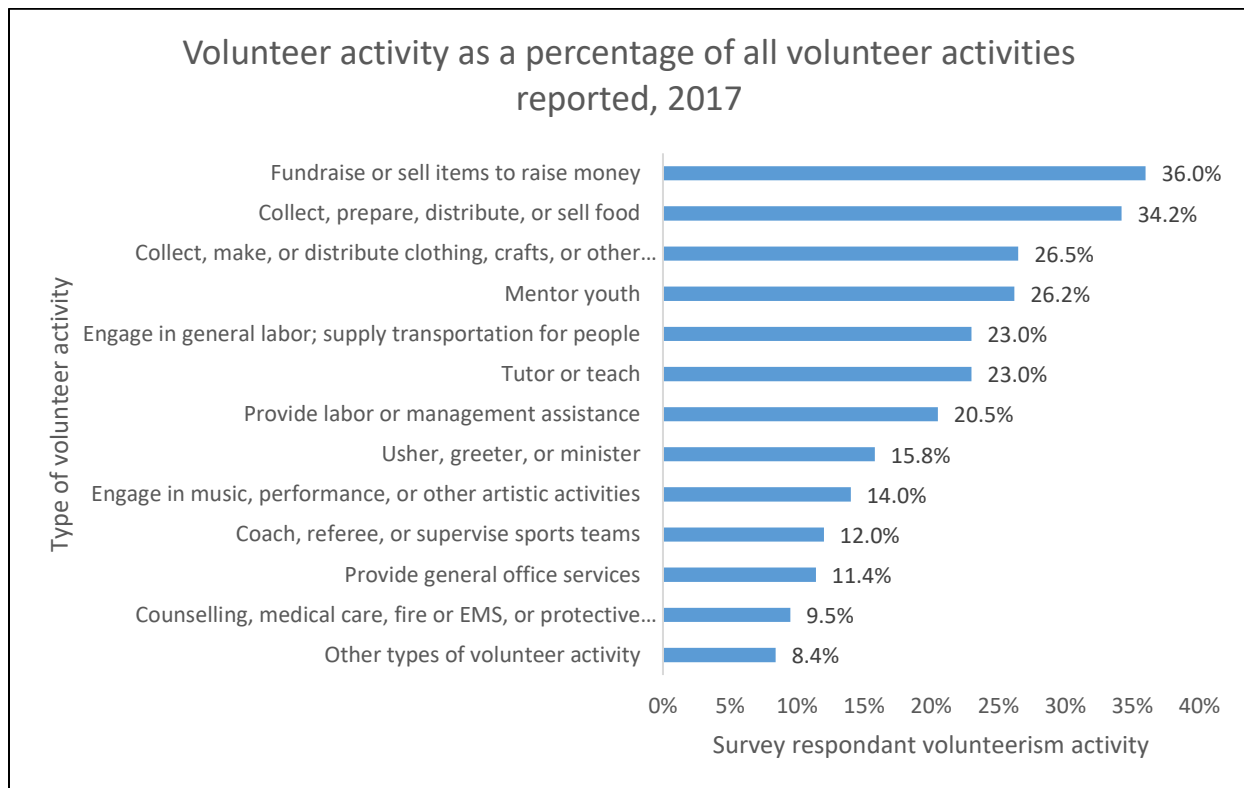
duty service members are passionate about participating in community engagement even as they struggle to learn appropriate communication skills, strategies, and practices. The United States has a highly developed nonprofit sector, beside the private (or business) sector, and the public (or government) sector. This pluralization of institutions sustains a civil society and a strong democratic state (Hopkins, 2017). The nonprofit sector is unique among the three as it is fundamental to sustaining a democratic and civil society (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004) and a balancing response to the failures of government and private markets (Steinberg and Weisbrod, 2018). “Nonprofits are a form on institutional hybrid, combining attributes of profit-maximizing firms and those of government” (p. 9640). They contribute to the national GDP, and their volunteers contribute about 5% of the hours worked nationally. Run by private citizens, nonprofit organizations build social identities, develop citizenship skills, encourage public debate, and serve the public good (Lewis, 2005).

Volunteer Activities

The nonprofit sector has a broad range of organizations including “charitable, educational, scientific, and religious organizations; associations and other membership organizations; advocacy groups; and similar private agencies” (Hopkins, 2017, p. 3). They include healthcare, nursing homes, childcare, blood donations, fraternal organizations and may subcontract for public sector organizations to work on specialized complex and hard-to-evaluate programs (O’Regan & Oster, 2000; Steinberg and Weisbrod, 2018). Table 2.6 below shows the type of volunteering activity of survey respondents over the course of one year (2016-2017) indicated in the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Census Bureau in 2017 (Turner et al., 2020). The BLS “recognizes volunteering as a type of work, but it does not include volunteers as part of the labor force” (p. 7). Data on

volunteering were collected as a supplement to the 2015 CPS survey sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). The CPS survey design sample was administered to households representing the civilian noninstitutional population of the United States like homes, apartments, and condominiums. Some non-institutional group quarters such as homeless shelters and convents and monasteries were included in the CPS survey. Data related to volunteerism in the armed forces, categorized by the BLS as an institutional population, was intentionally excluded (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). Findings from this study can begin to fill that gap.

Table 2.6. 2017 CPS Survey of Volunteers by Type of Activity



Note. From *Making volunteer work visible: Supplementary measures of work in labor force statistics* (p. 7), by J. A. Turner, B. W. Klein, and C. Sorrentino, 2020, *Monthly Labor Review* (<https://doi.org/10.21916/mlr.2020.15>). In the public domain.

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024) lists 114 industry categories of 300 thousand tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations with over 12 million paid employees. Table 2.7 shows the volunteer workforce was more than 11 million people on an average day in 2022 and Table 2.8 shows women tended to volunteer more often than men and volunteerism increased with age overall (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024).

Table 2.7. 2022 Volunteer Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statics

Number of persons and average hours per day for participants in volunteer activities, 2022		
Activity	Number of persons on an average day	Average hours
Administrative and support activities	4,712,000	1.56
Social service and care activities	3,187,000	2.23
Attending meetings, conferences, and training	2,038,000	2.15
Participating in performance and cultural activities	721,000	2.40
Indoor and outdoor maintenance, building, and cleanup activities	470,000	2.07

Note. From *More than 11 million people volunteered on an average day in 2022*, by U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 (<https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2024/more-than-11-million-people-volunteered-on-an-average-day-in-2022.htm>). In the public domain.

Table 2.8. 2022 Volunteers by Gender and Age

Percentage of the population who volunteered on an average day, by age and sex, 2022		
Age	Men	Women
15 to 24 years	1.9	3.5
25 to 34 years	3.1	2.5
35 to 44 years	0.9	5.4
45 to 54 years	3.7	5.0
55 to 64 years	2.8	5.5
65 years and over	6.4	7.8

From *More than 11 million people volunteered on an average day in 2022*, by U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 (<https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2024/more-than-11-million-people-volunteered-on-an-average-day-in-2022.htm>). In the public domain.

Typically, nonprofit organizations are privately run, self-governed by volunteers, and accountable to key stakeholders and the public/community they support (Lewis, 2005). These organizations include veteran service organizations and military support organizations.

Military Support Organizations

Military support organizations (MSOs) are nonprofit organizations that support current service members, rather than veterans. Though these organizations may be run by veterans, their mission is the active-duty community. The Department of Defense lists four military relief organizations that provide financial assistance to service members with loans, grants, or a combination of both (Department of Defense, n.d.). The four organization types are presented below along with examples of community organizations that are operated under military authority and regulations (Table 2.9). MSOs that are true, independent nonprofit organizations are usually located on or near military installations. Several of the interviewees for this study participated in the military operated and true nonprofit organizations.

Table 2.9. Military Support Organizations

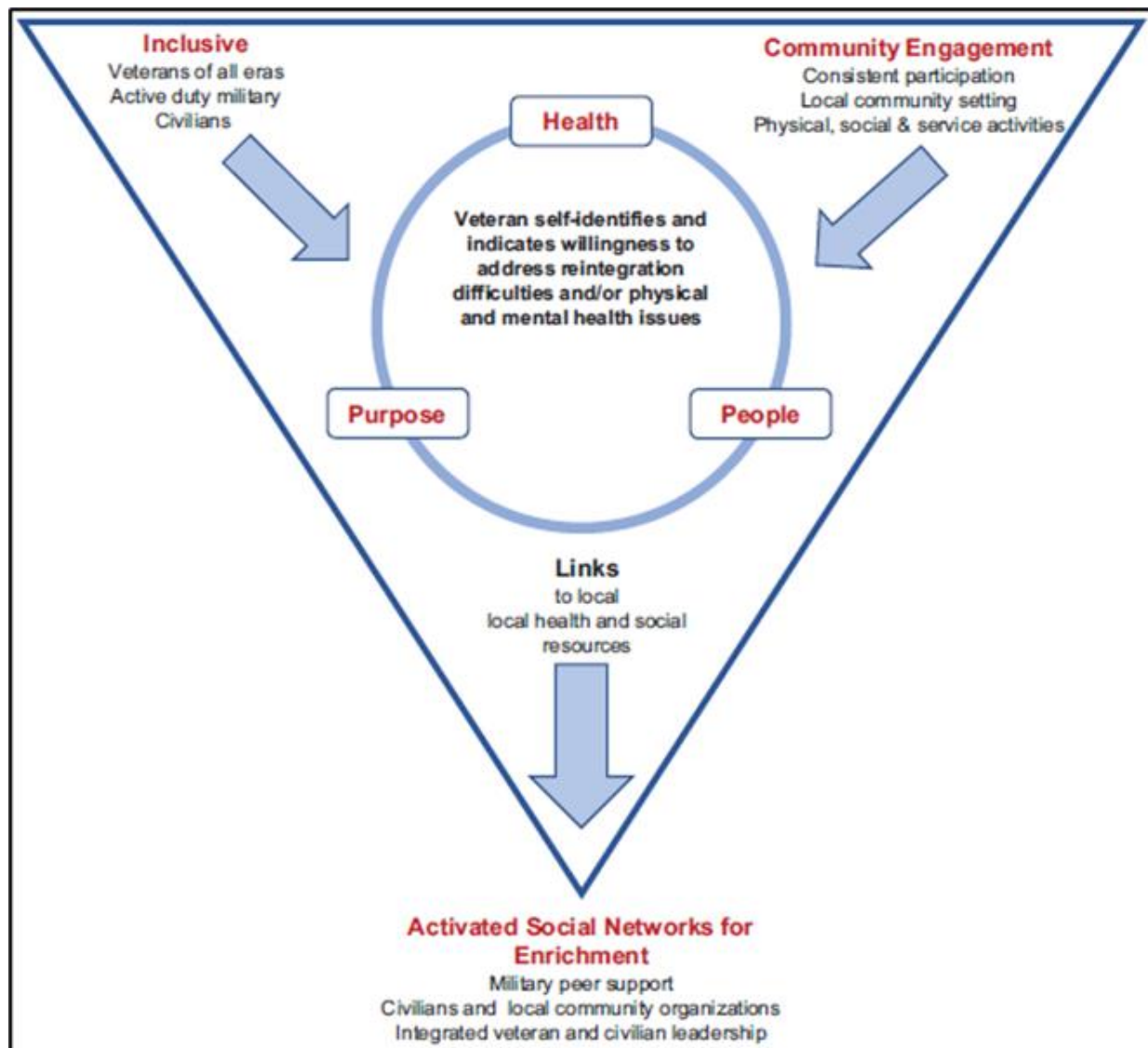
Military Relief Organizations	
Army Emergency Relief	Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society
Air Force Aid Society	Coast Guard Mutual Assistance
Military operated and regulated community organizations	
Sergeant Audie Murphy Club	Family Readiness Groups
Military OneSource	Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers
True nonprofit organizations that directly support active-duty communities	
United Service Organizations (USO)	American Red Cross
Military Police Regimental Association	Association of the United States Army

Veteran service organizations (VSOs) serve to benefit veterans and families. While VSO support for current service members is available, they are not the typical clientele. VSOs may be congressionally chartered, such as the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) or

privately run like Student Veterans of America (SVA) and Team Red, White, and Blue. VSOs are usually membership-based in local community posts or chapters (Safdar & Brys, 2017). Military support organizations (MSOs) support current service members and their families (DeSimone, 2020). Both VSOs and MSOs help with the transition from military service to the civilian world by reconnecting military service members with civil society as engaged citizens, finding employment, completing education, providing financial assistance, and supporting wellness. VSOs help veterans navigate the Veterans Administration in filing disability claims, negotiating administrative red tape, and lobbying congress for greater investment in veteran support. MSOs provide localized support directly to military units and communities through family support groups, children's activities, scholarships, military unit events, and military community events.

Team Red, White, and Blue developed the Enrichment Equation and a theoretical framework defining the concept of enrichment as the primary health outcome of volunteering with their organization. Enrichment creates “quality relationships and experiences that contribute to life satisfaction and overall wellbeing” (Angel, et al., 2018, p. 556). The enrichment equation theoretical framework is based on social resiliency theory (Cacioppo et al., 2011) and the veteran wellness model developed by Berglass and Harrell (2012). The Enrichment Funnel (Figure 2.4) shows how overlapping and mutually reinforcing components of health, people, and purpose operates within an organizational environment of inclusion, community engagement for volunteers in their organization (Angel et al., 2018, p.558).

Figure 2.4. The Enrichment Funnel



Note. From "Team Red, White & Blue: a community-based model for harnessing positive social networks to enhance enrichment outcomes in military veterans reintegrating to civilian life," by C. M. Angel & B. P. Smith, J. M. Pinter, B. B. Young, N. J. Armstrong, J. P. Quinn, and M. S. Erwin, 2018, *Translational Behavioral Medicine*, 8(4) p. 558 (<https://doi.org/10.1093/tbm/iby050>) Copyright © 2018 by Oxford University Press. Reprinted with permission.

Active-duty Air Force members were the subject of a 2017 study on the effects of military installations on community volunteerism (Dolch et al., 2017). Sited at Barksdale Air Force Base, military personnel differed from their civilian counterparts regarding motivations for volunteering and preferences for in-person work vs donating money. At the time of the study, Air Force promotions were tied to volunteerism in a practice known as the Air Force “whole person concept” (p. 3). Due to push back and claims of unfairness from the enlisted ranks, the Air Force ended this practice in 2015, and it is no longer included in individual evaluations. The active-duty Air Force survey participants were embedded in a culture of compulsory and institutionalized volunteerism. This contrasts with the participants of this study, whose are voluntary volunteers volunteering for individual reasons and motivations.

The Civilian World

The civilian world appeared in the literature review several times. The civilian world stands in opposition to the structured world of the military (Ryan et al., 2011), or a fortress or warrior society (Anderson & Goodman, 2014). References were made in relation to transitioning from military service to the civilian world (Ryan et al, 2011; Hezel, 2024; Whitworth et al., 2020), shifting away from conformity, navigating unfamiliar territory, and psychological adjustment using civilian over VA resources (Anderson & Goodman, 2014), nontransferable military skills (Maclean, 2017), education and credentials needed for jobs that were performed in the military (Diamond, 2012), habitus comparing one military social field vs multiple civilian fields (Cooper et al., 2016), being perceived as different (Cooper et al., 2016), TAP facilitation for a smooth transition (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023), transforming military service, critical military skills, and experiences to post-deployment community service and integrated civic engagement to help with readjustment and to bolster veterans’ sense of self-worth after the moral

ambiguity of warfare (Usbeck, 2018), barking orders at people does not fly in the civilian world (Haynie & Shepherd, 2011), strategies for transition that include finding a new purpose, achieving career satisfaction, and establishing a new identity (Raabe et al., 2024), not fitting into the scheme of things in federal civil service regarding jobs, position, and place in the organization (Reburiano, 2019), academic advising support to military students (Wilson & Smith, 2012).

Military Service

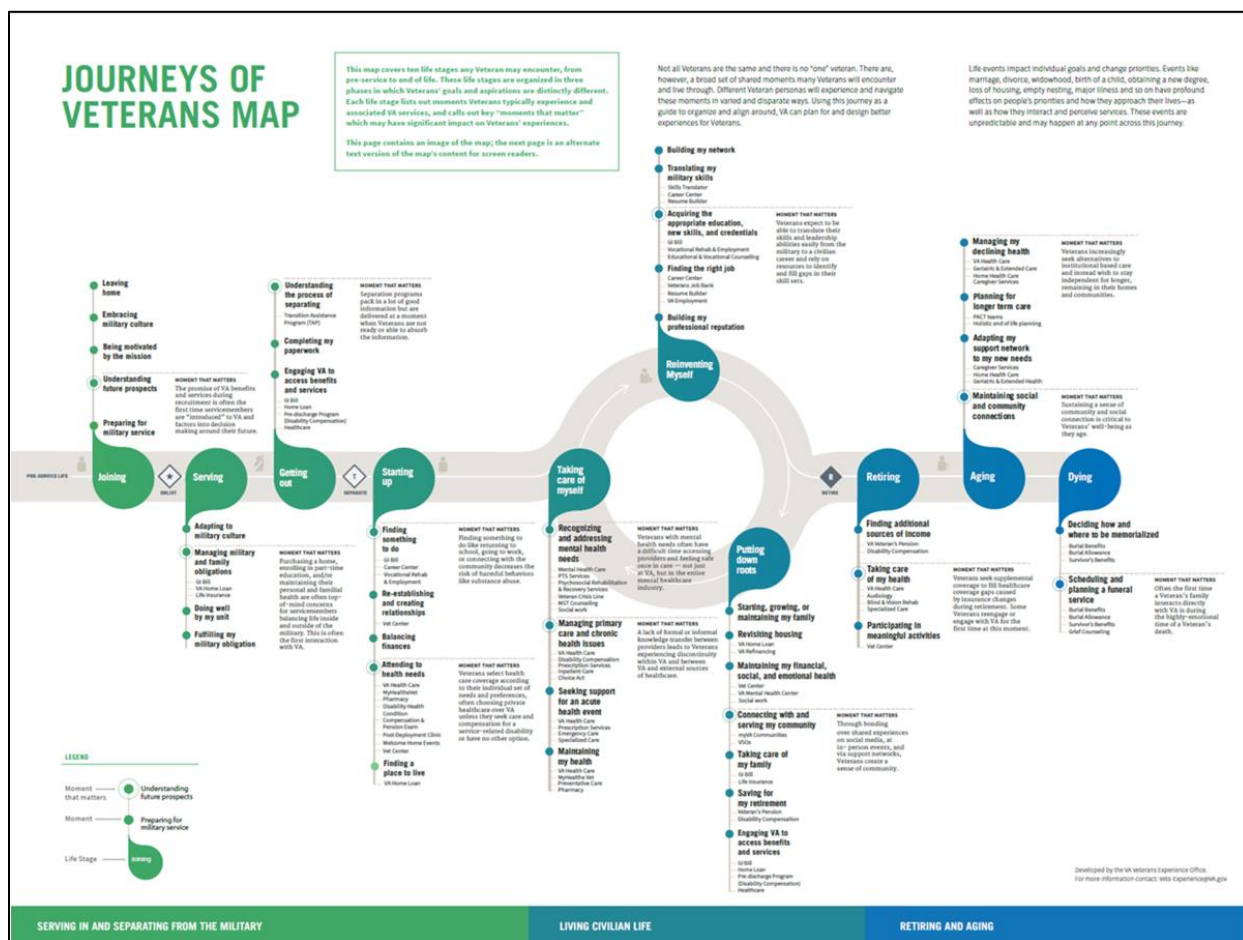
In the United States Armed Forces voluntary military service is established through a contract between the armed forces and an individual. Military service has a long history dating back to ancient Greece where “the willingness to voluntarily subordinate one’s private interests to those of the city was the decisive mark of the citizen-soldier” (Ehrenberg, 2017, p. 13). Currently, military service in the U.S. military is voluntary. Individuals can serve in a full-time active-duty status or in a part-time commitment that can be at the federal level, on reserve, or for any State National Guard. Reserve and National Guard forces may be ordered to temporarily active-duty status in times of need by the Governor or U.S. President. Reserve forces can be mobilized to active-duty service by the U.S. President. National Guard forces can be placed temporarily on active-duty status by the U.S. President for national security or combat operations. Each state governor can call up National Guard units onto active service in times of peril within state borders or to assist other states.

Service members come from all levels of society before enlisting. They come from diverse backgrounds and perspectives that originate within the United States or from foreign nations. Their pre-service upbringing, experiences, culture, religions backgrounds, and traditions shape moral beliefs, values, and character. The decision to enlist is a complex process based on

the perception of military institutional high ideas, occupational training, and individual circumstance. Institutional motivations are intrinsic, seeing the military as a valued organization. Intrinsic motivations included joining an institution with shared values, a call to duty and patriotism, and selfless sacrifice for a cause larger than oneself (Woodruff, 2017). In contrast, extrinsic self-oriented goals for enlistment are focused on calculated benefits. Extrinsic occupational incentives include job security and pay, military and veteran education and health benefits, travel and adventure, and self-enhancement (Helmus, 2018).

Military inculturation reinforces, expands, and refines these qualities of character while developing new technical and leadership skills. Service members transitioning into the military experience loneliness and stressful acculturation into the military institution during basic training and reporting to their first duty station (Kintzle et al., 2023). Volunteering and the transition program cycle service members back into civilian life. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Journey of Veterans Map (2022) identifies ten life stages in a veteran's experience, from birth to end of life (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5. Journeys of Veterans Map



Note. From *Journeys of veterans map*, by U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2022

(https://news.va.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/11/Veteran-Journey-Map-2016-S508C_11.3.22.pdf). In the public domain.

The stages are grouped into three-phases of the life cycles of people who choose to serve in the armed forces: 1) Serving in and Separating from the Military; 2) Living Civilian Life; and 3) Retiring and Aging. The first phase, Serving and Separating from the Military, consists of four stages of military service: Joining, Serving, Getting Out, and Starting Up (Figure 2.6).

Note. From *Journeys of veterans map*, by U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2022 (https://news.va.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/11/Veteran-Journey-Map-2016-S508C_11.3.22.pdf). In the public domain.

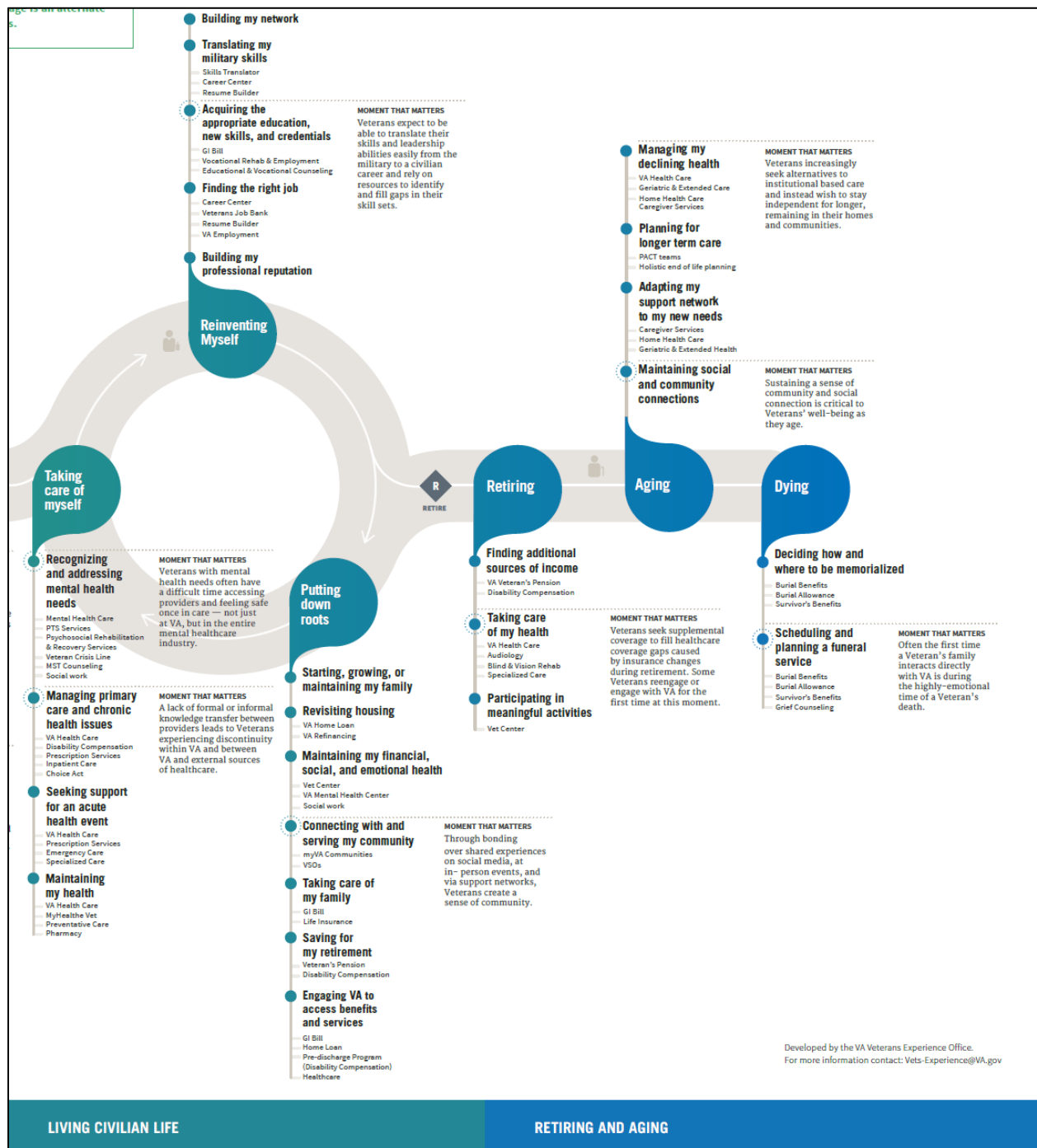


In the Joining Stage an individual decides to leave home and enlist in the military. They embrace the military culture and prepare for boot camp. The second stage of military service is Serving. In the Serving Stage the service member adapts to military culture, builds experience, becomes qualified for veteran benefits, and fulfills their obligation. is Getting Out, when a service member begins the transformation into a veteran. In the Getting Out Stage, a service member participates in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), engages in veteran benefits through the Veterans Administration (VA), and finalizes paperwork to close out their military service contract and obligation. The final stage of military service, and last step within the first phase of the journey of veteran map, where the next life phase begins, is the Starting Up Stage, where the veteran prepares for a new career, enters college, and integrates into the civilian community. In the Starting Up Stage the new veteran must establish, or re-establish, relationships, engage in health care, and find something to do. At this last stage in the first phase of the veteran journey, the veteran begins entering the Living Civilian Life phase.

The Living Civilian Life phase (Figure 2.7) consists of three stages of life: taking care of myself, reinventing myself, and putting down roots. This phase is symbolized as a circle, or cycle, on the Journey of Veterans Map. In the Taking Care of Myself Stage a veteran is expected to recognize and address mental health needs, manage their own healthcare and seek support for disabilities and chronic health issues, and to access healthcare to maintain their health support. This stage is critical as the veteran shifts from a holistic organizationally operated healthcare system to an individually managed health care responsibility. The next stage, Reinventing Myself, is where the veteran builds a network, translates military skills to civilian careers, gains new skills, credentials, and education, and begins anew to build a professional reputation. I think

it is important here to highlight that a veteran begins skill building, networking, and learning how to manage healthcare only after final separation from active-duty service.

Figure 2.7. Journey of Veterans Phase 2 and 3



Note. From *Journeys of veterans map*, by U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2022

(https://news.va.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/11/Veteran-Journey-Map-2016-S508C_11.3.22.pdf). In the public domain.

The VA online career development tools, and nonprofit organizations can provide support, but it is incumbent on the individual veteran to initiate communication, enact change, and be proficient and knowledgeable. The third stage of phase two is Putting Down Roots. In this stage, a veteran supports and builds a family, buys a home, manages financial, social, and emotional health, starts to volunteer in the community, saves for and plans for retirement, and maintains healthcare management practices. The journey of veteran's map shows Living Civilian Life is susceptible to change repeatedly, represented by a circle, where a veteran could go through the three stages repeatedly. It is not until they retire that they take to off-ramp from the constant change of Civilian Life to phase three: Retiring and Aging.

The third and final phase of the journey of veteran's map is Retiring and Aging (Figure 2.7). This final phase has three stages: retiring, aging, and dying. In the Retirement Stage, a veteran needs to find additional income. Military retirement pension and disability payments through the VA are listed as income on the map. Continued healthcare management is listed as retiring veterans' healthcare coverage may encounter gaps in service, and they connect or reconnect with the VA healthcare system. Without a career or work, a veteran at this point is expected to find meaningful activities through volunteerism. Their declining health in the Aging Stage leads to continued healthcare management, including geriatric and home care. A veteran at this stage begins end of life planning. The final stage in the journey of veteran's map is the Dying Stage. Here a veteran may finalize end of life planning by engaging in burial and survivor benefits and planning a funeral service. Here the journey of veteran map ends with the family interacting directly with the VA.

The focus of this study occurs throughout phase one, and the transition between phase one, stage four, Starting Up, and the start of phase two, the Taking Care of Myself stage. Service

members who volunteer during their active-duty service do so through phase 1, primarily during the Serving stage. Volunteerism is not included on the Journey of Veterans Map in phase one until a veteran begins the Putting Down Roots stage and begins community service.

Volunteerism from that point continues through phase three as a meaningful activity up until death. Volunteerism is a boon to successful transitioning throughout the literature, a point reinforced by the veterans I interviewed for this study. The active-duty service members, though they could not address the transition experience, found volunteerism supported social and emotional health, built community and networks, and could see their volunteer activities as reengaging with a civilian identity.

Values of Military and Community Service

Individual beliefs and values are described as stable and desirable goal that guide a person's actions (Grönlund, 2011). They are trans-situational and may "vary in importance and serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or group" (Schwartz, 2007). Values are described as resting on a continuum with self-enhancement values (achievement, hedonism, and power) on one end and self-transcendence values (benevolence and universalism) at the other (Banks et al., 2021). In volunteerism research, the values held by volunteers inform how they build an engaged-citizen identity expected to embrace prosocial values and cause action (von Essen, 2020, p. 245).

Volunteers who identify with nonprofit organizational goals, mission and purpose, and espoused values gain a sense of belonging and social relevance. Volunteer work can connect service members with civilians in their own communities, introduce different ways of thinking about and solving problems, and help to "reintegrate them into civilian

communities” (Connolly, 2006, p. 439). Volunteering is an opportunity for service members and veterans to “help themselves by helping others” (Usbeck, 2018, p. 439).

The participants in this study expressed an altruistic mindset, a sense of obligation to community service, and a sense of duty compelling them to volunteer. Contextually, military culture and nonprofit culture are opposing social constructs, but the values inherent to them are similar. The values present in contrasting lifestyles (military vs civilian) show that individuals can have multiple social identities based on prevailing social interactions (von Essen, 2020). The Department of Defense website does not include a list of core values for the organization. However, DoD did outline the core values for the Department and of the service branches in a white paper defining diversity (Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2009). In the white paper the DoD provided a “set of core values” but allowed each service branch to “table its own identity in the form of Service-specific core values” (p.2). The DoD and Service-specific core values (Table 2.10) detail specific traits embedded into military service and culture of the Army (Army Publishing Directorate, 2019), the Navy (Secretary of the Navy, n.d.), the Marine Corps (Department of the Navy, 2024), the Air Force (Department of the Air Force, 2023a), and Space Force (Department of the Air Force, 2023b). Values are interpreted in a way that is unique to the culture of each service branch, but intentions and applications are commonly shared amongst the group.

Table 2.10. DoD and Service Branch Core Values

DoD Core Values: Duty, Integrity, Ethics, Honor, Courage, Loyalty				
Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	Space Force
Loyalty	Honor	Honor	Integrity	Character
<i>-Devotion</i>	<i>-Accountability</i>	<i>-Ethical & Moral behavior</i>	<i>-Courage</i>	<i>-Accountable</i>
Duty	<i>-Integrity</i>	<i>-Honesty</i>	<i>-Conviction</i>	<i>-Honor</i>
<i>-Teamwork</i>	<i>-Responsibility</i>	<i>-Integrity</i>	<i>-Honesty</i>	Connection
Respect	<i>-Ethical Conduct</i>	<i>-Respect</i>	<i>-Accountability</i>	<i>-Empathy</i>
Selfless Service	<i>-Honesty</i>	<i>-Responsible & Accountable</i>	Selfless Service	<i>-Respect</i>
<i>-Commitment</i>	Courage	Courage	<i>-Discipline</i>	Commitment
Honor	<i>-Selfless Service</i>	<i>-Strength</i>	<i>-Respect</i>	<i>-Diversity</i>
<i>-Army Values</i>	<i>-Conduct & Decency</i>	<i>--Mental, Moral</i>	Excellence	<i>-Achievement</i>
Integrity	<i>-Loyalty</i>	<i>--Physical</i>	<i>-Accomplishment</i>	<i>-Strengths</i>
<i>-Honesty</i>	Commitment	<i>-Personal Conduct</i>	<i>-Performance</i>	Courage
<i>-Moral Principles</i>	<i>-Respect</i>	Commitment		<i>-Accept Risk</i>
Personal Courage	<i>-Moral Character</i>	<i>-Discipline</i>		<i>-Fearless</i>
<i>-Physical</i>	<i>-Excellence</i>	<i>-Determination</i>		
<i>-Moral</i>	<i>-Competence</i>	<i>-Dedication</i>		

Military core values integrate and reinforce individual and institutional qualities. Each branch of the US Armed Forces developed core values independently, resulting in a mixed presentation when compared side-by-side. However, military core values are actionable and aspirational, ideological and inspirational, traditional and developmental. The military branches identify, define, publish, and integrate their values across policy and practice. This study considers the volunteer experiences of service members that align with volunteerism and nonprofit organizations.

Values associated with volunteerism and nonprofit organizations are often shared and integrated into the behaviors of individuals and organizations within society. DoD and the service branch values are integrated into the training and moral/ethical standards of individual service members and the mission, leadership, and actions of military units. Unlike military culture, where individual values are identified, defined, and enculturated, nonprofit volunteers or workers' values are presumed and developed over time and experience rather than formally taught. Certification is available for volunteer managers through several sources. The Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration provides a list of core values and principles within the professional ethics of volunteer management (Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration, 2016). Values are a key component to successful management and leadership styles and help strengthen organizational values (Connelly, 2006; Hernandez Ortiz et al., 2021). Volunteers bring passion, authenticity, mission, commitment, and specialized skills in the legal, financial, management, and technology fields (Hernandez Ortiz et al., 2021).

Six articles in the literature list core values held by volunteers (Table 2.11). Values linked to motivations for volunteering include altruism, humanitarianism, and religious support (Grönlund, 2011; Hustinx et al., 2010b). The values associated with volunteerism include benevolence and universalism (Banks et al., 2021; Grönlund, 2011; Schwartz, 2007; Stukas et al., 2016; Voegtlin, 2019), selfless service (Hustinx et al., 2010a; Jäger et al., 2009; Usbeck, 2018), doing good (Blackstone, 2009; Edenfield & Andersson, 2017; Jeavons, 2016; Mateiu-Vescan et al., 2020; von Essen, 2020), being good (Blackstone, 2009; Grönlund, 2011; von Essen, 2020; Yonkman & Bridgeland, 2009), and providing valuable experiences (Albright et al., 2020; Chambré, 2020; von Essen, 2020). Altruism and service were the overriding personal values in both military and nonprofit contexts.

Table 2.11. Volunteer Core Values

Volunteer core values			
Schwartz (2007)		Hustinx et al. (2010a)	
Ten basic human values	Power (authority, wealth)	Core human values	Altruism
	Achievement (success, ambition)		Compassion
	Hedonism (pleasure, enjoying life)		Concern for others
	Stimulation (exciting life, varied life)		Generosity
	Self-direction (creativity, independence)		Social responsibility
	Universalism (social justice, equality)		Community spirit
	Benevolence (helpfulness, joy)	Usbeck (2018)	
	Tradition (devoutness, humility)	Invoking the civil-military social contract	Altruism
	Conformity (obedience, honoring parents)		Community service
	Security (national security, social order)		Helping others
Grönlund (2011) Identity types			Reciprocity
Moral values	Altruistic		Collective identity
	Humanitarian		Patriotic attitude
Influencer	Universalism	von Essen (2020)	
	Self-direction	Volunteer experience to construct and disclose identity	Altruism
Helper	Benevolence		Helping others
Community	Tradition		Doing good
	Conformity		Meaningful activity
	Benevolence		Friendship
Religious	Benevolence	Mateiu-Vescan et al. (2021)	
	Tradition	Volunteer motivation is a complex system	Altruism
	Conformity		Concern for others
Success	Power		Growth
	Achievement		Service
	Security		Meaningful activity

Jeavons (2016) listed the values for nonprofit organizations and the volunteer managers in nonprofit organizations (Table 2.12). Nonprofit managers and organizations must embody and demonstrate ethical and moral values to “fulfill the implicit social contract” for their organizations and the nonprofit sector (p. 213).

Table 2.12. Volunteer Manager and Nonprofit Organization Values

Jeavons (2016) Volunteer manager ethics		Jeavons (2016) Organization operational and ethical values	
Integrity	Trustworthiness	Integrity	Honesty
	Honesty		Conformity
	Moral principles		Trustworthy
Openness	Transparency	Openness	Transparent
	Honest		Trustworthy
	Democratic		Democratic
Accountability	Credibility	Accountability	Social contract
	Set the example		Perform according to promise (conformity)
	Accept constructive criticism		Subject to evaluation (openness)
	Accountable to others		Answerable for failures
			Effective
Service	Servant leadership	Service	Serve the public good
	Service-oriented		Service-oriented
	Selfless service		
Charity	Respectful leadership	Charity	Caring for others
	Caring demeanor		Reciprocity
	Reflect the highest ideals of society		Personal service
			Caring work environments

Likewise, military organizations must have the trust of the citizenry, and its values are embodied and expressed in the individual values and ethics of service members (Dempsey, 2012). For units, independent expressions of unit organizational values live within unit mottos. Unit mottos express the spirit of the people, the traditions, and the ideals of the organization. Examples of military unit mottos include “De Oppresso Liber” or “to free the oppressed” for the US Army Special forces, and “Semper Fidelis” or “Always faithful” for the US Marine Corps.

Transition from Military to Civilian Life

The literature described “in transition” as a process or a personal characteristic of a service member or veteran. The DoD InTransition program helps transitioning service members with mental health coaching and community resources (“InTransition,” 2025). Current service

members “in transition” were related to the organizational and administrative of separating from and connecting to support resources (Army Publishing Directorate, 2017; Army Publishing Directorate, 2024b; Kamarek, 2017). Warriors in Transition is a transition program referenced in the Army Community Service regulation (Army Publishing Directorate, 2017), now integrated into the Army Recovery Care Program (Army Publishing Directorate, 2020), a specific transition program for wounded, ill, or injured soldiers who will recover and return to duty or transition to veteran status (p. 98).

Service members are subjected to anticipatory socialization and resocialization (Boundless, 2023). Anticipatory socializations is an individual plan to join a group that involved changing attitudes and behaviors in preparation for a shift in one’s role” and purposeful interactions with the anticipated group (p. 4.7C.1). Individuals incorporate new values, norms, and new roles with frequent anticipatory socializations (Anderson et al., 2012; Goodman et al., 2006). Resocialization is imposed upon an individual by a group within a total institution environment through systematically rebuilding of a different personality or self. Resocialization includes the process of resocializing new recruits into the military and the “return to society after discharge” (p. 4.7C.1). A veteran “in transition” had separated from the military and was learning and adapting new roles and identities while reintegrating into society (Castro et al., 2016; Drebing et al., 2018; Duel et al., 2019; Pedlar et al., 2019), the workforce (Becker et al., 2022; Cooper et al., 2016; Greer, 2017), higher education (Cole, 2013; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Jones, 2013; Lim et al., 2018), and post-military transition experiences (Neill-Harris et al., 2016). Gaither (2014) utilized veterans in transition and military in transition interchangeably. Schlossberg's adult transition model described adults in transition through three steps: approaching transition, the 4S system of assessing coping resources, and strengthening those

coping resources (Anderson et al., 2012). Ford (2017) defined a successful transition for veterans when they have “returned to the private sector, applied for vacant jobs positions, and were subsequently hired” (p. 38). Matthieu et al. (2018) identified multiple definitions for a successful transition from the military so argue there is no unifying definition of a successful transition (p. 108).

With some minor variations according to the branch of service, all service members enter a transition window 12 months before separation from service. Retirees have more time and can begin the process 24 months prior to separation from the military. Unanticipated separations, like medical separations, medical retirements, and administrative separations, begin transition as soon as possible with a shortened timeline (Department of Defense, 2019b). The literature describes two parts of the military transition: 1) the military transition out of the military, and 2) the veteran transition or re-entry into civilian life (Kleykamp et al., 2021).

An expansive range of theories for “transition out” and “reintegration in” include the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide (Van Orden et al., 2010), Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicidal Behavior (Joiner & Silva, 2012; Castro & Kintzle, 2014), the Military Transition Theory (Castro & Kintzle, 2014; Castro et al., 2016; Kintzle & Castro, 2018; Kirchner & Akdere, 2019; Kleykamp et al., 2021; Morgan et al., 2024; Perkins et al., 2023), Adult Transition Theory (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Cole, 2013; Goodman et al., 2006; Greer, 2017; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Kleykamp et al., 2021), Success in Transition Model (Kleykamp et al., 2021; Whitworth et al., 2020), Role-Exit Theory (Gambardella, 2008; Weiss et al., 2019), Compensatory Control Theory (Shepherd et al., 2021), and the Ecological Model of Military and Service Member Reintegration (Elnitsky et al., 2017a; Whitworth et al., 2020).

Schlossberg's model of adult transition was identified as the approach to all military transition theories and models because it "describes a general model of regular adult experience" (Kleykamp et al., 2021, p.373). Phillips & Lincoln (2017) apply a critical lens to the adult transition theory and Livingston and Bauman (2013) state that the adult transition theory and its' 4S model for coping with transition don't account for unique experiences of veteran students. Unanticipated separations, like medical separations, medical retirements, and administrative separations, begin transition as soon as possible with a shortened timeline (Department of Defense, 2019b). Individual characteristics can improve the transition experience.

Morin (2011), through data from a Pew Research Center survey of Post 9/11 era veterans, analyzed why some veterans have a harder time than others with their military transition. Variables that complicate a successful transition to civilian life included having experiences a traumatic event, having a serious injury, being married, being a Post 9-11 (vs pre-9/11) veteran, having served in combat, and if they knew someone who was injured or had been killed. Variables that improve transition include having a college degree, understanding the missions they conducted while in service, and religiosity after leaving the service. Officers were "more likely than enlisted personnel to experience few if any difficulties readjusting to home life" (p. 7). For senior military leaders, being capable of self-directed and rapid assimilation in the workplace is an essential individual skill. For others there are companies and nonprofit organizations that have programs to assist transitioning veterans. When businesses have onboarding programs for veteran hires, they shoulder some of the burden transitioning veterans feel. When veterans must quickly adapt to new job environments the pressure to successfully transition is solely on the veteran (Ford, 2017).

When a service member decides it is time to leave the military or is told it is time to go, they begin a proscribed and detailed process to transition out from military service. Military organizations are described as total institutions (Cooper et al., 2016; Joseph et al., 2023; Naphan & Elliot, 2015) or greedy institutions (Cooper et al., 2017; Fossey et al., 2019; Nesbit & Reingold, 2011), similar to prisons, mental asylums, and convents. These institutions exert total control over individuals and operate at least partially outside of the rest of society. When they transition, the process is an admirative one of mandatory briefings and appointments facilitated by the Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program (Department of Defense, 2019b). After separation veterans continue to experience transition through cultural shifts, new employment, and environmental changes. Transition is a “role exit” where service members concurrently acquire a new role/position while leaving the old military role, values, and norms behind (Naphan & Elliot, 2015). Though a reality for all service members, participating in the transition process, leaving the military, is antithetical to military culture.

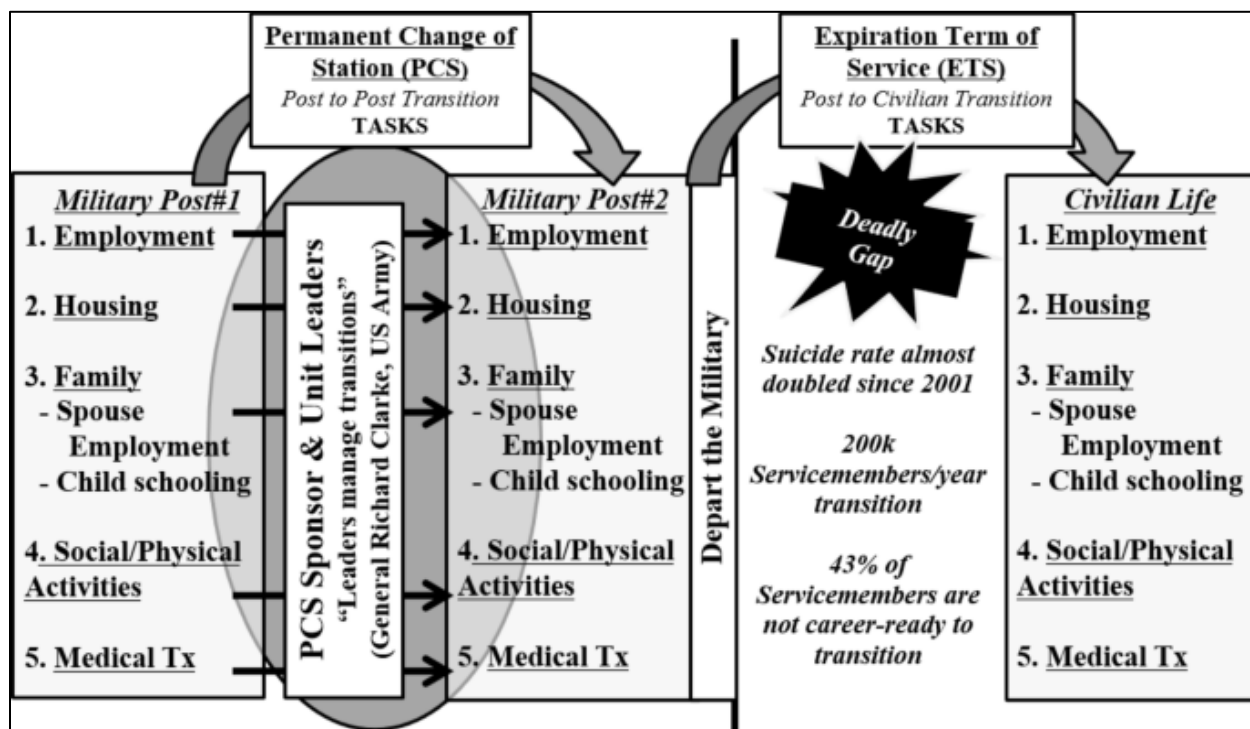
Transitioning service members often experience a lack of support from leaders and peers that can have a disaffecting effect on their own investment in transition planning (Raabe et al., 2024). Transition is a separation from military life and with associated “changing structures, culture, and life roles” (Anderson & Goodman, 2014, p. 40) that can be anticipated and planned for, unanticipated and reacted to, or they can be expected changes that turn out to be non-events (Schlossberg, 1981; Whitworth et al., 2020). When veterans leave the service for college, they find their military experiences have given them different backgrounds and needs than their civilian classmates (DiRamio et al., 2008). To help veteran students adapt to college life schools can set up acculturating experiences to reduce failed integration (Jones, 2017). TAP is expected to meet the needs of service members leaving the military through training, orientation, and

opportunity building, but some research shows it often falls short for many veterans (Kirchner & Akdere, 2019; Shue et al., 2021; Ward, 2020;) while other studies state it is successful but needs improvements (Faurer et al., 2014; Perkins et al., 2023).

Mental Health in Transition

A study on the national epidemic of veteran suicide tested the effectiveness of veteran sponsors based within their receiving communities to assist transitioning service members (Geraci et al., 2022). Geraci calls the fragile time between separating from the military and fully reintegrating into civilian society the deadly gap. This gap represents the loss of support and service and a statistical increase in the rates for veteran suicide. Within the deadly gap timeframe after they formally separated from the military and lost active-duty support systems, suicide rates increase as veterans continue through the transition experience in local communities (Figure 2.8). Geraci concluded that suicide intervention and prevention programs offered by the VA have limited reach “because only 26% of newly separated servicemembers enroll in VA healthcare” (p. 3). The veteran sponsor initiative connects transitioning service members and veterans to community-based volunteer peer-mentors who help them set goals, connect with resources, and adapt to unexpected challenges during the transition process. Service members and veterans who participate in veteran sponsor initiatives, like Onward Ops below, report lowered stress and increased interpersonal connections, which are key for reducing suicide and distress (Edwards et al., 2023).

Figure 2.8. Transition and the Deadly Gap



Note. From “Partnered implementation of the veteran sponsorship initiative: Protocol for a randomized hybrid type 2 effectiveness—implementation trial,” by J. C. Geraci, E. P. Finley, E. R. Edwards, S. Frankfurt, A. S. Kurz, N. Kamdar, M. E. Vanneman, L. M. Lopoo, H. Patnaik, J. Yoon, N. Armstrong, A. L. Greene, G. Cantor, J. Wroblewski, E. Young, M. Goldsmith, R. W. Seim, and M. Goodman, 2022, *Implementation Science* 17(43), p. 4 (<https://implementationscience.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13012-022-01212-9>). CC-BY-4.0.

Working with the Veteran Sponsorship Initiative Geraci created Onward Ops (formerly the ETS Sponsorship Program), a nonprofit organization that works to connect transitioning service members to trained and certified sponsors in their home communities. The sponsors connect with service members through the TAP within six months of separating with the goal to intervene and coordinate support during the deadly gap timeframe. Onward Ops is a DoD

Skillbridge partner and 501c4 nonprofit organization. Transitioning service members are provided with online resources and a volunteer sponsor (Onward Ops, 2024).

A reinforced transition experience can support a sense of belonging for transitioning servicemembers. If transitioning military service members and veterans can “re-establish a new identity that is not linked so strongly to their military experience” belongingness may be enhanced, making their transition much smoother (Castro & Kintzle, 2014, p. 5). A successful transition is marked by individual retention of “selected aspects of the soldier identity” while the military institution works to “respect and encourage the genuine and useful process of becoming something *other* than a soldier” (DeGroat, 2013, p. 32). Nonprofit organization Team Red, White, and Blue tailors its programming to the requirements of healthcare systems in local communities. That approach allows transitioning service members, veterans, and military families access to resources (Angel et al. 2018, p.562). While veterans find purpose and meaning in military life that is difficult to replicate as a civilian, meaningful employment, community volunteerism, entrepreneurship, and public service can renew veterans through continued purpose and meaning (Castro & Kintzle, 2014).

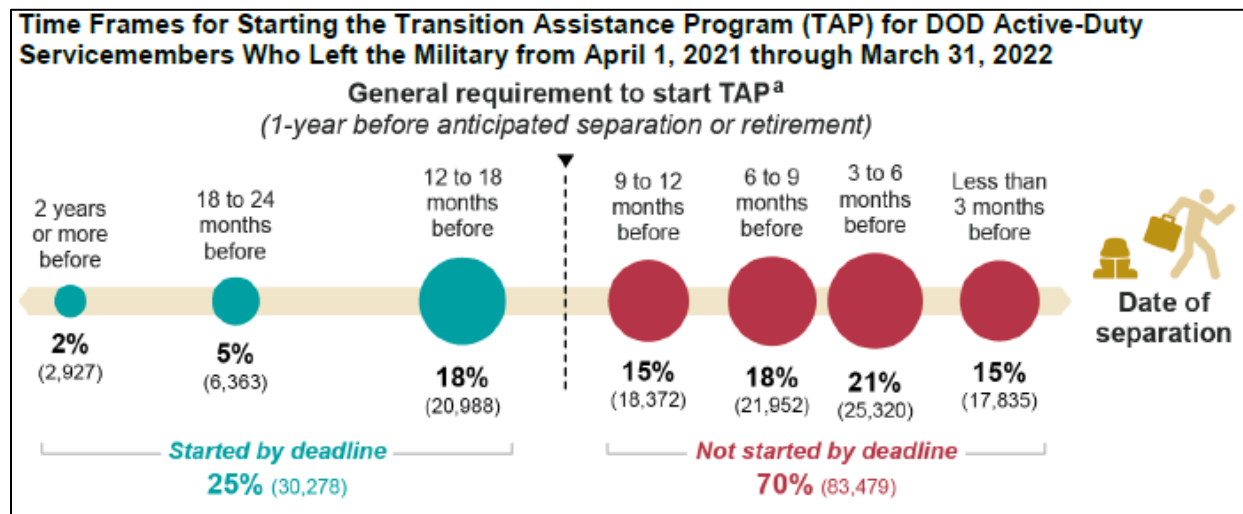
Transition Assistance Program

TAP is a Congressionally mandated program operated by the DoD. Interagency partnerships mandated for TAP are the DoD, Department of Labor (DOL), VA, Department of Education (ED), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Small Business Administration (SBA), and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), in conjunction with the Military Departments who operate TAP at military installations (Department of Defense, 2019b). Briefings and trainings are integrated into a condensed schedule to introduce service members to available options for post-military life. Unit commanders are responsible for ensuring individual

servicemember attendance and a TAP checklist for each service member is provided to ensure full engagement in the program. Assessments and research continue to improve coordination and ensure accountability (Castro and Kintzle, 2014). The TAP focuses on efficient and practical but short-term solutions for transitioning service members (Kintzle and Castro, 2018).

Each branch of the military operates a TAP at major installations and online for remote locations. Although TAP attendance is mandatory within one year of expected separation, a recent report to congress found that 70 percent of servicemembers did not start TAP on time (Locke, 2023). Additionally, a tailored 2-day course on employment, higher education, vocational training, or entrepreneurship was not fully attended. TAP policies place service members into three Tiers once they complete initial briefings and make an individualized transition plan. Tier 1 consists of service members deemed fully prepared for the transition. Tier 2 is for service members moderately prepared, and Tier 3 is for service members deemed not fully prepared. Tier 1 personnel may but are not required to attend the 2-day course. Tier 3 service members are required to attend by all branches of the military. For Tier 2, Navy and Air Force personnel are exempt, while attendance for Army and Marine Corps personnel is determined on an individual basis. Overall, “service branches waived attendance in a tailored 2-day class for 53 percent (64,106) of servicemembers who left military service from April 2021 through March 2022” (Locke, 2023, p. 5). Though attendance was mandatory, 22 percent (nearly 11,000) of Tier 3 transitioning service members still did not participate. Locke charted the timeframes for starting TAP over a 12-month period shown in Figure 2.9 below (p. 2).

Figure 2.9. Time Frames for Starting TAP for Active Duty



Note. From 2023 Servicemembers transitioning to civilian life: DOD could enhance the transition assistance program by better leveraging performance information, by U.S.

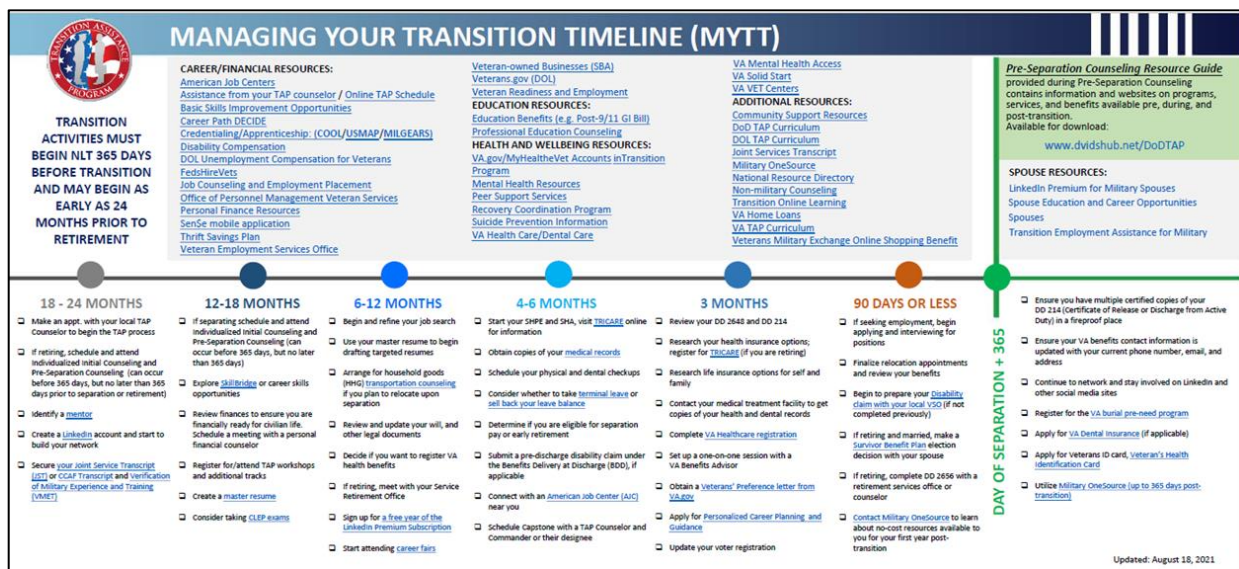
Government Accountability Office, 2023 (<https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-106793>). In the public domain.

Transitioning service members encounter competing priorities in preparation for the return to civilian life. They face adjustment to lifestyles and must make major life decisions (O’Conner et al., 2023). They face organizational and societal barriers from the military side such as limited access to transition resources and unhelpful support services. On the civilian side they may lack civilian skills and certifications, they may face personal barriers due to physical or emotional trauma, have difficulty communicating with employers and translating military skills to civilian workspaces, and experience self-esteem and identity challenges. Recommended TAP improvements included expanding it beyond 12 months (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Kintzle and Castro, 2018; Whitworth et al., 2020), adding performance goals (Inhofe et al., 2020), and reducing the number of waivers allowed for the 2-day course to better support preparation for employment, college, vocational certification, and entrepreneurship (Locke, 2023). The Success

in Transition (SIT) Model, based on Adult Transition Theory and Military Transition Theory, also proposed fundamental changes to TAP (Whitworth et al., 2020, p. 29).

The end-of-career transition timeline for military personnel is packed with mandatory and challenging tasks that may not allow the additional pressure to find a civilian job. The TAP military transition timeline below details the major steps and supporting services that must occur (Figure 2.10). By doctrine, the transition timeline begins at 18 months, or 24 months for retiring service members (Department of the Army, 2024).

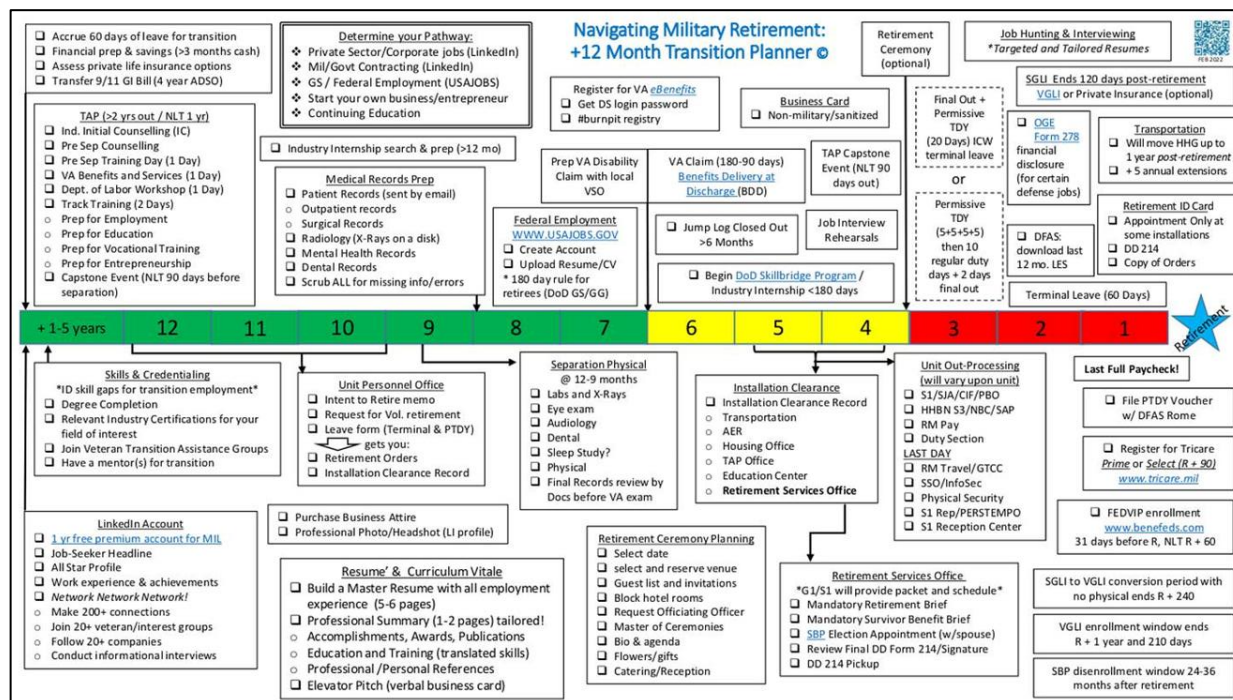
Figure 2.10. Managing Your Transition Timeline (MYTT)



Note. From *Managing your transition timeline (MYTT)*, by Transition Assistance Program, 2024 (https://www.tapevents.mil/Assets/ResourceContent/TAP/MYT_Timeline.pdf). In the public domain.

Kirk Windmueller (2022) was dissatisfied with the TAP military transition timeline with respect to retirees. He designed a transition plan and timeline for service members to address the increased complexity of military separation through retirement (Figure 2.11).

Figure 2.11. Navigating Military Retirement: +12 Month Transition Planner



Note. From “Why planning is imperative for your transition from military service,” by K.

Windmueller, 2022, *Military Times*. (<https://www.militarytimes.com/education-transition/2022/02/03/why-planning-is-imperative-for-your-transition-from-military-service/>).

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Through the lens of adult transition theory, adjusting to new career or sociocultural settings is easier if a person has actual or similar prior experience (Goodman et al., 2006; Schlossberg, 1981). Schlossberg’s adult transition model was selected for the theoretical framework because it specifically focuses on adult transition experiences. Components of the theory align with the literature on military transition programs, veteran transition experiences, social and career reintegration of veterans, and adaptive communicative and leadership practices of people in changing personal, social, and career environments. The three parts of the Adult Transition Theory are: 1)

identifying that a transition is happening and the cyclic process of moving-in, moving-through, and moving-out of the transition, 2) systemically taking stock of potential resources to help cope, and 3) and managing the transition and taking charge by strengthening resources and developing and using new strategies to adapt to a new reality.

Anderson and Goodman (2014) apply Schlossberg's Transition Model to veteran's transition from military to civilian life. They acknowledge the complexity and unique experiences of individuals moving from military culture back to a civilian one, albeit changed by military experience. The military-to-civilian transition "includes both internal and external factors that influence the ability to cope and adapt" (p. 41). Anderson and Goodman frame the application of Schlossberg's model for counselors with assessing and developing interventions and treatment plans to assist veteran clients to develop coping mechanisms categorized in Schlossberg's 4-S system to transition successfully. The transition process is either moving-in or moving-out, beginning with a triggering event causing disequilibrium, and ending when the changes are normalized and integrated into a new reality. The in-between time of moving-through a transition, between moving-in and moving-out, is where individuals develop and activate coping strategies that enable adaptation.

Barriers to Transition

Transitioning service members may encounter professional, personal, and social barriers that negatively impact a successful transition. Professional barriers include difficulty articulating military KSA's, leadership styles, and communication strategies to civilian workplace norms. Lagging cultural adjustments, imposter phenomenon, and mismatched and underemployment create dissatisfaction for veterans. Keeling et al. (2018) found many transitioning veterans did

not have a job lined up and had unrealistic expectations of finding work that met their perceived skill level and their desired income. Personal barriers can remain unaddressed or hidden during TAP since that program does not address cultural and personal wellness in depth. Particularly impacted are women, combat veterans, and unplanned separations due to medical or moral fitness. Societal barriers account for the gap between the total institution support provided by the DoD and government or civil institutions that are limited in scope and availability. Transitioning service members need to reintegrate into civilian society overall, and into smaller communities at work, in college, and with families and friends. Further discussion of barriers to transition follow.

Professional Barriers. Successful planning, resourcing of, and understanding the change in profession from military to other specializations require research, resources, and professional help. Gaither (2014) describes career change as a process both artful and technical. It involves translating military experience into civilian contexts, civilianizing military skill sets, setting personal and career goals, identifying objectives, and managing time. A common mistake in transition planning service members struggle with is “the mind-set change needed to be competitive in the ever-changing world of work” (p. 216). Transitioning service members who retain the military mind-set and culture may have unrealistic expectations of easily finding the right job and salary; potentially upsetting their financial security. “Civilian pay may end up being lower than what exiting military personnel expect” and “military certifications might not be valued or even accepted” (p. 220).

A foundational principle of the hiring process is matching the right person to the right job. Misalignment of skills, talent, and interests directly affects retention and talent management (Ford, 2017). Yet, hiring veterans is challenging for employers when employers lack an

understanding of veteran skills. Veterans likewise may feel they lack the skills needed for civilian work environments (Ward, 2020). Translating military qualifications, skills, and experiences into civilian jobs are challenging and leads to misalignment or underemployment (Keeling et al., 2018; Zogas, 2017). Service members in unique military careers like combat arms experience a skills mismatch when seeking jobs in the civilian world. A mismatch is more likely for those with lower ranks, without post-secondary education, and who serve one term of service (Duel et al., 2019). “Some personnel do not consider their military skills transferrable to the civilian field” (Cooper et al., 2017, p. 58). Additionally, soft skills developed during active-duty military service, such as persistence, reliability, conscientiousness, and attention to detail, may help or hinder employment (Zogas, 2017).

The lingering call to active duty is a persistent stressor for veterans within their first enlistment contract. The standard first-term enlistment is an 8-year contract, some of it on active duty, and for the remainder they stay on an Inactive Ready Reserve list. Veterans may have separated from service, but that obligation holds, and they can be called back to service at need. Service members may be involuntarily extended beyond their expected ETS date. This program, colloquially called Stop Loss, was heavily used in the 1990 – 1991 Gulf War, the Bosnia and Kosovo campaigns, and at the beginning of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars after the attacks on 9/11 (Henning, 2009). With some limitations and some exceptions, retired officers and enlisted personnel remain under the call-back conditions and are subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) permanently (House of Representatives, Congress, 2020; Ryan et al., 2011).

Personal Barriers. Transitioning service members are impeded by limited or ineffective transition support at public/private firms and an ineffective TAP experience (Duel et al., 2019; Ward, 2020). In TAP, the focus is on post-service employment and benefits. “Little emphasis is

placed on supporting and building up the resilience of the military member to address the broad range of challenges they frequently face during their transition to non-military life” and this lack of emphasis includes a lack of integration for a holistic approach to transition (Whitworth et al., 2020, p. 26).

In their study on the effect of military experience on women’s eating habits Breland et al. (2017) found women veterans who had varied eating habits before military service encountered environments facilitating poor eating or nutrition habits during service to include: boot camp, deployment, and living on a military installation. The stress related to military service as a female contributed to poor eating habits, feeling isolated, poor mental health, and a lack of leadership support during their careers. After leaving the military, women veterans continued to experience a lack of support in college. They received health information less often than women with no military experience on addiction, mental health, sexual assault and relationship violence, and stress reduction (Albright et al., 2019). Albright et al. also found that woman combat veterans had higher rates of attempted suicide, were less likely to use mental health services, and held a stigma against seeking mental health support.

Combat veterans experience paradoxes and dilemmas during and after transition (Castro et al., 2015). Examples include veterans expecting recognition but feeling uncomfortable when it is given (the modesty paradox), veterans expressing being happy to be alive but living with survivor’s guilt (the Kanji paradox), and veterans wanting to talk about military experience but are afraid to (the safety paradox). Mental health difficulties can be a factor influencing veterans’ transition from the military to the civilian workforce in a negative way (Kukla et al., 2016; Ward, 2020). Employers may perceive hiring a veteran with a disability will come with additional expenses, influencing employment opportunities and impeding successful transition (Keeling et

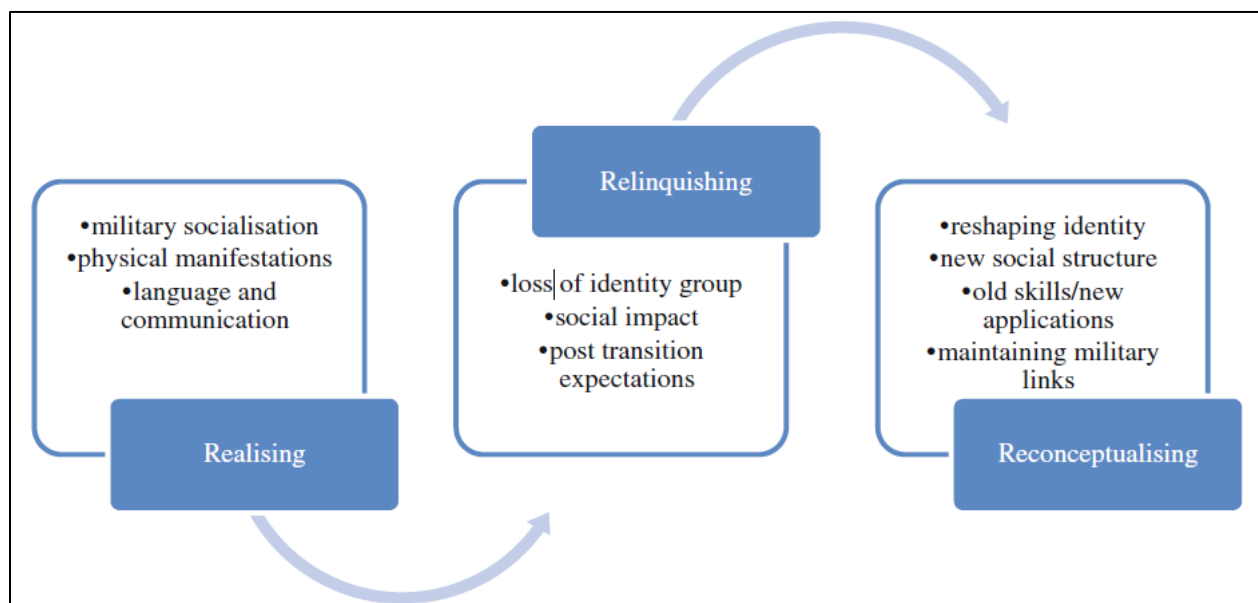
al., 2018; Ward, 2020). Disability compensation benefits are perceived as a vulnerability leading some veterans to be reluctant to seek employment (Ward, 2020). Additionally, many veterans can function within the military structure successfully with unaddressed health problems. Referred to as “functioning while suffering,” veterans find these same health issues serve as barriers to occupational and social functioning (Castro & Kintzle, 2014, p. 5).

Societal Barriers. When service members transition, they may experience a “reverse culture shock” (Bergman et al., 2014; Pedlar et al., 2016). Successful reintegration relies on the participation of civilian communities, nonprofits and government organizations (Manderscheid, 2007). The social impact of transition is not unique to U.S. service members’ transition to civilian life. Cooper et al. (2016) examined the experiences of United Kingdom military transitions utilizing Bourdieu’s (1977) concepts of habitus, capital, and field within the cultural setting, and hysteresis for the discord and disruption of the transition experience. Pedlar et al. (2019) apply Bourdieusian concepts in their review of Military to Civilian Transition (MCT) theories and frameworks in relation to Canadian military transitions. Bourdieu identified the “hysteresis” effect as a feeling of discord occurring when a military service member with a deeply embedded military identity enters civilian life, potentially manifesting as fear, anxiety or resistance to change (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Cooper et al., 2016). Andrewartha and Harvey (2019) looked at the experiences of Australian veterans’ transition to college and found veteran students experienced the same challenges as veterans in the U.S. and U.K.

Three stages to reshaping identity of Australian service members (Figure 2.12) in transition were identified as realizing, relinquishing, and reconceptualizing identity during career transition (Becker et al., 2022, p. 166). In the first stage veterans start realizing they had a strong military identity. They had bonded with social groups, connected to military values, and

achieved professional status. The relinquishing stage is when veterans begin to feel a sense of loss, disconnection. Some doubt the decision to leave when they realize the civilian world was very different and had changed since their enlistment. The third phase, reconceptualizing, involved development of new expectations and “learning about new ways of being and behaving” (p. 168). The transition experience of New Zealand military service members aligned with contemporary findings of reverse culture shock experiences with reintegration (Cardow et al., 2024).

Figure 2.12. Stage of Identity for Veteran Transition



Note. From “Reconceptualizing identities: Veterans' perspectives on career transition challenges,” by K. Becker, A. Bish, M. McCormack, and D. Abell, 2022, *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 34(2), p. 166 (<https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21472>). CC BY-NC-ND 4.

Social support while serving is critical to service member mental and behavioral health (Barr et al., 2023). Transitioning service members face the risk of increased morbidity and premature mortality in part “due to adoption of risky health behaviors, social isolation, and inadequate engagement in health care services” (Angel et al., 2018, p. 554). Service members

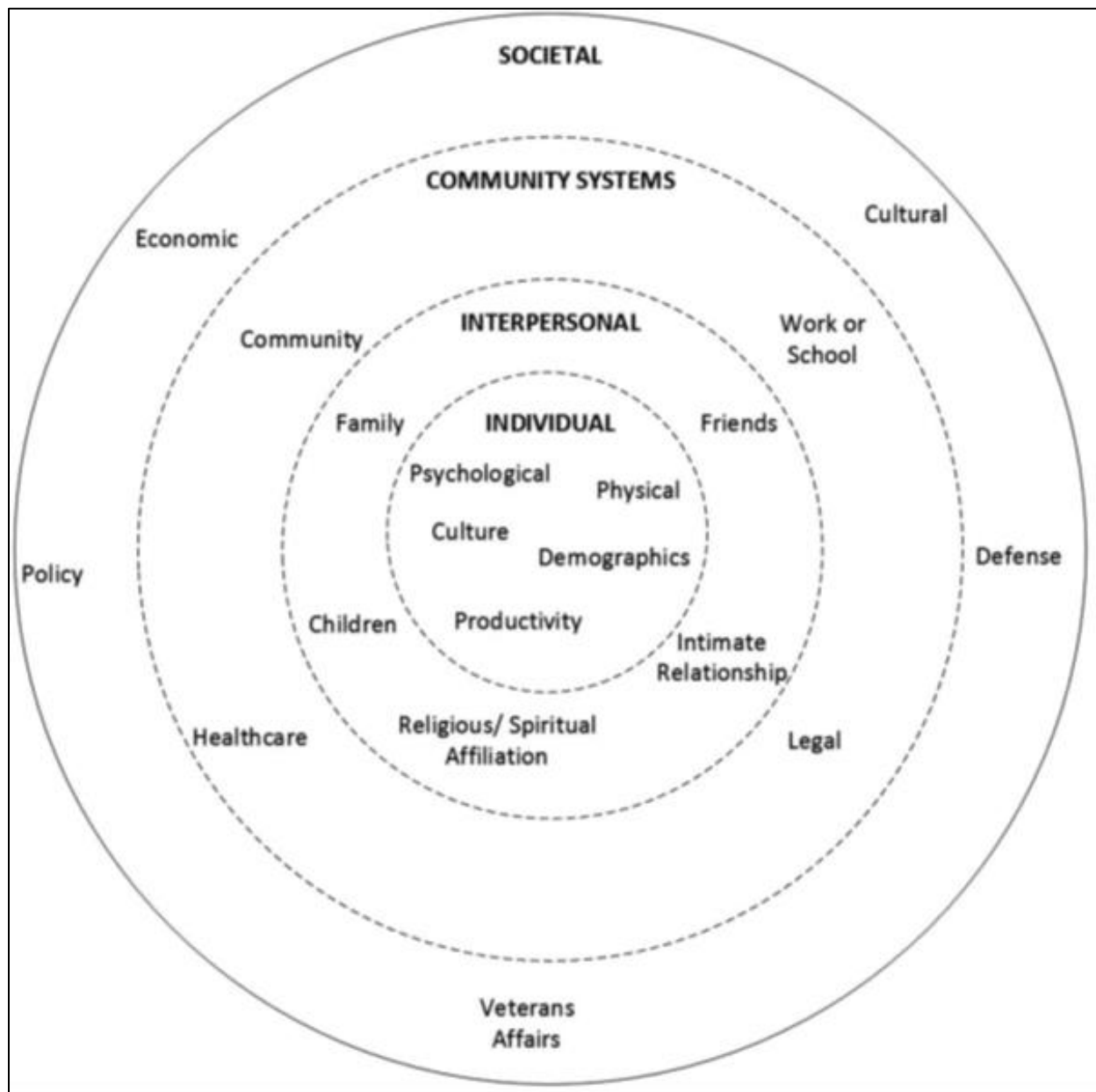
who transition from the military to higher education experience a complex set of challenges as veteran students through financial stress, obligations prioritizing family and work, disabilities and mental health issues, degraded scholastic skills, culture clash and self-identity crises, isolation, invisibility, and disconnectedness from peers, a lack of belonging, and veteran stigma (Andrewartha & Harvey, 2019). Self-stigma, an experience of self-depreciation, is internalized shame, and identifying with stereotypes, works as a barrier to successful transition (Albright et al., 2018; Love, 2024). There is little understanding of a transitioning service members' difficulty identifying with civilian society when the continual influence of military culture impedes change (Cooper et al., 2016; DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011). Language practices and the use of military acronyms, slang, and terminology need to change to adapt to a civilian environment (Gaither, 2014; Shepherd et al., 2021). Communication strategies of veteran students on college campuses are challenged by military vs civilian culture clashes around value differences, taking others' perspectives over one's own, and self-silencing to avoid conflict (Howe & Shpeer, 2019).

Military norms, behaviors, training, and purposes would be extreme in civilian culture. Combat training prepares service members to face and distribute death in armed conflict. Military identities are “instilled with opposing cultural practices, meanings, and values when compared with civilian professional identities” (Grimell, 2017, p. 837). The “military mind” so deviates from civilian norms that it would be called deviant behavior in any other context (Duel et al., 2019, p. 110). Indoctrination through basic training is a transformative act, transforming the mind to a new military identity, which is then sustained in everyday practices during service. Gaining proficiency in warfighting and technical skills, presenting military demeanor and bearing for social capital, and grounding identity in military culture is the essence of the military

institution. These characteristics are not necessarily transferable to civilian contexts potentially disrupting identity value.

Resetting the military life to a civilian one is a process of adjustments and integrations to return to a normal “civilian life” of employment, community membership, family life, safety, and redeveloping personal values, and goals (Angel et al., 2018; Keeling et al., 2018). The transference from military life to civilian life occurs in an ecological system of letting go and taking hold of one’s place in the world. Reintegration to civilian life is dynamic, personal, culturally bound, and “psychosocial in nature, involving interaction between the individual and the environment” (Elnitsky et al., 2017a, p. 114). The ecological model of military service member and veteran reintegration (Figure 2.13) portrays the complexity of the transition environment experiences by service members (p. 115).

Figure 2.13. Ecological Model of Military Service Member and Veteran Reintegration



Note. From “Military Service Member and Veteran Reintegration: A Critical Review and Adapted Ecological Model,” by C. A. Elnitsky and C. L. Blevins, 2017, *American Journal of*

Orthopsychiatry, 87(2), p. 115 (<https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000244>). Copyright © 2017 by Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice. Reprinted with permission.

After transitioning from the military and integrating back to civilian life, service members/veterans may experience reverse culture shock and a sense of disorientation when the once-familiar civilian culture they grew up in has changed in their absence (Cooper et al., 2016, p.3; Howe & Shpeer, 2019). Military transition experiences may or may not lead to crisis, however “existential concerns which may unleash experiences of meaninglessness, emptiness, or lack of place in the world, may have a profound impact on the self in a transition” (Grimell, 2017, p. 836). Grimell evaluated veterans’ self-identity work as they transitioned from the military. Her findings suggested that “a military culture shapes a military story of ‘who I am’ (p. 833). The self-identity work of veterans is a reformulation of identity and their own personal story. Grimell found if self-identity work is burdensome and taxing the veteran may be struggling with trauma and moral injuries. Veterans who served in areas of conflict may have existential and moral struggles, once only theoretical, but now real due to service in combat. The loss of military structure and camaraderie that bolster military life and experiences requires a renegotiation of self-identity (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Cooper et al., 2017).

“The absence of a shared military cultural identity, along with an unrecognized sense of privilege, can interfere with the modern veterans feeling of community belongingness, as well as hinder the modern veterans’ establishment of a new effective social support network that includes civilians” (Castro & Kintzle, 2014, p. 5). This role exit is a process where veterans simultaneously “disengage from a role central to their identity and replace it with a new one” (Naphan & Elliott, 2015, p. 38). Yet service has a lasting effect on identity. Worldviews change, conformity is instilled, they are separated from civilian life and adapt new group norms to

reinforce their military identity (Binks & Cambridge, 2018) and social identity (Flack & Kite, 2021). Understanding how this transition can be facilitated and accounted for is unpacked in the next section.

New identity, Purpose, and Resources

The impact of military transition can be measured by assessing the changes in relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles (Anderson & Goodman, 2014). Feelings of disconnectedness from civilians may occur in transitioning service members as they lose their core military identity. Experiencing a lack of deserved recognition from non-veterans, poor mental health support, troubles with role transferability to civilian life, and loss of purpose compound transition difficulties (Binks & Cambridge, 2018). The conflicting values between military and civilian life contribute to the difficult contextual experiences of transitioning veterans (Demers, 2011). The military identity is “infused with the values of duty, honor, loyalty, and commitment to comrades, unit, and nation, which promotes self-sacrifice, discipline, and obedience” (p. 162). Veterans come from a culture of self-sacrifice, discipline, obedience, and merit. Their ability to “depersonalize the act of killing,” train to be the “ideal warrior,” and value groups and teams over individuals, feeds into the civilian-military gap. The military world contrast greatly with “individualistic, liberty-based civic values which embrace materialism and excessive individualism” (p. 162). The military does a great job of indoctrinating and training civilians to become soldiers but does a poor job of reversing that in preparation for a return to civilian life (Zogas, 2017). Institutional career changes may create a liminal state in transitioning service members, generating a temporary lack of clear role identity, where “new selves must develop before old possibilities are discarded” (Ibarra, 2007).

Military and Veteran Suicide. In the third quarter of the 2024 calendar year between July 1st and September 30th, the DoD reported 106 confirmed deaths by suicide: 74 active-duty, 5 Reserve, and 27 National Guard servicemembers (Clark, 2024). The good news is the suicides in the DoD dropped from the previous years' accounting of 83 active duty, 11 Reserve, and 30 National Guard suicides. That Army, followed by the Marine Corps, bore the heaviest numbers of suicides at 33 and 13 respectively. Data for the Space Force began collection in Q1 2021 when two suicides were reported in Q2 of 2023, followed by an increase in 2024, one each for Q1, Q2, and Q4. Suicide rates for Q4 2024 were not yet available through the Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO). In the annual report for CY 2023, the DSPO reported 523 service members died by suicide: 363 active duty, 69 Reserve, and 91 National Guard (Clark, 2024). There were 1,373 suicide attempts in CY 2023 among active-duty service members. Rates between suicide completion and suicide attempts were very different while the rates for the Reserve and National Guard were similar. The highest rate for active-duty suicide attempts was 436 in the Air Force, followed by 383 in the Army, 264 in the Marine Corps, 287 in the Navy, and 3 in the Space Force. The primary method of suicide completion was by firearms. The primary method for suicide attempts was by poisoning.

The White House created a national strategy and five priorities for reducing military and veteran suicide to address what is described as a national tragedy. "Since 2010, more than 65,000 veterans have died by suicide – more than the total number of deaths from combat during the Vietnam War and the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan combined" (The White House, 2021b). The data aligns with the literature in acknowledging high rates of suicide completion or ideation, especially within the first 3 to 12 months after transition (Edwards et al., 2023). The fact sheet notes most of the completed suicides of veterans are by guns, matching active-duty data. The

prevention plan focuses on veterans' gun safety, coordinating support resources for veterans, and localized public health services for veterans (Stone et al., 2017). The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense have programs that support and coordinate resources to reduce suicides in the military and veteran communities. The only approaches that bridge support between the departments are a suicide prevention crisis hotline and medical coordination for previously identified service members who are at risk of suicide and are leaving the military.

Social Intervention. Finding a renewed purpose and meaning can be supported through meaningful employment, volunteerism, entrepreneurship, and public service. New cultural identity development and a sense of community belongingness can contribute to transition success (Castro & Kintzle, 2014). Team Red, White, and Blue, a VSO nonprofit, was created by an Army veteran who observed veterans wanting to make community connections but felt alienated from their local communities. The approach to provide an inclusive social support structure meant “engaging veterans with culturally sensitive messages and interventions and tailoring programming to the unique characteristics of local communities” (Angel et al. 2018, p.562). In higher education, the Green Zone program builds institutional support for transitioning student veterans, provides specialized training for faculty and staff, and enhances student success through integration and public acknowledgement as a military-friendly school (Nichols-Casebolt, 2012). Family, friends, fellow veterans, classmates, and faculty contribute to the success of a student veteran (Ryan et al., 2011). The Mission Continues and Team Rubicon, are examples of civic engagement that “constitute the social contract through cultural practices” providing a “community-oriented path toward veteran reintegration” that emphasize “the role of volunteerism, altruism, continued community service, and mutual responsibilities” (Usbeck, 2018, p. 428-429).

Social Skills Development. Military service helps develop social skills for disadvantaged youth. Nesbit and Reingold (2011) link military service and volunteering and conclude “military service helps overcome barriers to volunteering by socializing people with civic responsibility norms, by providing social resources and skills that compensate for the lack of personal resources, and by making veterans aware of opportunities to volunteer” (p. 67). They found that people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds gain compensatory social resources and opportunities for education and training that develop organizational skills, which can be translated jobs. On the other hand, studies have found that stereotypes lead employers to perceive veterans as lacking civilian job skills and having poor social skills (Stone et al., 2018; Ward, 2020). Many veterans seek out volunteer opportunities at nonprofit VSOs to build social skills by networking with other veterans (Matthieu et al., 2021). Contextual influences on community reintegration for injured servicemembers includes school, work, and volunteering among the factors for successful transition experiences (Hawkins et al., 2015). Positive social support had a direct influence on community reintegration and volunteering had an indirect influence on injured veterans. Volunteering “assisted with development of social support, created the opportunity to provide support to others, and assisted with being a part of the community” (p. 536).

Careers: The Civilian-Military Divide

“Society has struggled with reintegrating members of the armed forces since colonial days” (Stone et al., 2018, p. 2). A report prepared by American Legion, the Lumina Foundation, and Solutions for Information Design (SOLID) defines the civilian-military divide as “the lack of understanding and knowledge about how military experience applies to a civilian environment” (Boring et al., 2021, p. 32). Employers may have a stereotype challenge when veterans

transitioning to the civilian workforce. They include general barriers, discrimination barriers, and stereotype barriers simply because there are so few people with military experience in the U.S. population (Gaither, 2014; Ward, 2020). Transitioning service members can encounter culture shock when leaving the military. They encounter new and unfamiliar workplace rules, communication norms, consequences at work, clothing, and hairstyles that are not uniform and controlled (Gaither, 2014). Senior military veterans entering corporate positions have three times the experience of civilian competitors and are 160% more likely to have a graduate degree but face underemployment in new careers when they have less responsibility, authority, and pay (Boatwright & Roberts, 2019; Liongosari et al., 2023).

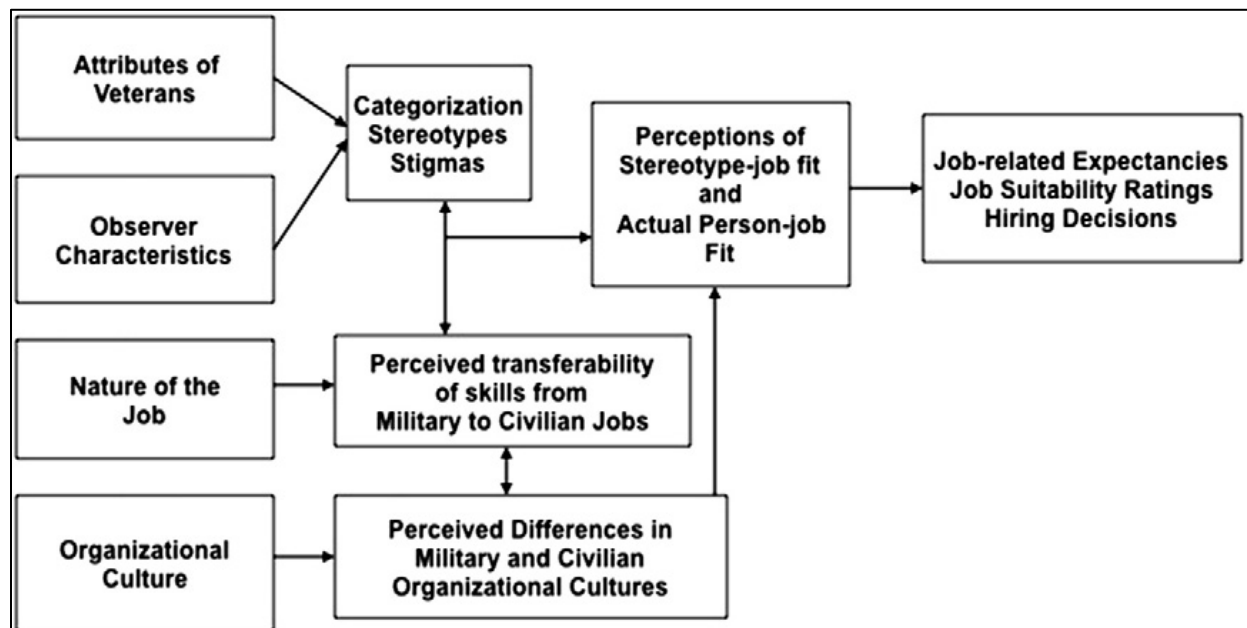
The civilian-military divide, along with the gap in knowledge and culture between the military and the public, is a root cause of transition challenges (Boatwright & Roberts, 2019; Carter et al., 2017; Liongosari et al., 2023). Articulation of transferable skills and experiences for the civilian workplace is a challenge when employers don't understand military job titles and acronyms. Misrepresentation and negative stereotypes of veterans in the workforce result in underemployment and undermine efforts by military transition programs and businesses to connect service members to careers.

In the civilian-military divide service members' lack of understanding of how civilian organizations and jobs work reveals a need to develop civilian cultural competency (Carter et al., 2017). Military KSA's are valuable to organizations that invest capital in leadership skills training programs, but military credentials and training certifications may not transfer and may need to be retaken if required for civilian employment. In their study on the effects of traumatic life events leading to sudden career transitions Haynie and Shepherd (2011) examined experiences of war-disabled combat veterans and identified two transition transference

competencies. First, career competence transference is “linking knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired from a previous career to an emerging new career” (p. 516). Next, coping competence transference is “linking knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired as a result of coping with a trauma to an emerging, new career” (p.516).

Stereotyping Veterans. Hiring manager perceptions of military veterans in the application and hiring process may be negatively impacted by perceptions and veteran stereotyping (Stone et al., 2018). The Stone & Stone (2015) model of factors affecting hiring decisions about veterans maps the factors of the applicant with the nature of the job and organizational culture accounting for stereotyping and stigmas while considering fit and skills transferability (Figure 2.14).

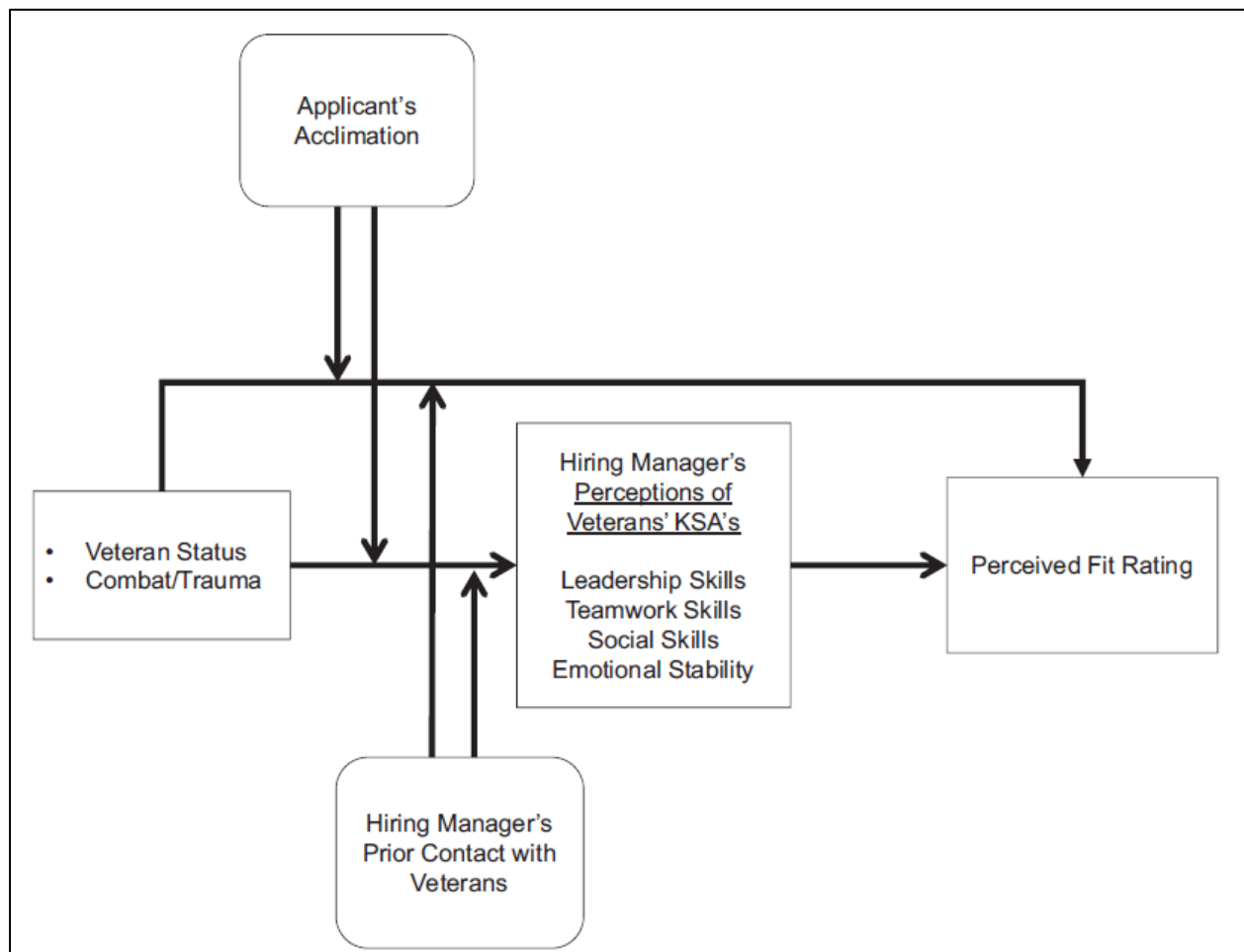
Figure 2.14. Factors Affecting Hiring Decisions About Veterans



Note. From “Factors affecting hiring decisions about veterans,” by C. Stone and D. L. Stone, 2015, *Human Resource Management Review*, 25(1), p. 72 (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2014.06.003>). Copyright © 2015 by Elsevier. Reprinted with permission.

The Stone & Stone model was further adapted to account for group-based preconceptions and judgements for veterans who self-report military service on resumes (Stone et al., 2018). Doing so can activate “typical military” stereotypes held by hiring managers that may impact assessment of fit into organizational culture (Figure 2.15).

Figure 2.15. Model of Factors Affecting Hiring Decisions



Note. From “Do Stereotypes of Veterans Affect Chances of Employment?,” by C. B. Stone, M. Lengnick-Hall, and J. Muldoon, 2018, *The Psychologist-Manager Journal*, 21(1), p. 10 (<https://doi.org/10.1037/mgr0000068>). Copyright © 2018 by American Psychological Association. Reprinted with permission.

Transferring Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

According to the Government Accountability Office report on military and veteran support to help service-members transfer skills to civilian employment, nearly 200,000 military service members transition from military to the civilian workforce each year (Reed et al., 2022). Though they receive extensive high-quality training for their military career, their skills often do

not transfer to civilian jobs without “costly and duplicative retraining to obtain credentials for civilian occupations” (p. 1). The difficulty articulating military KSA’s to valued skills sought by employers contributes to veteran unemployment and underemployment after leaving the service (Boatwright & Roberts, 2019; Davis & Minnis, 2017; Liongosari et al., 2023). Educating employers on military jobs and KSA’s is a recommended strategy to improve successful military transitions to the workforce (Stone & Stone, 2015). An example of KSA transfer from military to civilian contexts is demonstrated below (Table 2.13).

Table 2.13. Transfer of Military Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA’s).

Military	Transfer Gaps	Civilian
KSA’s • Values, empathy, ethos • Discipline • Professional bearing • Confidence • Resilience • Mental agility, judgment • Innovation, expertise • Trust, example, teamwork • Communication • Positive, prepared • Develops others • Gets results	Veterans Articulating • Differences between KSAs • Overlap	Soft skills • Leadership • Knowledge • Culture • World Experience
Policy and programs	Transition Support inadequate	Technical skills
Leadership as Profession	Veterans putting KSAs into civilian terms	• Training • Certification • Military Education • Job experience
Service to country	Civilians putting KSAs into military terms	Critical skills
Personal sacrifice	Relating military attributes to civilian jobs	• Leadership, teamwork • Problem-solving • Adaptability, Decision-making • Diversity • communication
Always on call	Recredentialing, Recertification	
	Gap in vocabulary • Military and civilian terms for skills and characteristics • Job postings and descriptions	

Integrated Talent Management. Integrated talent management involves employer programs for new veteran employees who recently transitioned from the military. Human Resource Development (HRD) practitioners can integrate veterans into the workplace and help their organizations develop strategic relationships with military transition programs (Ford, 2017). Ford created the Veteran Integration Strategy (VIS) framework (p. 40) to help integrate new veteran employees into the workplace. Rather than an adaptable one-size-fits-all model that serves clients, the VIS framework specializes efforts by organizational level appropriate for employers to support employees (Table 2.14). Colleges can adopt a similar big-picture approach to upscale their support through community coordination with helping agencies (Brown & Gross, 2011), service for veteran students with disabilities (Burnett & Segoria, 2009), and faculty professional development (Dillard & Yu, 2016).

Table 2.14. Ford’s Veteran Integration Strategy framework.

	Anticipate	Maintain	Sustain
Organizational Level	Anticipatory talent management activity	Maintenance of effective talent management system	Sustainment of talent management systems and gainful processes
Strategic	• Establish value-creating TM system • Provide resources & support • Provide leader sponsor/presence to programs	• Monitor & assess TM system • Communicate decisions & changes • Enable resources that facilitate change	• Evaluate business & HR analytics • Assess value-added activities, ROI & goal attainment • Continue leader sponsorship of programs
Operational	• Initiate strategic workforce & human capital planning management strategies • Facilitate activities that support strategy	• Facilitate access to LMS, KMS, and training • Design employee and leader development initiatives • Analyze activity-based metrics	• Measure program & initiatives effectiveness • Analyze outcomes-based metrics • Support employee interest-based groups
Tactical	• Validate local/global job descriptions • Identify veteran-related resources (e.g. ERGs and Mentors)	• Initiate onboarding practices & procedures • Provide development opportunities & feedback	• Assess performance • Set goals • Provide continuous feedback • Support engagement
	Attract	Develop	Retain&Utilize

Note. From “Talent management and its relationship to successful veteran transition into the civilian workplace: Practical integration strategies for the HRD professional,” by D. G. Ford, 2017, *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 19(1), p. 40

(<https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422316682736>). Copyright © 2017 Sage Publications. Reprinted with Permission.

Leadership Style

Military schools ingrain the practice of heroic leadership that remains with service members and veterans. Where a rigid military approach to leadership may be problematic in civilian settings, volunteering usually occurs in a safe environment for service members to observe, experience, and practice non-heroic approaches. Learning to adapt leadership skills is essential for a successful transition to contemporary organizations (Crevani et al., 2010). When studying the rise of the veteran nonprofit sector, Bender (2018) found the professional backgrounds of nonprofit staff “provide alternative and additional logics for interfacing with the constraints of nonprofit organizations” (p. 25). Staff with military backgrounds were difficult to find for her doctoral study on the veteran nonprofit sector. Bender cited Ivany (2014), a retired Major General with the Army, wherein he reflects on the hesitancy of senior military officers and corporate executives taking leadership positions at nonprofit organizations and higher education. Ivany makes note of three major concerns that discourage military leaders from nonprofit leadership roles: the vastly different culture; the different nature of the mission and how to measure success; and fundraising. Bender’s study shows that transition challenges may occur at any military rank and experience level.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

This study investigates the volunteerism experiences of active-duty service members and considers how those experiences affect transition from military to civilian societies. Research question one asked about individual experiences, particularly in relation to transferable functional skills and abilities, self-worth and identity, adaptive communication practices, and the practice of leadership. Question two addresses how or if volunteerism impacts transition success.

Qualitative interview studies explore lived experiences of participants and document analysis reveals the supportive organizational infrastructure promoting community engagement in the US Armed Forces. Qualitative document analysis (QDA) is a methodology often used alongside interview studies and observations that reveals the complexities underlying the lived experiences of people (Wood, et al., 2020). QDA combined with interviews contributes to triangulation of data, increases trustworthiness in analysis and conclusions, and contributes to deeper understanding and thick, rich descriptions (Morgan, 2021). Documents exist in many forms ranging from books to maps to websites (Bowen, 2009). The stories of the participants are embedded in military culture, itself defined strictly by oaths, policies, laws, and regulations. If the participants in this study are the storytellers, then the documents are the stage. I employ semi-structured interviews and document analysis as a conceptual framework. I briefly introduce literature to frame this study and provide an overview of this study.

Why Qualitative Inquiry?

“Natural conversations usually involve an equal exchange between the researcher and the participant...the interviewee gets to ask the researcher questions...information exchange is bidirectional” (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 127).

This chapter is an outline of the methodological framework of this effort. Good qualitative research is enshrined in Sarah Tracy's (2010) "big tent" criteria for quality qualitative research and listed as follows (p. 840). The anchor of Tracy's criteria for quality qualitative research is that it has meaningful coherence. Meaningful research should achieve its original purpose and review existent literature pertinent to the study. Quality qualitative research addresses a worthy topic. The research reveals overlooked topics or ways of life. It is relevant, timely, interesting, and significant. It holds to a rich rigor using abundant, appropriate, and complex theory, data, time in the field, samples, contexts, and analyses. This study is sincere, characterized by self-reflexivity and transparency. That it is credible is indicated by thick, rich descriptions, triangulation, or crystallization. It holds multivocality in that it represents more than one point of view. The research resonates with readers. It creates knowledge and inspires action, its findings transferable to other similar situations, and is naturally generalizable to readers so they feel some familiarity with the findings.

The development of habits is linked to quality qualitative research (Hunt, 2010). Developed early by socialization, experience and mentorship, good research habits and dispositions lead to pacing and balance in qualitative research. Hunt uses the term "active waiting" to describe "the need for researchers to achieve a balance throughout a research project" by "allowing adequate space and time for the full development of each aspect of the research" (p. 72). Habitual practice of reflexivity allows researchers to examine biases and predispositions, being sensitive to their own worldviews and assumptions. The habitual practice of deliberate and purposeful pacing avoids rushing a research project that can lead to completing too soon, deselecting avenues of inquiry, and ignoring follow up opportunities based on hunches and insights. Alternatively, going too slow in pacing may undermine quality research development.

Appropriate pacing helps develop the skills needed by new researchers. Mentors play a critical role in development. Hunt recommends the role of researcher habits that support quality qualitative research be “drawn out, discussed, and modeled in teaching and mentoring relationships” (p.74).

Interpretive Qualitative Research

Interpretive research is an ideal qualitative methodology for small qualitative studies with a small number of participants. The inductive approach of inductive research seeks to understand rather than explain “the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Schwandt, 1994, as cited in Willis, 2007, p. 8). After a comprehensive review of published literature relevant to this study I gained permission from relevant agencies (IRB, US Government) and began data collection (Table 3.1). Data collection for interpretive research includes conducting qualitative interviews, analyzing interview transcripts, field observations, and qualitative document analysis. Data is often collected and analyzed concurrently in an iterative sense making cycle (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Thorne, 2025). Evidence collected may include numerical data generated by reports and statistics situated within original source material (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011).

Interpretive research has the following common set of principles (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 105-106): naturalistic inquiry, researcher as instrument, interpretive analysis, use of expressive language, temporal nature, and hermeneutic circle. Naturalistic inquiry studies phenomena in their natural setting and accounts for social and historical context for that instance. Researcher as instrument is the principle placing the researcher as the instrument of data collection as the trusted observer and recorder of participant experiences. The researcher is considered part of the data and acknowledges their biases, preconceptions, and positionality. Interpretive analysis

requires interpretation at two levels: subjectively from participants perspective and understanding the meaning behind participants experiences. The two levels contribute to creating thick, rich descriptions of the phenomenon studied. Use of expressive language in interpretive inquiry captures verbal and non-verbal language, emotions, and descriptions. Temporal nature if interpretive research understands the phenomenon of interest, as it evolves over time. The hermeneutic circle is the iterative process of going back and forth between text and context to understand diverse experiences and meaning within the study. This interpretive study engages these principles through participant interviews, document analysis, the nature of military service, the phenomena of volunteerism, and my insider researcher positionality.

Table 3.1. Research Journey Timeline

Date	Activity
21 March, 2021	IRB Approved
March – April 2021	Pilot Project conducted
October 2022 – March 2023	IRB Updates and Renewals
22 May 2022	Proposal for dissertation approved
26 May 2022	Submitted request for the founding documents establishing the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal (MOVSM) records to George H. W. Bush Presidential Library
January 2023	Request and gain permission to interview soldiers at Fort Riley, Kansas
14 April 2023	Received 104 pages of documents founding the MOVSM from the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library
7 June 2023	Volunteer Management Information System (VMIS) data provided
February and March 2023	Conduct interviews (restricted access) VMIS data collection review (restricted access)
March 2023	Begin document review that includes restricted data DoD, US Army, and Fort Riley policies on volunteerism (public access online) MOVSM founding documents (requested, public access) Begin analysis using literature, NVivo 14, reflection, and member checking.

Qualitative Interviews

Informal open-ended interviews are conducted as a casual conversation between the researcher and the participant. Informal and open-ended qualitative interviews are open conversations between the researcher and participant. Structured questions are not necessary for the interview that touch on the researcher's interests during the conversation. Though the informal, open-ended interview is supposed to feel natural, the researcher is mindful of the purpose and guides the conversation. Natural conversations open the participant to asking questions along with the researcher in an "equal exchange" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p, 127). It is an open conversation between the researcher and participant. Structured questions are not necessary for the interview that touches on researcher interests during the conversation. Though the informal, open-ended interview is supposed to feel natural, the researcher is mindful of the purpose and guides the conversation.

Interview Guide. An interview guide is developed in preparation for interviews, providing short and clear questions that ask for a more specific detail in recollection, and longer questions that are broad and open-ended (deMarrais, 2014). Open-ended and prompting questions encourage participants to share their stories in rich, thick detail. Participants take ownership of the interview, and the researcher becomes the learner-listener to original storytelling of lived experience. Skill and expertise help with semi-structured interviews and a useful tool for the professional and novice is an interview guide. Interview guides are not rigid questions that must be answered. Rather, they are a reference guide for the interviewer to stimulate the discussion (Tracy, 2020).

In qualitative interviews the researcher is the learner and the participant the expert in their own lived experience (deMarrais, 2014). Researchers create relaxed settings and build rapport

with the interview participants in a permissive open environment to build trust and encourage detailed reflection. An interview protocol or guide may be constructed to either facilitate and direct the interview or serve as a reference point for probing and exploratory engagement. In-depth and open-ended qualitative interviews dig deep into the interviewee's experiences seeking to push past surface explanations toward deeper meaning-making, understandings of the participants reality, and interconnectivity of shared/similar experiences among selected participants.

A review of publications in peer-reviewed literature focused on semi-structured interview guide development (Kallio et al., 2016). From this review, they concluded with a recommended five phases of development for a semi-structured interview guide. The first stage in developing a semi-structured interview guide is to identify necessary prerequisites needed to ensure a semi-structured interview method would provide rigorous data collection about the research question. In this first stage, the researcher must have some prior knowledge of some areas of the phenomenon to be studied. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate for studying people's perspectives, opinions, complex/sensitive issues, and areas where participants were asked to discuss challenging topics. In the second phase of developing a semi-structured interview guide the researcher needed to conduct an extensive literature review of previous knowledge about the purpose of the study. Previous knowledge supports the framework and preparations, so the researcher has comprehensive knowledge of the subject and complementary substantive information. In a situation with "sparse or fragmented knowledge in the literature, empirical knowledge could be used to complement and deepen the theoretical background...Consulting experts is one way of gaining the empirical knowledge to seek understanding of the phenomenon" (p. 2959).

The third phase in developing the interview guide is to create a preliminary guide to formulate a tool for interviewing using previous knowledge. The guide, as a list of questions directing the interview toward the research topic, should be comprehensive in knowledge but flexible to allow for the flow of dialogue. The review of the literature helped Kallio et al. to outline effective questions for the interview guide (p. 2960). They should be designed to gather the richest data, be participant-oriented and not leading, and clearly worded. They should be single-faceted, open-ended, and allow the respondent to be spontaneous, detailed, unique, and vivid. The semi-structured interview guide is recommended to prepare two levels of questions: main themes and follow-up questions. The main theme questions address the general idea of the focus of the research and can set the environment to comfort the participant. The follow-up questions are designed to further explain the main themes, redirect the interview toward the purpose of the study, and gain accurate optimal information. Another aspect of follow-up questions includes techniques in verbal and nonverbal probing. Verbal follow-up probing techniques include “repeating the participant’s point, expressing interest with a verbal agreement, or giving the impression that the interviewer is aware of certain information” (p. 2960). Remaining silent to allow the respondent to think is an example of non-verbal probing.

Pilot testing the interview guide is the fourth phase of developing a semi-structured interview guide. Testing the interview guide allows for improvements to the interview questions and data collected improves integrity and ethics. Three testing techniques are recommended: internal testing, expert assessment, and field testing. Internal testing is conducted within the research team or with research collaborators. The external assessment brings qualified specialists to critique the interview guide and give insights, guidance, and recommendations. Field testing provides an interview guide to a group of potential study participants. Their feedback can

increase the relevancy of the questions and improve the clarity of the wording. Participants in the field test can tell researchers if the questions encourage participants to be open and share their experiences. In their review, field testing was the most common form of pilot testing in the interview guide. The last phase of developing the semi-structured interview guide is publishing the guide along with the study. This allows clarity on the research process and allows peer researchers to use it.

Listening Guide. Gilligan (2015) developed the listening guide as a research method to facilitate psychological discovery by attending to voices in text or recorded transcripts in qualitative research. This work was in response to the realization that prevailing theoretical frameworks in psychology held a dominant thematic voice that reified binary logic and perpetuated cultural stereotypes, especially regarding gender (p. 70). The listening guide method gives researchers access to parts of the narrative that highlight marginalized and understudied experiences participants may not readily or consciously reveal. It is a method for clarification or to reveal what is unspoken, contradictions, and self-silencing choices. Researchers using this method may unravel complexity in complicated experiences by attuning to the speech acts of participants.

Researchers using a listening guide are listening for: 1) descriptive text and surface statements, 2) attending to the first-person voice for many ways of describing self, finding patterns, and discovering disassociated knowledge, and 3) for contrapuntal voice or different voices of the participant, their interplay, and tensions. The listening guide method applies to qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Applicable to any text or transcript that contains the first-person voice, the guide “tunes our ear to the multiplicity of voices that speak within and around us, including voices that speak at the margins and those which in the absence

of resonance or response, tend to be held in silence” (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017, p. 76). Researchers using this method listen to (or read) the text or transcript three times (or exercise three listening’s). The first listening is called Listening to the Plot wherein the researcher attends to the setting and environment of the interview (p. 73). Researchers listen to discern who is present, who is missing, repeated words, salient themes, metaphors, emotionally charged utterances, and the stories of participants lived experiences. Listening to the plot overlaps with qualitative analysis and helps researchers’ reflective practices by attuning to their personal responses to the material.

Listening for the I, the second listening, draws attention to ‘I’ statements as participants regard their way of knowing their place in the world. In this stage each ‘I’ statement is listed in order of appearance in the text or narrative. The resulting poem-like ‘I’ statement list creates ‘I poems’ that “pick up an associative stream that flows through narrative, running underneath the structure of the sentences” (p.72). ‘I poems’ evoke a hidden voice potentially related to disassociation from experiences in the world. The final listening is called Listening for Contrapuntal Voices. The research question(s) guide the researcher to find tensions within the different voices of the participant related to specific questions or topics. The three steps in the listening guide method address may reveal unsaid feelings or patterns contributing to a deeper understanding of the participant’s experiences with the study phenomenon. The listening guide method is relational, “creates trust, and engages others in the research because the act of listening in itself is a manifestation of respect” (p. 77).

Qualitative Excellence

It is critical that qualitative researchers offer detailed accounts of their data resources and communicate their journey to account for emergent data and signaling the quality of their

research, credibility of the researcher, and trustworthiness of the data and findings (Bansal and Corley, 2012). Credibility and trustworthiness establish the value and rigor of qualitative research. To establish trustworthiness a study has credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Amankwaa, 2016). Sarah Tracy (2010) identified eight “Big Tent” criteria for qualitative researchers to produce excellent qualitative research. These include researching a worthy topic, rich rigor in data collection and theoretical constructs, sincerity through self-reflexivity and transparency about research methods and data analysis, credibility through thick descriptions, triangulation, multivocality, and member reflections, resonance that moves readers with transferrable findings, provide a significant contribution, research that is ethical, and is coherent, interconnected with literature, and achieves its purpose.

Methods I used to establish excellence in this qualitative research study touch with criteria set forth by Amankwaa and Tracy. First, I believe this is a worthy topic. Volunteering to serve in the armed forces and volunteerism in civilian communities are historically and culturally linked. Military service provides technical and operational leadership skills, embeds and employs high moral values, requires personal sacrifice, and serves the needs of society. Volunteerism exercises high moral values and requires personal sacrifice of time, energy and money, it serves the needs of society and provides opportunities to learn new job skills and develop leadership competence. Volunteerism supports the mental health of veterans through value-laden continued service and a meaningful social purpose. Evaluating the intersection of military and community service is novel and relevant, contributing to a deep understanding of service members experiences, practical applications that will enhance military transition planning, training, and integration of community resources. Importantly, the established benefit of volunteerism brings a new approach to suicide intervention prior to entering the transition timeframe, create new

coping strategies in safe environments, develop skills and adaptability before they are needed, and build familiarity with social services. Suicidal ideation occurrence in the military and veteran population vulnerable groups including women veterans under 30, white male veterans over 55, and enlisted service members under 30 years old (The White House, 2021a).

I established my credibility as a researcher and trustworthiness in the findings of the study. To meet high standards exercised multivocality to provide thick descriptions through semi-structured interviews with 19 participants. Multivocality is achieved here through the “us” collaborative approach during the interviews. As a member of the military community and a practicing volunteer and nonprofit leader, I built relationships with the interview participants based on shared experiences and realities, using my experience and knowledge to guide my questions and responses to emergent themes in real time. I knew going into this study that the experiences of veterans who had already transitioned would only represent one side of the phenomenon of volunteerism while serving on active duty. Veterans are better positioned to reflect on how volunteering while on active duty affected their transition from the military, but that was a reflective perspective of both the volunteer activity and the transition. The experiences of current service members were needed to look at the other side, the primary side, of the phenomenon as the active-duty interviewees were currently serving in dual capacities in the military and as volunteers. Active-duty participants could not reflect on the transition impact of volunteerism, but they could think about how volunteering could benefit them when they separate from the military through a projected perspective. The interviews, capturing a before-and-after picture of the phenomenon, in conjunction with the document analysis of transition, obligation, intersection, and consequences of military service and volunteerism, and my insight

from my own experience provide a holistic look at the phenomenon, contributing to tacit knowledge, relevance, rigor, triangulation, and resonance of the findings.

Interviewing human beings requires transparent and ethical methodologies and methods. My positionality, conceptual framework, theoretical framework, research design, sampling strategy, and data analysis are provided in this chapter. In addition to human protection protocols established by the university institutional review board, to interview active-duty personnel I was required to follow additional processes required by the Army and Fort Reilly leaders and offices, and government and military regulatory compliance, protocols, and practices. The process I took to receive permission to interview Department of Defense personnel is included in this chapter. My coordination timeline, communications, and approvals to receive permission to interview active-duty service members are provided to be sincere and transparent, to be clear about my ethical considerations and accountability, and to contribute a reference point for future researchers considering human research involving active-duty service members in the U.S. armed forces.

I used a reflective journal to help through the many days of work until I began analyzing the interview transcripts. Admittedly, I had help from peers who advised me that at some point I needed to stop adding new material to the literature review. I took that constructive criticism and stopped searching for new publications and for articles that reinforced a point unnecessarily. Some concepts and intersecting ideas needed to be mapped out, drawn out, or graphed for clarity and insight. Some of these creations are included in the chapters and some in the appendices. I also used reflective practice with my interview participants. I asked each participant to review the transcription of our discussion and provide corrections, clarifications, additions. Each of the 19 participants had this opportunity but only one replied with a clarifying point. All replied that

the transcript was accurate to their memory and validated the data before I began analysis. Development of a reflexive journal, providing a detailed description of the research steps and timeline contribute to conformability. My reflective research journal helped analyze my behaviors for trends, biases, and patterns throughout the study. A detailed timeline, steps required to complete data collection, and points of contact who supported, advised, counseled, and approved aspects of research that include active-duty service members are included in Chapter 4.

A key stakeholder for this study was the Fort Riley Garrison Commander. The active-duty service members were all under his command and without the approval of the installation commander. I agreed to the condition that I would present my findings to the garrison commander before the dissertation was published. From an engaged scholarship approach, the study is only enhanced with the perspectives of community stakeholders (Van de Ven, 2007). Plus, stakeholder involvement in qualitative research gives them a voice in the research and allows them “an opportunity to express their own perspectives, values, and opinions (Palinkas et al., 2011, p. 49). I was not completed with the study before the Garrison Commander was placed on orders to serve at a new installation. I provided a summary briefing of my preliminary findings to the Garrison Commander before he left Fort Riley. Also in attendance was the Garrison Command Sergeant Major and the senior staff. The overall response was positive.

I provided an orientation of the study to all interview participants, who were required to agree to and sign an informed consent document (Appendix D). The informed consent stated the purpose of the study, the procedures and methods to be used, any risks or discomforts anticipated, and any benefits anticipated, and the extent of confidentiality to protect their identity. The risk level for participants was determined to be less than “minimal risk” on the

application to the university Internal Review Board. The highest risk moments during interviews were when two interview participants reflected on traumatic experiences that nevertheless informed the reflective recall of their experiences relevant to the study. In these moments participants were allowed to pause and stop, they were assured the interview would end when they chose. Participants were asked to review and provide feedback on the transcripts of their interviews for further analysis.

Being close to the participants in experience can also lead to blind spots in design, data collection and analysis, and drawing conclusions. This study is influenced by my military and nonprofit experiences and goals for the study. In acknowledging this influence on research design, sampling, data analysis, and conclusions I make myself available to critique and criticism.

Positionality

Positionality is “the stance or positioning of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study – the community, the organization or the participant.” (Rowe, 2014, p.628). Rowe discusses positionality as an element of action research where “theory and action inform each other in ongoing spirals of action and reflection called praxis” (Anderson & Ospina, 2014, p. 19). Researcher stance as an insider or outsider clarifies and acknowledges their roles in all phases of research. The qualities I hold in relation to the research context, setting, and participants are complex.

I am an insider because I once served on active-duty status in the US Army and was stationed at Fort Riley where the active-duty interview participants are stationed. I continue to work at Fort Riley in my post-military career. I am a veteran who participated in volunteerism when I was on active duty. I continue to volunteer and run a nonprofit organization that directly

supports an active-duty unit located at Fort Riley. I am an outsider because I am no longer active-duty, and my understanding of that experience is different from the experiences of current service members. I am a retiree from the Army, placing me in a different category from active-duty and some veteran participants. I am the president of a nonprofit organization, placing me as both a volunteer and leader in that role. As an academic, my level of education separates me from most interview participants. Active-duty and veteran participants may have placed me in a position of authority and deference due to our shared military experience and my position as the researcher. I shared my experiences in the military and volunteerism with each participant to build rapport and familiarity. I avoided presenting myself as a knowledge expert in research and academics. My personal experiences that led to the study and influenced my reflective practice, research purpose, study design, analysis, and conclusions. Instances of insights were captured in my reflective journal.

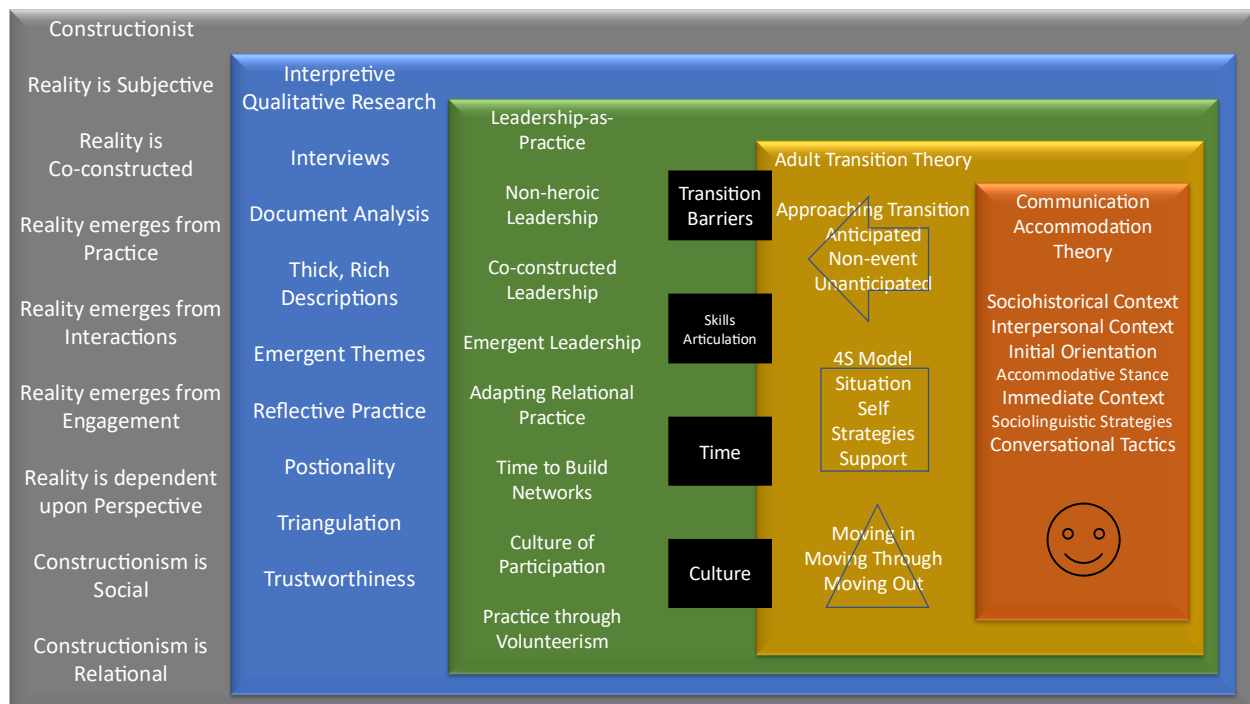
As a veteran who served at Fort Riley, and as a nonprofit leader for an organization that operates on Fort Riley, I have an insider-outsider role as researcher. This foreknowledge informed my choice to focus specifically on the Fort Riley community as I know from personal experience that service-member volunteerism is organized and coordinated with community nonprofit groups, local schools, and governmental agencies. Making reflective judgements and knowing myself was an essential tool for my own successful transition to university campus culture and integration into a new civilian career.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a “system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs” research (Maxwell, 2013, p. 39). I am informed by several overarching theories including Adult Transition Theory, Leadership-as-Practice, and

Communication Accommodation Theory. These three theoretical approaches are complex and integrate several additional concepts. Adult Transition Theory (Schlossberg, 1981) is influenced by elements of Military Transition Theory (Kintzle & Castro, 2018). The constructionist worldview for this study incorporates Leadership-as-Practice (Raelin, 2016) for adapting military practices to civilian environments. Communication Accommodation Theory (CAD) is appropriate to study military service members participating in civilian organizations and environments. My conceptual framework model nests these three theories within a general interpretive lens and constructionist ontology (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1. Conceptual Framework



The conceptual framework is nested intentionally. Communication accommodation occurs naturally as verbal and nonverbal communication practices adjust and accommodate different social contexts and interlocutors. Military communities have specialized cultures and communication practices that individual members adjust to accommodate at varying levels of

success to support, or avoid, successful communication. As such, the conceptual framework begins with CAT, a practice already in place as individual service members enter periods of transition. Individuals entering transition carry all lived experience up to the point when they realize they are approaching or are in a major life change. Transition barriers like skills articulation (Kirchner & Akdere, 2019; Davis & Minnis, 2017), time away from society (Drebing et al., 2018) and time to transition (Roumell et al., 2024), culture shock (Joseph et al., 2023; Pease et al., 2015), and cultural barriers (Lim et al., 2018) shown in the black boxes are challenges transitioning veterans encounter as they reintegrate to civil society.

Communication Accommodation

Successful communication skills are essential for successful transition experiences. Adaptive communication strategies are helpful for service members in a wide range of settings, from communications with local nationals during combat deployments to mentoring service members for leadership development to keeping family and friends close. Adapting communication strategies is essential for employment (Boatwright & Roberts, 2019; Liongosari et al., 2023). Contributing to communication challenges, stereotypes about veterans can compromise successful civil integration and cause psychosocial damage (Almaraz, 2024). Knowledge gaps between veterans and non-veterans result from the small number of Americans with military experience and the overgeneralizations and stereotypes in consumable media (Kirchner & Yelich Biniecki, 2019) which in turn contribute to a cultural disassociation within the broader American society. Veterans trying to translate military KSA's to civilian employment, educational, or social contexts are hindered by a gap in cultural context that in turn builds barriers. Articulating military KSA's can be a barrier for employers and veterans when there is no available interlanguage for mutual understanding (Kirchner & Akdere, 2019) as

service members and civilian impoverished language hinders articulation (Deetz, 2008) and military terms and speech are appropriated and misplaced in civilian industries and academic institutions (Boring et al., 2021).

Leadership-as-Practice

The Leadership-as-Practice perspective “focuses on the everyday practice of leadership...leadership in its activity rather than through the traits and heroics of individual actors” (Raelin, 2011, p. 195). Raelin specifically notes that leadership-as-practice is not intended to replace (dethrone) individual “great man” paradigms, but to put into focus everyday activities, “moral, emotional, and relational aspects, rather than...rational, objective, and technical ones” (p, 195). Military leaders mature in the military profession through applied and practiced leadership. Leadership-as-practice has flexibility as a framework to adapt military knowledge, skills, and abilities for nonprofit organizations. Volunteering in nonprofit organizations allows service members to practice new approaches to leadership.

Research Design

Research is an iterative process undergoing constant review and adjustment and the data tells the story. That has been true throughout my process as a novice researcher, evidence by the evolution of my research concept and multiple IRB updates and extensions. Working through a pilot project prior to the current study was helpful. I wrestled with positionality, imposter phenomenon, and a learning curve as a freshman researcher. The pilot projects examined senior military leaders and their experiences with nonprofit leadership. The results were informative but limited and narrow. I realized I wanted to understand the phenomena of any service member who volunteered, not just senior leadership who permitted volunteerism. I wanted to examine leadership in the informal non-military spaces. The pilot project brought focus and clarity to my

hunch, my personal experiences, and the difference I wanted to make in the world through this study. The participants for interviews were active-duty service members who are engaged in volunteer activities, and veterans who, when they were serving in the military on active-duty status, actively volunteered in their communities. Of the 21 qualified respondents, 19 followed through with an interview. I did not have a quota in mind, nor did I seek to have equal portions of active-duty vs veterans in the study. Small numbers would have provided ample data through qualitative semi-structured interviews. However, the respondents did result in a balanced pool of interviewees with ten active-duty and nine veterans participating.

Pilot Project

I began this journey with a pilot project under the same title and IRB. The pilot project was initially to interview chapter presidents of the Military Police Regimental Association (MPRA), an organization with chapters supporting military police units around the globe. The title of the current study, “Military Leaders in Nonprofit Organizations,” and the initial IRB originated with this initial effort. The research questions remained unchanged as I want to understand how military leadership skills and abilities transferred to nonprofit organizations, how leaders changed their leadership and communication practices to adapt to non-military leadership contexts, and how the overall experiences of military leaders in nonprofit organizations contributed to transition readiness and success. I soon realized I had created a problem with the study. By focusing only on MPRA chapter presidents I had severely limited the participant pool and excluded others who are not in positions of higher authority. It also became clear to me that I wanted to understand the intersection of military service and volunteerism and community service phenomenon in general, not a specific case study on MPRA presidents who, were all senior military leaders. I had built constraints into the IRB, informed consent, interview

guide, and the debriefing statement. I updated the proposal, the IRB, and associated forms to be less restrictive. The new participant eligibility criteria changed to any person who concurrently was a leader in the military and a nonprofit organization. This update to the IRB was approved.

Table 3.2 lists the pilot project participant demographics and associated categories. The data represents identities revealed during semi-structured qualitative interviews. The asterisk notes my positionality as researcher. I am an insider to the community as both a retired active-duty Army veteran and a nonprofit leader. Participants were identified through my military career and my network relationships with nonprofit organizations. The asterisk notes my positionality as researcher. I am an insider to the community as both a retired active-duty Army veteran and a nonprofit leader. I worked for two participants, BC and KN, during my military career. Participants were identified through researcher networks with nonprofit organizations and people known to the researcher. Difference among the participants in experience and gender, three men and three women, contributed to multivocality, a component to establish credibility, a marker for quality qualitative research (Tracy, 2020).

Table 3.2. Pilot Project Participant Profiles

Participant number	Pseudonym	Military Branch	Military Status	Military Rank	Gender	Nonprofit
1	BC	Army	Retired	Sergeant Major, E8	M	Military Police Regimental Association, Rehabilitation Foundation
2	JN	Army	Active Duty	Major, O4	F	Military Police Regimental Association
3	KN	Army	Retired	Sergeant Major, E8	M	Community volunteer
4	MR	Navy	Retired	Chief Petty Officer, E7	F	Vets2Industry, Veterati
5	SM	Army	Retired	Sergeant First Class, E7	M	Toastmasters, Retiree Council
6	VR	Army National Guard	Reserve	Major, O4	F	Healthcare
*	Researcher	Army	Retired	Sergeant First Class, E7	M	Military Police Regimental Association

After analyzing and coding the data revealed three themes to the researcher: (a) activities, (b) leadership, and (c) organization (Table 3.3). The participants' experiences were unique to their personal experience but shared certain commonalities that may indicate generalizable summations relevant to future research. Each participant has decades of experience leading organizations and people in the military and are subject matter experts in those settings. They all struggled when functioning as a leader in the nonprofit sector and adapted their behavior or adjusted their commitment to nonprofit organizations.

Table 3.3. Pilot Project Analysis Results

Codes	Categories	Themes
training schedule training holidays resiliency training online training academy annual training annual diversity training	Platoon Sergeant Level Staff Level Training	Activities
effective leader everyday leaders faith leader headquarters platoon leader high-level leaders key leader engagements military leader quasi leader subordinate leader	Leadership Role	Leadership
Different Leadership Transition Mission Fundraising Arduous Process Experience Sponsors Tasks, getting things done. Military Context Correct Process	Nonprofit Military Mission Transition	Organization

Despite transition difficulties they each experienced, all maintain a commitment to service in a new capacity and are passionate about engaging in community work as an employee or volunteer. They found their leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities valuable in new careers or as volunteers in nonprofits. Each described their challenge in adjusting to the culture of nonprofit organizations requiring personal adaptation to a different way of doing things. Participants talked about transitional experiences, being adaptive to new organizational contexts, and learning how to communicate effectively with non-military people. Several said the

transition changes they experienced as very impactful not only at the end of their military careers, but also at the beginning as they were transformed from civilians to soldiers.

The pilot project revealed three findings about the experiences of military leaders in nonprofit organizations. The participants had similar experiences regardless of their branch of service or status as current military service members or veterans when serving in nonprofit organizations. The activities practiced during the military carried over successfully to nonprofit organizations. The leadership principles in the Army Noncommissioned Officer Creed (Appendix E) stating “I know my Soldiers and I will always place their needs above my own. I will communicate consistently with my Soldiers and never leave them uninformed” (Department of the Army, 2025, p. viii) translated in their nonprofit leader role. These principles were repurposed to a new code to know your people and to maintain regular and meaningful communication. Improving leadership KSAs through training and certification helped participants learn new aspects of the job and cultures, and introduction to topics they were familiar with in the military, but through a new civic perspective, deepened knowledge and practices of communication styles, leadership styles, and diversity. Assessing their practice and methods of leadership in the nonprofit context resulted in adjusting to nonmilitary communities and approaches to communication. Barriers protecting personal time, largely absent during military service, were strange at first for most participants. Only one had to push back on expectations to work on weekends or evenings. Differences of language and meanings were problems that were either adapted to or continue. If the nonprofit organization has a high military/veteran population communication and culture adjustment is minimal and easy. Other contexts require the individual to learn new terms, communication styles, and cultural norms.

As I developed and conducted this pilot study, I had an expectation that the stories of the participating military leaders in nonprofit organizations would mirror my own. Years prior, KN and BC had run the nonprofit chapter that I oversee now. A conclusion from the pilot was that translating military leader knowledge, skills, and abilities, leadership and communication styles, ethics and morals, and discipline and organization was difficult but possible. However, transitional support and training are not available to assist with a career transition from military to nonprofit participation. Evidence from the interviews suggested greater military and veteran engagement in nonprofit work and leadership is lacking because of a gap in interlanguages between military and other sectors of society, misunderstandings about military culture, and traditional separations between the private, public, and nonprofit sectors.

I concluded that there was a need for better preparation of military leaders and veterans to volunteer or hold leadership roles in nonprofit organizations and future research needed to be done to better understand this phenomenon. Only one of the participants in the pilot project, VR, personally volunteered while serving on active duty. The others, the veterans, only volunteered after leaving the service, but had service members under their command who volunteered. The complex experience VR described volunteering while serving, and the secondary evidence that other active-duty service members volunteered and perhaps had similar intersectional military and community service, was the unexpected discovery leading to this current study. The pilot project work was a developmental step for me as a researcher and laid the foundation for this study, which shifted the participant criteria from senior military leaders to any active-duty service member who volunteered.

Research Site

Participant interviews were conducted and recorded using an online conferencing platform and a digital recording device. Video transcripts were generated by uploading video recordings to a private YouTube channel I created for academic purposes. The YouTube transcription tool for videos proved highly accurate in the pilot project preceding this study. I estimated transcripts from YouTube were 70% accurate in word recognition and grammar. Punctuation and sentence structure needed to be added manually as I rewatched the interviews during analysis. In-person interviews were conducted in a secure office setting and recorded. Participants were offered the opportunity to choose the interview location, but all preferred my office setting or online.

Membership Role

My insider and member role helped to build rapport during interviews. My personal experience influenced how I worded the informed consent agreements for interviews, memorandums and proposals to gain permission for interviews from the Garrison Commander and the Army, my interview guide, recruiting posters, and my sampling strategy. My status as a veteran and volunteer influenced my theoretical framework, research design, recruitment strategy, and data analysis. My own military career occurred concurrently with the veterans and some of the older active-duty participants. Shared military experiences in the day-to-day regimen and in combats helped build rapport and a deeper unspoken understanding of the world. This understanding went both ways. I gained insight into their experiences, and they gained insight to mine, building trust and collaborative engagement.

Data Collection Methods

I decided to focus primarily on semi-structured interviews and document analysis, setting aside observations and surveys. Permission granted by AHRPO allowed for interviews, data collection from VMIS, and an Army-wide survey. This study was initially proposed as a mixed-methods inquiry, heavily qualitative supported by minimal quantitative data (QUAL→quan). The research framework originally consisted of interviews, document analysis, and field observation methodologies. I discarded administering a survey under the peer advice of other scholars with military research experience who advised/warned me permission to interview active-duty service members could take too long to benefit a doctoral student. Additionally, the Fort Riley point of contact for research approval. Fort Riley typically refused to approve survey requests as they typically burdened government staff with distribution and recovery the surveys. They wanted minimal impact on their employees, and it helped that I was familiar with Fort Riley culture and organizations. I reflected on this in my data collection spreadsheet, a component of my reflective journal. After I met with my Fort Riley point of contact at a local Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Council luncheon I wrote, “They have been unhappy with approved survey research that pulled the Garrison Staff into the process. That I already know who to talk to and where the data will be is helpful gaining approval for the Letter.”

The large response during the recruiting phase allowed interviews to begin quickly. Transcribing, reviewing analyzing, and obtaining participant feedback through member checking was time intensive. The detailed descriptions from the interviews, plus my personal on-site experience with active-duty service members volunteering, caused me to rethink the observation methodology. I decided to remove field observations to save time, relying on participant descriptions in the interviews to be the primary source for data. than expected participant pool of

current service members and veterans responded to recruiting efforts and the limitations of time and other obligations require a reduction in the scope of my data collection ambitions. I then adjusted the methodology to only include semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

Site

Fort Riley, Kansas was selected as the site for this study because it is an active-duty Army installation with a historical and economic impact on the Flint Hills region and has an ongoing partnership with Kansas State University. The history of this relationship was an advantage to this study as evidenced by the help I received working through the protocols and requirements for Fort Riley Garrison Command and the Department of the Army. I received help from Fort Riley representatives with writing and submitting documentation, researching policy, collecting data, and recruiting interview participants.

Volunteerism is reported as community service under a quality-of-life metric in the annual Fort Riley Economic Impact Summary (U.S. Army Garrison Fort Riley, 2024). Fort Riley has an active volunteer program that tracks and reports volunteer hours and opportunities. Fort Riley is convenient and familiar to me as the researcher for this study since I was stationed at Fort Riley for the last ten years of my Army career before retiring. Now, I work at Fort Riley as a representative for Kansas State University and I am the president of a small nonprofit organization supporting Fort Riley military police units, soldiers, and families. The volunteer population in the Fort Riley report includes soldiers, family members, and civilians who provided “values-based, high-quality, cost-efficient services that contribute to resiliency and quality of life for people living in the Flint Hills Region” serving 75,521 hours and saving \$2,274,368 in cost avoidance (p.41).

Sample and Population

Personnel stationed at the Fort Riley U.S. Army installation are the active-duty population in this study. They were convenient and accessible and generally representative of active-duty US Army service members. Veteran participants were recruited from the local community. Active-duty participants were identified with the help of the volunteer coordinator from the Fort Riley Army Community Service (ACS) office. I made this connection as a strategy to ensure sure compliance with government approval and to ensure active-duty participants met typical-case criteria (active-duty, volunteer experience). Department of Defense Instruction 3216.02 mandated review and approval by a university Institutional Review Board (IRB), Fort Riley Garrison Commander, US Army Human Research Protection Office (AHRPO), and the US Army Information Management Control Officer (IMCO) before I began recruiting the active-duty participants (Department of Defense, 2022).

I used my personal and professional networks, supported by purposeful and snowball sampling strategies, to reach out to the community for veteran participants. Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research to build information-rich studies using restricted resources (Palinkas et al., 2015). With purposeful sampling, participants are qualified based on specific experiences or knowledge. This sampling strategy is the most common one used inn qualitative research (Elliot & Timulak, 2005). There were two requirements for participation in this study: 1) people who volunteered in community nonprofit organizations, and 2) that the volunteer work was conducted while serving on active-duty status in the U.S. Armed Forces. I wanted to interview current service members and veterans who met these criteria to better understand the phenomena from pre-transition and post-transition perspectives. Snowball sampling was used to supplement and reinforce the purposeful strategy. Snowball sampling is a technique that invites

interviewees to be partners with researchers in qualitative research by reaching out to refer others within their networks to the study (Hutchinson, 2014).

Interview participants were recruited through local community organizations: the Army Community Service Volunteer Corps and the Army Education Services Center located at Fort Riley, the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, two local Chambers of Commerce, and online through the Noncommissioned Officers Association and the Military Police Regimental Association. Only the online recruiting efforts produced no respondents. I presented my research topic and asked for volunteers at nonprofit organization meetings, recruiting tables at public markets, posted flyers on and off Fort Riley (Appendix F), and spoke with organization leaders who distributed calls for study participants through their own networks. The communication plan included emails, phone calls, posters, presentations, and networking through community organizations. Fort Riley is an Army installation, so all active-duty participants were in the Army. There is a small contingent of Air Force service members, but no one responded to the call for participation. Differences among the respondents regarding their individual experience and gender contributed to multivocality, a component for establishing researcher credibility, and a marker for quality qualitative research (Tracy, 2020).

Participant Demographics

Interview participants were identified by pseudonyms, branch of service, and gender (Table 3.4). Fourteen of the 19 interviewees volunteered before they joined the military. The majority (17 of 19) plan to continue to volunteer or still do if they are veterans. One of the findings indicates that people who are apt to volunteer as citizens are open to volunteering while serving in the military. All participants who did not volunteer before military service indicated they would continue to engage in community service as veterans. All but one interviewee felt

volunteerism helped with transition. Feeding people in the community was the most popular activity (12/19 reporting) followed by neighborhood clean-up (10/19). Participants named fifty-two organizations and activities they supported with a total of 111 individual acts of volunteerism among them all.

Table 3.4. Interview Participant Demographics

Active duty						
Pseudonym	Military Status	Military Branch	Gender	before military	after military	Helps with transition
Stacey	Active Duty	Army, prior Army Reserve	Male	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mary	Active Duty	Army	Female	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pat	Active Duty	Army	Female	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sean	Active Duty	Army, former Marine Corps	Male	Yes	Yes	Yes
Carlos	Active Duty	Army	Male	No	Yes	Yes
Jennifer	Active Duty	Army	Female	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jo	Active Duty	Army	Female	No	Yes	Yes
Bryan	Active Duty	Army	Male	Yes	Yes	Yes
Zachary	Active Duty	Army	Male	Yes	Yes	Yes
Abby	Active Duty	Army	Female	Yes	Yes	Yes
Veteran						
Sam	Veteran	Army, Army Reserve, Army National Guard	Male	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wesley	Veteran	Army	Male	No	Yes	Yes
Manny	Veteran	Army	Male	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nashelle	Veteran	Army	Female	Yes	No	No
Frank	Veteran	Marine Corps	Male	Yes	Yes	Yes
Arlen	Veteran	Army, Army Reserve	Male	-	Yes	Yes
Tony	Veteran	Army	Male	No	Yes	Yes
Mark	Veteran	Army	Male	Yes	No	Yes
Amanda	Veteran	Army, Army Reserve	Female	Yes	Yes	Yes
Me	Veteran	Army, Army Reserve, Army National Guard	Male	No	Yes	Yes

Interviewing Department of Defense Personnel. I sought help and advice from mentors, research and compliance offices at the university, community organizations and knowledgeable people, and academic professionals in the field who had experience with conducting research on the military community. I assumed there would be an established protocol in place for research activities between Fort Riley and Kansas State University. I found that much of the prior research conducted with members of the Fort Riley community did not include active-duty soldiers, favoring veterans and spouses, therefore not requiring the Garrison Commander and Department of the Army approval. While working on my literature review, I

came across an article in the Military Times, “*Many Vets are landing jobs, but the transition can be tough*” (Finley, 2022). This article included research by Dr. Karl Hamner with the University of Alabama College of Education, where he stated in his own article that veterans need more time to prepare for transition than provided by TAP (Hamner et al, 2021). I contacted Dr. Hamner by email on 18 November 2022 explaining the focus of my study and he agreed to meet via Zoom. A few weeks later on 5 December we met and discussed my study. Dr. Hamner graciously shared his experience with research on veteran transition challenges but recommended I not work with active-duty service members for my dissertation because it could take a year or more to get official government permission to interview active-duty soldiers. He said the better approach for the time constraints of doctoral work was to interview veterans. I considered this but chose to include active-duty interviews, as this perspective was missing in the literature.

On January 2023 I emailed Kansas State University’s Research Compliance Office for guidance on conducting research with Fort Riley personnel. I needed to know if the university held a current Department of Defense Federalwide Assurance (FWA). Paul Lowe, Associate Vice-President for Research and Director of K-State Research replied to my email. He recommended I contact Dr. Briana Goff and referred me to the IRB website for resources. I did so, meeting with Dr. Goff on 7 February 2023. Dr. Goff did conduct research with active-duty soldiers at Fort Riley, but specifically during their off-duty hours. She recommended I contact Lori Bishop, Executive Director of the Flint Hills Volunteer Center to see if they could support me with data, participant recruiting, and points of contact.

I initiated the process of interviewing active-duty service members by emailing the Fort Riley Public Affairs Office (PAO) to determine the right protocol. PAO directed me to the Fort

Riley Garrison Commander's office where I received directions for the next step. The Garrison Commander, Colonel Foote, had final authority to approve my request, but I had to get approval from the Army Human Resources Protection Office (AHRPO) and the Army Information Management Contoral Office (IMCO) first. From 25 October 2022 – 23 May 2023 Mr. Brandon French, Management Analyst with the Installation Management Command (IMCOM) at Fort Riley, worked with me to navigate the requirements for the Garison Commanders letter of approval. He connected me with the Army Human Research Protections Office (AHRPO) to receive their approval first. AHRPO stated, in addition to their approval, I needed Information Management Command Office (IMCO) approval for data retention and protection. With AHRPO and IMCO approval in place COL Foote approved my study, with the caveat that I brief him at some point before publishing the dissertation. When I discovered that COL Foote was moving to a new command, I coordinated through Mr. French to provide an in-process update on my preliminary findings on 23 April 2024.

Data Coding and Analysis

Data was managed and analyzed using written notes and a researcher journal, brainstorming and visualizing on whiteboards, stored and analyzed using the NVivo 12 and 14 qualitative data analysis software. I would email myself when ideas and connections came to mind and I did not have access to my researcher journal, serving as a supplemental note-taking tool. Examples of my researcher journal, braining storming on a whiteboard, and email note taking are provided in Appendix G.

Interview transcripts were entered for coding using the NVivo 14 program. Transcripts were processed first through the NVivo Auto code function as an exercise to generate an initial view of the data. They did not result in groupings or patterns of connections. Reformatting the

data into paragraphs helped construct free speech patterns into something akin to written text. That thought process assisted with precoding for significant passages, words and paragraphs (Saldaña, 2016). Initial coding for the first cycle “breaks down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examines them, and compares them for similarities and differences” (p. 115). This started to create codes that overlapped or divided into other codes. Some chunks of that data would be a long statement that became cohesive at the end, but in the middle other coded datum were identified as examples or linguistic asides. This made for a complex process that resulted in certain pieces of data being coded multiple times for different purposes. Simultaneous coding then was appropriate to capture layered content. This technique is appropriate when data suggests multiple meanings embedded within codes.

Qualitative inquiry is emergent, inductive, and evolutionary (Saldaña, 2021). During the analysis process data was entered into NVivo software and coded using exploratory methods for a qualitative analysis of narrative interview transcripts. Analysis of interview was conducted with the entire transcript and with my side of the discussion removed. It was clear to me that removing my voice from the interviews also removed nuance and context present in my prompts and responses to the interlocutor. My reflective journal, coordination notes, and collected documents to note emergent patterns within the data and my processes. Holistic coding of the data is a preparatory lumping exploratory process. It helps develop temporary labels on broad topics to be further analyzed through more specific first- and second-cycle coding. Once lumped data and temporary labels are assigned, I began first-cycle coding Initial Coding which broke down the lumped data into discrete parts, allowing for emergent similarities and differences. This approach allowed meso- and macro-levels of meaning to be assessed.

Pseudonyms represent each interview participant. Personally identifiable information (PII) was collected during the recruiting and interview processes. PII was removed for the dissertation and from all future publications and shared data. PII is secured by program password and device password only available to study investigators. Transcripts of the interviews do not include PII of participants or any individual mentioned during the interview. The original recordings will be erased and irretrievable at the conclusion of the study. Deidentified data are maintained indefinitely for future research. Transparency, a component of sincerity, is a marker of quality qualitative research, when researchers are “genuine and vulnerable,” and share “goals, hopes, and mistakes” (Tracy, 2020, p. 272). Sincerity is also established through self-reflexivity, an honest awareness of one’s identity, being frank, questioning assumptions, and providing transparency about the research design and process.

Power imbalances rest with control of information, personal information, and trust. As the researcher I am committed to protecting personal information and to following through with my promises and commitments to the participants. My personal experiences and positionality could have led to blind spots in my design, data collection and analysis, and conclusions. This study was influenced by my nonprofit experiences and intentionality for the study to have a meaningful impact on theory and practice. I strive for transparency and am open to critique and criticism. For instance, I may be presumptive in where data is leading based on my own agenda to find problems like my own and a stated purpose to provide a solution. I may prioritize some trends over others and not follow the data. To work against any bias, I practiced reflexivity and transparency.

Chapter 4 - Findings

The purpose of this study is to better understand how active-duty service members experience volunteerism and if volunteerism helped them prepare to transition to the civilian world. The 19 interview respondents were current active-duty service members or veterans located at or near Fort Riley, Kansas except for one veteran referral, Sam, not living or working in the area who was interviewed online. The respondents were episodic and regular volunteer participants; all volunteered to service in the U.S. military. The semi-structured qualitative interviews were Interviews focused on the following research questions.

Q1. How do active-duty service members experience volunteerism?

Q1.a. What are active-duty service members experiences in transferable skills and abilities, self-worth and identity, and reintegration into civil society?

Q2. How does volunteerism impact transition success?

Data collection included interviews and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with active-duty Army soldiers stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas and veterans of any branch of service. Volunteerism while serving on an active-duty status in the U.S. armed forces was the eligibility requirement for interview participation. For veterans the volunteering activity would have occurred back when they were serving in the military in an active-duty status. Nineteen interviews were conducted over a two-month period from June to July 2024. Nine participants were currently serving on active duty with the US Army stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas. Fort Riley was selected for convenience as it is located within 30 miles of Kansas State University, the installation is representative of an Army installation, and it has an active volunteerism program coordinated through the Army Community Service office. Ten interview participants were veterans, nine served in the Army and one in the Marine Corps. Two active-duty

participants currently in the Army had prior service, one in the Army Reserve and one in the Marine Corps. Of the nineteen participants seven were female, five were females on active-duty and two veterans.

This chapter is organized to discuss the predominant themes that emerged through data analysis. Three overarching themes emerged from analysis with subcategories underneath them. Then, I will outline what led participants to volunteer, a theme that transcended the meta themes of preparation, adaptation, and transition, the overarching themes that emerged from data analysis.

Preparation

Generally, for respondents who reflected on how volunteering affected their military service, it was described as positive for transition readiness, supported mental and social health, and fulfilled a sense of purpose. Being a volunteer provided a sense of purpose, and it felt good.

Preparing for Transition

Emergent themes from interview participants show volunteering to be a positive and transformative experience. Veteran participants in the study reflected on how volunteering connected directly to their transition success. Some intended to prepare for their transition, but others did not realize they were benefitting their transition until our interviews.

Managing Expectations

Participants describe the transition as hanging up the uniform, changing from the military uniform to another civilian-based uniform, and expecting their military experience to get them a job. Some struggled with their own transition readiness when plans fell through. Mark put time into developing a relationship at his volunteer site that coincided with his preparation to retire and transition from the military. The plan did not lead to the job offer he expected and a

relationship on site soured after a disagreement. Unexpectedly his presence there was rebuffed and he felt unwelcome. I asked him if he felt he had lost a safe space and if, because of that, he was going through two transitions at the same time:

The first part of that question is, absolutely, I lost a safe space. I lost the safe space when I was losing something, or I wasn't really losing it. That chosen family, that EOD family, is forever going to be different now for me. To lose that almost at the same time or through the same year that I was getting ready to retire, it was difficult. I lost a lot of drive in both work and in that volunteer opportunity. To be completely frank he ruined it for me. I used to get up and be really excited to throw that Midwestern Car Collection shirt on and jump on the Harley and ride over there. I was like, 'Man, oh my God, I don't want to go because I'm gonna see him and he's gonna tic me off. So, I'm not gonna be able to do anything. I want to go.' And it ruined a lot of it for me. (Mark, p.18)

Networking

Building networks through volunteerism is a theme that emerged primarily from the active-duty interviews. Tony and Manny, both veteran respondents, offered confirmation from their post-military perspective that building networks helped them when they transitioned out from the military. Manny noted that volunteers are not only doing good for someone, but they are also connecting to networks. Jo said she enjoys meeting other soldiers from different military units at volunteer events. That connection has built relationships and friendships that she is grateful for. Tony expanded his professional networks beyond his Amy contacts. "I've expanded my social network to people I would have never been in contact with if I didn't volunteer while on active duty."

Abby was surprised by a connection she made when she volunteered at a community farmer's market and met a member of the U.S. Congress:

For instance, when I was volunteering at Freedom Fest, I was talking with one of the organizers. We volunteered for four hours, and we were talking the whole time. When I left, I found out he's a retired major in the Army and he told me, 'If you ever need a reference for anything let me give you my card.' He's also a member of the U.S House of Representatives. So, I realized, I mean you don't do it for those reasons though, I firmly believe you volunteer for the right reasons, but you have to make connections to help you grow in every way, mentally and then educationally. Little things like that add up to the benefits of volunteering and just engaging with the community without you even realizing it. (Abby, p. 13)

Enhancing Military Experience

Volunteerism while serving had some effects on military service experiences for a few participants. Receiving recognition and awards, helping with a greater sense of purpose, and countering boredom.

Expanding Military Experience

Volunteering provided a sense of purpose, mental focus, and positive activity and an opportunity to bring soldiers together that normally do not see each other. Zachary credited volunteerism as the motivation that kept him going for his military duties. He described his passion for volunteering as energizing his military duties. Though his priority obligation is the military, and his free time is limited, volunteerism is a passion that balances and energizes his military life. Mary, also active duty, feels protective of

her volunteer time, sometimes not letting her unit leadership know that she is volunteering on weekends.

Awards and Recognition

As the unit leader, Jo allows her soldiers to volunteer during the workday to build morale. Plus, her soldiers track and report their volunteer hours to earn the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal (MOVSM). The MOVSM is awarded to service members to recognize them for their volunteerism in civilian communities. Attaining the MOVSM was one motivation to volunteer for the interview participants. It is difficult to earn and uncommon among the ranks, but those who earn the award also receive points that count towards promotion at the low to mid-level enlisted ranks. Officers are awarded the MOVSM but do not accumulate promotion points to improve promotion eligibility. Though the MOVSM was created in 1992 many of the participants did not know about the award while serving. The veteran participants often learned of the award after leaving the military. Awareness of the award and ambiguity about the required hours to earn it, plus the effort to track volunteer hours, and then the personal ethics about taking credit for altruistic work may be some of the reasons why more service members do not pursue the award. Frank said recognition is why he chose to volunteer, “It wouldn't have really clicked in my mind if it hadn't been for that award system.” Mark said his volunteerism was known by leaders in his unit.

I didn't track any of my hours because honestly, I didn't know it was even a thing until probably a year ago and they were like, ‘Oh yeah, hey we're’...there was this push. And I was like, Oh?’ My boss at the time was like, ‘Hey, you've been volunteering at the car museum for like three years, right?’ I was like, ‘Yeah.’

‘You've probably got like quadruple the hours required to get this medal. Do the memo because it makes the whole Battalion look good.’ I was like, ‘Okay.’

(Mark, p. 2)

Advice for Volunteers

I asked study participants what advice would be good to share with current service members, and the responses were passionate and practical. The active-duty participants promoted the MOVSM award as a reason for other service members to volunteer. Veterans deferred to the transition preparation and a continued sense of purpose as the main benefit to share. Bryan and Zachary recommended volunteering to make the best of down time, to contribute to society, and to have fun. More practical words of wisdom from Jessica, Nashelle, and Carlos encouraged service members to think about the skills and experiences they will get that are not specifically military-oriented. They reminded service members to document and report their volunteer activities to earn the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal (MOVSM) and to include volunteer experiences with their resumes when they eventually transition from the military. Pat saw volunteering as an opportunity to do something social and beneficial with her friends. She promoted the MOVSM to her soldiers as a benefit of volunteering while expecting they would not commit to long-term volunteerism. Nashelle said she recommends to soldiers that they earn the MOVSM to help get promoted. Mark equated community service and military service, adding that volunteering can connect them with a community for the long-term.

If you're talking about transition what would need to be included is how volunteering can help you practice your skill set in a different type of

organization, how to know and understand the community that you intend to stay in for the rest of your life. I think those are probably the main components.

(Amanda, p. 13)

Realizing Identity

All participants voluntarily joined the U.S. armed forces, referred to as the All-Volunteer force. For the service members and veterans in this study, their volunteer identity intersects. They are both a voluntary service member and or veteran, and a voluntary community servant.

Professional Identity

Participants delimited their professional life from their personal life, often switching from one to another via mental constructs or material contexts. Bryan believed soldiers like himself the medical fields were closely aligned with civilian counterparts, but “more insular and a bit different, expected to be more professional” than other soldiers. Jennifer described the psychological and physical barriers she emplaced to manage and separate her professional military identity from her personal life.

I've always been able to negotiate that just because I've always tried to keep a good barrier between my personal life and my professional life. So that when you leave work you can actually decompress; although we're always on call. Even when I was a drill sergeant at Fort Leonard Wood, when you would leave work, I lived off post, and you would drive out the gate, a little way away you would drive over some train tracks, and that was kind of the signal in my head of like, over the train tracks, now I'm personal me, as opposed to professional me on the other side.

I always try to have some sort of a barrier, at least figment of my imagination type of a barrier, as I move from one location to another, going home each day or like taking

that deep breath when I get in the car at night every day. Now, I call my husband to say I'm leaving, I'm on my way. That's the routine that I've done in order to break the monotony. We'll talk about our day the whole way home. Once I get home, we'll either continue the conversation or we just become mom and dad and we can have our conversation about kids, about how it was your day, what did that look like for you, and then to decompress. (Jennifer, p. 11)

Uniforms

Uniforms are a mark of group identity and membership that represent individual military identity and association with military authority and community. Uniforms are a material representation that rank and authority, social status, and service branch association within military contexts. In civilian settings these military representations are not fixed but received and interpreted differently by individuals in the civilian world. Participants described uniforms as representations, communications, and social negotiation of personal identity. Active-duty participants described relationship modes and ways of engaging with the world as shifting when donning or doffing uniforms. Uniforms acted as a separator between the military world and the civilian world, affecting external engagement with the world and internal modulation for role switching. Veteran participants maintained respectful perceptions of uniformed service members but varied on perceptions of veterans who continue to wear uniforms, military-like clothing, and retain military identity after service as failing to fully transition from the military.

Active-Duty Participants. Stacey equated leaving the military to “hanging up the uniform.” Being in uniform was used to describe clothing worn in a moment in time and to describe current military membership: “my volunteer service while I've been in uniform has mainly been two things.” “I get to take off this uniform and still be socially engaged but there's

no expectation, there's no going to parade to rest with civilians, saluting civilians. We're just people.”

Veteran Participants. Tony often referred to his time in the military as being “in uniform.” Tony reflected on his unexpected early retirement “under duress” because he needed to prioritize his family. “So, I felt I didn't fulfill all the investment the Army made in me by giving it back in service, in uniform.” Amanda said volunteering helped make connections in the community “outside of the uniform” that in turn helped with transition.

The Researcher. I often asked veteran participants to reflect on their time in uniform rather than asking about their time in the military. The connotation being that time in their life when they were in the military. Active-duty participants responded from a perspective of whether they were on duty or off duty. Using uniform as a descriptor in this way did not interfere with communications or cause confusion with the participants. Admittedly, this was directly related to my positionality as a veteran.

Volunteering

I asked each interview participant to recall their volunteer activities and organizations. Among the 10 active-duty respondents, eight had prior volunteer experience before joining the military and nine plan to continue to volunteer after they leave the military. Among the nine veteran respondents, six had volunteer experience before joining the military. Of those who had prior volunteer experience, four continue to volunteer after leaving the military. Three of the nine veteran participants had no prior volunteer experience before enlisting but continue to volunteer now that they have left the service. Overall, 14 of the 19 respondents had volunteer experience prior to enlisting into the military and 16 will or do volunteer after separating from the military.

Motivations to Volunteer

The motivations to volunteer were complex in the data, with each respondent identifying multiple motivations. Motivation to volunteer were grouped into 16 categories that emerged from interview data: giving back, mental health, transition preparation, networking, learning, community, life balance, supporting children and the less fortunate, communication, value laden, qualifying and quantifying, service and time, personal development, unit support, bridging and enabling, and emotional engagement-obligation (Appendix H). They discussed their personal motivations to volunteer, which provided thick, rich data. volunteering. Participants' motivations to volunteer aligned literature noted in chapter two: intrinsic and extrinsic, self-oriented and altruistic. From a practice perspective, participants had the opportunity to change from military styles of leadership to servant leadership. Tony explained his motivation to serve, "Yeah, my motive was servant. My motive was to serve the organization. I believed in it. I saw all the good."

I've always just kind of enjoyed it, I guess. Which is one of the reasons that I'm in the VFW and the American Legion, because I just I enjoy doing that kind of stuff and reaching out to people that you know that are not aware of their benefits or you know might need a little help or something. (Wesley, p. 8)

Volunteer Activities and Trends

A wide range of volunteer activities were revealed among the 19 interviewees, and overall, the frequency of volunteering per participant varied greatly. A comprehensive list of volunteer activities described by each participant shows volunteer engagement before, during, and after their military service (Appendix I).

Volunteer Trends. Active-duty service members who volunteered did so at the same or similar rates as civilians, in similar activities, with similar motivations, and had ample

opportunities to volunteer in their local communities. Interviews and an analysis of documented Fort Riley volunteer activities and government reports. Active-duty participants described how they expected to volunteer after service. The most common activity shared by respondents (12/19 reporting) was volunteering to provide food for communities. 11 preferred helping with some type of community clean up. Less popular activities included church-related activities, youth programs, donating blood or volunteering with the Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, and fundraising. The least popular activities were memberships in clubs or social groups. Active-duty soldiers and veterans engaged in responding to a range of needs, from international disaster response to helping veterans in communities to providing lunchtime snacks on a military installation. Of the 12 interview participants who helped provide food to communities, five were on active-duty status.

Seven of the 19 participants had children while on active duty. Participating in activities supporting children (mentoring youth, coaching) was not significantly affected by parental status of the participants. Within the veteran participant group, seven of the nine chose to volunteer in youth-related activities. Within this subset, two were parents. Within the active-duty group of participants, of the five who were parents, four participated in a youth-related activity. The five active-duty participants who did not have children did not tend to engage in youth activities. Only one non-parent active-duty participant engaged in youth work. An active-duty participant shared his experience volunteering at an orphanage while deployed, “I deployed to Poland and there was, like, an orphanage that we volunteered at a couple times. It was nice for those kids to see American soldiers, adults. They hung out with us a bit. We had a good time and those are tangible things that I think are good for a community.” Several of the participants, when reflecting on their volunteer activities for their church, did not count it as volunteerism. Taking

credit for volunteering to support their church was seen by some as counter-intuitive to personal sacrifice through service. “I think, for some people, it goes against the altruistic thoughts of why some people might, or might not, do something. Because, if you’re gaining something by doing something, then it may take away from the charitable aspect, away from the giving of oneself.” That perspective may also be true for donating blood, resulting in under-reporting of this altruistic activity with four participants reporting donation-based behavior through blood donations.

The difference in how civilians, active-duty, and veterans chose to volunteer is presented in the chart below. The categories are derived from the CPS survey to align military volunteerism with civilian categories (Appendix J). The categories are organized according to civilian ranking, highest to lowest activity, with the participant activities distributed accordingly. The most common volunteer activity for the civilians group is fundraising. As a group, study participants did fundraise as well but were also very active in providing or managing labor. Comparing current service members to veterans during service, a distinction can be seen that may represent differences in military operational eras (wartime vs post-war service). The last two columns compare veterans’ volunteer activities during military service to what they do now as veterans. Changes may represent how community engagement is affected by military service considering contexts of time, families, work, and priorities.

Adaption

Participants’ experience in the military system embedded a deep understanding of traditional heroic leadership. Volunteerism served as a satisfying outlet to translate those skills and actively participate in civic democracy. For the most part, how participants

adapted their leadership style and practices was dependent on the volunteer environment, task, and people.

Adapting Military Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Descriptions of the adapted approach to leadership were diverse among the interviews. Five participants stated they were less rough in their approach to communication and leadership in volunteer settings. Several participants described a preference for collective and communal leadership. While communication and leadership practices were viewed as contextually situated for both active duty and veteran participants. Each respondent compared their military leadership style to choices they made while volunteering. For most, they adapted or transferred their military leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's). The active-duty participants reflected on ongoing adaptive leadership practices and ruminated on transferability of KSA's in the future. Veteran participants looked back to their active-duty experience for memories of adapted leadership at the time. Since the veterans had completed transition, they reflected on KSA transferability in their lived experience.

Leadership KSA's

Participants shared experiences of leadership skills that transferred over to volunteering and nonprofit leadership. They also described not getting the professional development and leadership they desired and deserved, which impacted their transition readiness. Wesley used adapted leadership skills and practices he learned in the Army to engage as a volunteer during his active-duty Army career and afterwards as a nonprofit leader. Tony described how his professional and volunteer work have merged sense retiring from the military, "Because of my roles in nonprofits, I developed management

and leadership abilities that have now translated into all other fields as an expert.

Volunteering gave me more opportunities to use my leadership skills.” Nashelle said her military experience lacked the mentorship she expected and needed.

I don't want anybody to think that I could just say, like, that's why I'm so passionate about what I do now. It's because, you know, I didn't get the tools that I needed when I was in the military. My leadership, they really, they weren't after that, you know. They were just something else. They just, they really weren't there. (Nashelle, p. 16)

Technical KSA's

Participants could identify specific skills learned in the military that transferred to nonprofit work. The transferability exemplified how they would transfer to civilian careers. Truck driving, physical fitness, leadership and team building skills, training development, event planning, logistics, culinary skills, medical professional skills, public speaking, are skills identified by the participants. Note that leadership was described as a position, a role, and a technical skill by participants of various ranks or levels of responsibility. Bryan's military job as a pharmacy technician was the same in the civilian world. Carlos began as a food specialist and applied his culinary skills to nonprofit organizations feeding local communities. “This culinary background and event planning skill set, it's transferable from the military right into almost any role in the civilian world.” Sam described plugging in his military experience in organizational leadership and training skills directly into nonprofit events.

For me, it was a self-fulfilling circle. I would take my military experience and plug it into the nonprofit world with this organization utilizing the skills. At Fort

Knox I was a Scout Leaders Course cadre. I ran all the OPFOR missions. I was the NCOIC for all that stuff at the Armor Officer Basic Course and Scout Leaders Course. With this nonprofit they did a whole bunch of different things. They did everything from like little war games and stuff like that with paintball and airsoft and all sorts of different things they did. I would design these entire events for these nonprofits based off my experience doing that. That's my job! (Sam, p. 9)

Adapting Leadership

Interview participants described changing their approaches to leadership while volunteering. Some set aside their identity as a military leader so they could enjoy a relaxed and participatory environment. Others took a collaborative approach or softened their authority to retain elements of authority and organizational control.

Positional to Personal Leadership

The volunteer experience provided a safe space to adapt military leadership styles to a civilian context. The traditional heroic form of leadership was exchanged for action-orientated leadership based on coordination, influence, and personal connections rather than rank. Some of the participants maintained a consistent leadership identity across military and civilian roles, but many consciously adapted their style, becoming less "rough" and more collaborative. The fun and non-military, civilian job serving customers relaxed soldiers' normal military deference to Jennifer's leadership role, enabling different relationships to emerge. Jo, volunteering with the same group and technically under Jennifer's command, said, "We all kind of meshed together. It's like camaraderie that you didn't even know that you had." Pat summarized the concepts well when talking about becoming an "accidental leader" in basic training.

I think being a leader doesn't always have, like an official title. It can just be like how you act and take leadership on day-to-day things, or if you see something lacking organization, something lacking, someone there to support it, you just take that step to provide that, for whatever structure it can be. (Pat, p. 5)

Pat, Jo, and Stacey described their approach to leadership as peer engagement and relationship-based rather than official authority. Where Stacey is a senior leader in the military, Pat is new to the military and low in the rank structure. Though they are at the extremes of military rank and authority, they enacted leadership in the same way.

Individual to Social Process Leadership

Amanda found her military leadership skills were transferable to a leadership role with a nonprofit organization called Compassionate Friends. Her competence in organizational leadership and comfort with public speaking translated easily from her experiences as a unit commander and helped with chapter meetings, event planning, and conference organizing. Jennifer saw herself as the same person, whether at work or volunteering. She knew soldiers were intimidated by her at work but didn't understand why. Reflecting on this soldier's comment, "it gave me the perspective that soldiers do view me differently if they can see me outside of work, it gives them a different perspective." For her, volunteer activity broke down the distant leader-soldier relationship that existed at her unit, despite her self-image. Volunteering with her soldiers outside of the workplace changed others' perspective of her as the leader and fed back into the work environment by building stronger teams, trust in leadership, and esprit-de-corps among the soldiers. Jennifer's experience was personal and collective, stating volunteering allowed participating soldiers to "interact and be human with each other."

Leadership Avoidance

At least one participant enjoyed setting aside their leadership role when they volunteered. The equality and communal decision making among the group of military volunteers was rewarding civilian-like. Jo had no volunteer experience before enlisting or at prior duty stations. She enjoyed “backing off” her military leadership role to engage normalcy.

I like to back off in the personal, like, when I'm out and about not in the uniform.

I do like people being able to be afforded the opportunity to lead if need be. So, I'm for it to be at the beer stands. It's more a mutual agreement of who's doing what. We are just taking turns doing things. (Jo, p. 4)

Communication Strategy

Communication adjustments contributed to quality social interactions while participants volunteered. Study participants attempting to communicate across the civil-military divide encountered gaps in understanding, cultural differences, and impoverished languages. Without a commonly understood interlanguage between the military and civilians, each side must decide on their stance on accommodating the other.

Communication is not just about language, it reveals identities, group membership, and cultural background. Military-speak is a term referring to the use of military codes, terms, and jargon inappropriately. Participants encountered communication challenges with family, communities, and career transitions. Abby described her love for meeting new people that brought her out of isolation.

When I started stopping being a homebody, I started being happy. I became a people-person. A lot of people would be like, you're so bubbly, you're so

energetic. When I would just go to community events, you know, you got to be a welcoming, open person. You gotta say ‘hi,’ you have to greet people, you have to engage with people. It completely made me a people-person. I used to love meeting new people. It made me happy, and I think it even helped sometimes with my communication skills, because if I was working at the event, I had to be the one to engage people. It changed me a lot just getting involved in a community and stop being a homebody. (Abby, p. 6)

An analysis of participant interview data revealed accommodative communication practices around multiple topics (Table 4.1). Data collected was contextually related to the work activity, surrounding workspace, and purpose of work. Indirectly related were reflections on identity, different experiences, community connection, and ruminating on a return to civilian life. To achieve accommodative success some of the participants would pause and assess what they were going to say and to whom before speaking.

Table 4.1 Communication Accommodation Themes

Themes	% of codes	Codes
military	15.36%	Military experience, military side, military background, junior military officer, military people, military terms, military community, military jargon, military career
role	14.51%	Volunteer role, leadership role, civilian role
people	10.98%	Normal people, military people, marriages people
backgrounds	8.34%	Military background, different backgrounds
training	7.92%	Always training, training experience
conversations	7.86%	Several conversations, detailed conversations, family-oriented conversations
little bit	7.60%	Little bit
experience	7.34%	Military experience, training experience
volunteer	4.91%	Volunteer role, volunteer activities
side	4.75%	Military side, civilian side
leadership	4.33%	Leadership role, leadership style
style	2.32%	Leadership style, communication style
language	1.90%	Language use, inappropriate language
using	1.90%	Using military-speak, language use

Shared experiences and knowledge of military culture enabled productive conversations at the volunteer site. In instances where civilian knowledge of military culture was absent or unknown, participants' awareness of risk or vulnerability seemed heightened. Sam described what he called a “a little secret language” that transitioning veterans need to learn to navigate communication with civilians effectively. He observed veterans in leadership roles within his nonprofit organization create, understand, and use the secret interlanguage quite well. He also noted that civilians who don’t integrate military-speak into their communication practices do not connect well with veterans. Arlen described his observations of communication differences in the workplace.

The military culture is very directive, right. It's very hierarchical. Civilians, while there is a hierarchy at most places and there are bosses and people who are in charge and they tell other people what to do, it's not in the same type of language and mannerisms that you do in the military. For the most part it needs to be more suggestive and participative and nice. Just telling somebody, 'Hey, pick that up and move it over here,' maybe throw an expletive in there, although you know in today's military, I don't know what you're allowed to do or what you're not.

(Arlen, p. 7)

Conferred to Negotiated Identity

Participants described how their leader role held in the military would change in the volunteer context. The military socialization that brought the participants into the hierarchical military institution was relaxed during socializations in the volunteer context. This easing of deference encoded into speech acts occurred individually and collectively. Jennifer described leader-subordinate roles changing to cooperative relationships when volunteering. As volunteers, they were all the same. When Tony offered to take on leadership of a horse-riding club, he had to build relationships with enlisted soldiers and veterans who historically ran the club.

I had to politic a little bit, to let them trust me. There were some issues there.

They didn't want an officer because usually people that did it were either a retired NCO or a Department of the Army civilian. I had to demonstrate that I'm not gonna run this like an officer in an authoritative way. (Tony, p. 4)

Impoverished Language

An individual's capacity to accommodate their language affects the likelihood of successful communication, interpersonal and intergroup attitudes, expose social distances between the speakers, and impacts relationship building. Shared experiences and knowledge of military culture enabled productive conversations, reaching accommodation easily. In instances where civilian knowledge of military culture was absent or unknown, participants' awareness of risk or vulnerability seemed heightened. To achieve accommodative success some of the participants would pause and assess before speaking. Sam described what he called a "a little secret language" that transitioning veterans needed to learn to navigate communication with civilians effectively. He observed veterans in leadership roles within his nonprofit organization create, understand, and use the secret interlanguage quite well. He also noted that civilians who don't integrate military-speak into their communication practices did not connect well with veterans.

You adapt. Like I catch myself all the time. I do talk to a lot of soldiers. That's what I'm used to, and I still call people by their rank because that's what I'm used to. I think the time is the only thing I probably mess up a lot, because I'm working to 1700 instead of 5pm. Or I forget how to write it. Stuff like that, you know, I attempt to dress it up, but, I mean, for the most part, you know, I find out first if they're civilians, you don't ever have a military background, try to get to know the person first, before I start going into detailed conversation so I'm not talking too much things they don't understand. (Nashelle, p. 12)

Liminality

Throughout the interviews, participants described how space and place influenced their approach to leadership, relationships, and identity. The social space and the fixed material place were where volunteerism influenced individual identity and behavior. Space is not referencing material things, but in the socialmaterial construction effect of physical objects, spaces, and technologies. Generally, participants identified as volunteers, not service members, when volunteering in civilian spaces and places.

Influence of the Volunteer Site

Volunteerism provided a liminal social space for social and collaborative enactment of non-military identity development and a liminal physical place for them to embody identity with physical activity and the artifacts in the physical environment. The sociomaterial environment contributed to ideation of future selves, disengagement from military identity, release from pressures and building wellness. The active role of materiality, non-human artifacts as an active ingredient in producing leadership, shapes, orders, and directs relational and collaborative agency in leadership. Volunteer sites were ideational, cultural, subjective, and experiential engagement with a social space and a material, physical place.

Social Spaces

The location of the volunteer activity served as a liminal social space. Cultural differences in the civilian-military divide complicated integration of military volunteers into the volunteer workforce at times. Participants and their civilian counterparts quickly worked through any communication gaps, as evidenced by participants' experiences. Jennifer, a senior leader in her unit, found she could have relaxed conversations with

soldiers that otherwise wouldn't have happened when volunteering. Naturally introverted, she did not like busy spaces, but volunteering with other soldiers at a busy college game was the exception.

Physical Places

Performing physical tasks, helping with library book returns, cleaning, and distributing food in warehouses and concession stands describe engaging with physical places, objects, and technologies of the participant volunteer experiences. Whether driving food to needy families, or cleaning and organizing warehouse for Habitat for Humanity, doing something that required applied physical effort was enjoyed by participants and appreciated by community organizers. Jennifer noted the volunteer location away from work provided the contextual environment that re-built relationships and bonds external to the military workplace. Jo and Carlos describe how their physical location allowed them to engage in non-military identities and activities.

They're actually helping families in need. The things they needed were shelves moved, help packaging, some deep cleaning done, and just to help them do that. There were 15 of us that went and knocked it all out in just two, two and a half hours. You could see the gratitude that they had for us being there. It was heartfelt, honestly, and that wasn't even the intention. I was like, 'Let's just go out there and help them out.' Seeing their reaction, just helping and getting done so quick, was the icing on the cake. (Jo, p. 11)

One of the ones I got to go on, because I wasn't always able to do it with the constraints of my job, was a pheasant hunt. It was a bunch of veterans, and it was a lot of fun, you know. It was mostly Army veterans, but we did have a Navy

vet from Olathe that came, and an Air Force vet. So, it was just a lot of fun being out there walking the lanes and watching the dogs work and watching the participants, how happy they were again if they put down a pheasant. Then we helped them clean them and they got to take this stuff home and it was all free to them. (Carlos, p. 1)

Identity Exploration

Volunteerism contributed to morale and was an opportunity to adapt leadership or set aside the leader role and military identity. The change in style and identity was based on their perceived role. The change in leadership practice and intra-liminal identity did not vary whether they were working alongside civilians or other soldiers, even soldiers that they lead. Respondents shared personal stories about their own identity transformations, how they understood the world and how they in turn were perceived by civilians. Jennifer and Jo described increased esprit-de-corps among their peers beyond the identity ascribed by military culture and being in uniforms. Sam ascribed social capital to volunteerism that tended to see military volunteers excel.

There's this weird sense of, when you're volunteering, that there comes social capital along with it. You get to be a 'somebody' in these groups. A lot of these people that are participating in that particular nonprofit, they're looking for community, they're looking for engagement. They're not always the jock in high school or the cheerleader. They're people that are looking for acceptance and this is a very approachable organization that was attractive to people who come in. (Sam, p. 10)

Pat connected with small business owners while volunteering. “I’m volunteering, which is good, but I also learned a lot from just talking to people. I was considering maybe doing small business contracts as well, once I’m out of the military. Volunteering gave me that insight.” Jo said she was considering getting out of the military. Volunteering provided a goal should she decide to transition.

I’ve been so back and forth on when I want to get out. Knowing that this is a possibility I think if I get out... on the civilian side, I will get a job where I can still be involved in the community with volunteer aspects because it’s rewarding. Who knows? Maybe, I’ll come up with some volunteer thing on my own and help the community in some way. (Jo, p. 10)

Transition

The study participants provided experiences, individual motivations, and personal perspectives on the relationship between volunteering and transition readiness. The veterans reflected on their own volunteerism and transition experiences and whether volunteerism helped them prepare for civilian life. Most of the active-duty service members had not experienced the transition before except for two who had served, left the military, and then returned for a second enlistment.

Finding a Purpose

Volunteerism helped participants find purposeful activities away from their military life. Volunteering can contribute to building new skills and expanding a resume beyond military service. Stacey needed a way to focus after an intense combat deployment. He was determined to find a constructive outlet and community. Wesley, a veteran respondent, regained a lost sense of purpose after leaving the military. Bryan

volunteered for many reasons, one of which was to help with admission to medical school. Jennifer was determined to build networks with other people who shared similar values of service. Nashelle focused her efforts on helping seniors in retirement communities, a group she believes is “forgotten.” Frank saw performing selflessness acts through volunteerism as a means for achieving redemption.

To me it was always worth more than money. Having that letter meant more to me than a \$50 bonus would have been at the end of the week. Having that on paper. That I was appreciated. It definitely had a subconscious effect on me. The value of it to me when I was in my darkest times was, ‘I have hope. There's a there's a way of redemption through hard work for other people, for nothing.’
(Frank, p. 5)

Learning About Nonprofits

In the process of volunteering many of the respondents began to learn how nonprofit organizations are organized, coordinated, and how they are different from military organizations.

Running Nonprofits

Participants learned about the organization, process, and possibility of future nonprofit work. Two veteran participants stated that this exposure benefitted their post-military careers and nonprofit leadership. Tony described the different approach to leadership in a nonprofit in comparison to his military experiences and Pat described consistent learning and specific insights she received from organizers.

It’s interesting because I feel like everywhere I volunteer I learn something not always about volunteering. Like at A & H Farms I recently talked to the son of

the owner of the farm. He talked to me about how they organize these events and how they contract out with Express and like how they run their farm. At the library, the woman who's the head of the library, her mom is a small business owner that does contracts with the government at Fort Riley. I was considering maybe doing small business contracts as well, once I'm out of the military. So, talking to her and asking her mom questions about how they got started has also been an interesting resource and I hope it translates over. (Pat, p. 4)

Wellness

Volunteer activities created opportunity, community, and connection for participants, which are important for well-being, mental health, community reintegration, and sense of purpose.

Connecting with People

Volunteering helped the study participants to build community connections, establish friendships, enjoy fun activities, and provide valuable service to civilian communities. Volunteerism was described as healthy, social, and a positive intervention against isolation, loneliness, depression and even suicidal ideation. They narrated observations they observed in other service members. Only two reflected on their own mental health challenges that volunteering help counter. Stacey needed to connect to a community after a difficult combat deployment and found His local Knights of Columbus had many volunteers with similar experiences. Zachary expressed concern about soldiers who isolate themselves in the barracks.

I have got a lot of friends who, you know, are bored. There's nothing here to do.

So, I tell them there are a lot of things to do, you know. There are a lot of things

to do. Sometimes I almost feel like an ambassador for the ACS. I don't want to say depressing, but like most young soldiers in the barracks with me who just got here, some who haven't been away, aside from basic training. Some came here fresh from basic training. They didn't have the time to go home. Then they come here to Fort Riley. All you think is you're bored, you're not going to war, like you're in prison. So, I started talking to a lot of people. I think, generally, it helps mentally. It gets depressing and soon you will be worse. You say the phone doesn't work in there. Where we are the phone doesn't work, we got a lot of concrete, so you got to go outside to use the phone. People think there's nothing to do here but just stay in your room, go to the DFAC, eat, sleep, but I do a lot of things. (Zachary, p. 17)

Identity Transformation

The time of transition creates liminality when civilian and soldier cultures adjoin and overlap. Military-affiliated identity created when civilians enlist and go through basic training. The challenges and joys of relinquishing that military identity were most evident when participants shared how they felt. Volunteerism introduced participants to the reality and personal impact of the civil-military gap. Some described the experience as being in two worlds, or finding themselves engaged in identity transformation on a temporary scale.

Jennifer stated she believed volunteer work is proof that she can function both in the military and civilian worlds. Sam reflected on how his volunteer experience prepared him for the future.

At the end of the day, I would not be in the job I'm in, I wouldn't be doing the work I do had I not volunteered when I was on active duty. The biggest skill set of all that gave me was the ability to have a foot in each world, both the military space and the civilian space, working at the same time while engaging both sides of that community within that organization. That now is probably one of the most valuable skill sets that I have. (Sam, p. 15)

Arlen talked about the opportunity to observe and adapt to the civilian world while volunteering.

One, it helps with the acquisition of some of those soft skills that the service member may not have. Especially if you're volunteering for an organization you believe in, then there's a sense of satisfaction about doing something good for this community organization. I think you're combining two things there. If they really feel good about the organization, they're volunteering for they're going to get that satisfaction. They're going to want to do well. That means they're gonna observe those things we talked about. They're gonna want to fit into the culture. They're going to observe how that culture works and they're going to try to adapt themselves to make that transition into that culture and then feel good about what they're doing too.

When I was doing Red Cross stuff, I wasn't doing anything exciting or technical or anything. I was doing pretty menial tasks, but I was helping people and that that made me feel good. I didn't care what they were having me do. You want me to pick up trash, you want me to help this lady. I'll gladly do all that stuff

because I feel good about helping these people who are in these really bad conditions. (Arlen, p. 9)

Tony described the bridge he now sees from his volunteerism while active duty to his volunteerism and career as a veteran.

I'm using more of my non-profit leadership in my profession today, and in my other ventures, than my military. It's a very valuable education. I think it's because, I said it before, I think what it is, is it forces you to adapt some basic leadership and management principles but apply it to a completely different environmental context: the non-profit. The services are more intimate than war fighting, you know. My process was war fighting and taking care of people. Training people to do war fighting, conditioning them, leading them to do it effectively, and taking care of them afterwards. Now I'm involved in creating meaningful arts that have messages that inspire communities.

He described intentionally adapting his leadership style to non-profit work as a secondary world. That success encouraged him to continue adapting to leadership in the higher education world, corporate world, and now in the world of Arts and Medicine.

Volunteerism as a Bridge

Several active-duty respondents described personal benefits gained from volunteering. The experience expanded their awareness of community organizations as locations to build transition readiness. Carlos was an episodic volunteer, doing what he could. He described how that will help with his transition.

Let's see. I think the biggest influence it has is... During my time in the military, I've known soldiers that volunteer all the time. It seems like they do that more

than they do their own job. But volunteering while I was in, even though it was sporadic and not always a lot, but it's something I always enjoyed. I think it's going to help me transition into a civilian by knowing that I know what kind of organizations are out there that I can go assist and volunteer at. As a civilian I think I'll have more time to help go do that. (Carlos, p. 12)

The active-duty interview participants mostly agreed that volunteerism helped them become acquainted with local communities and begin to develop civilian identities. Veterans were asked to reflect on their transition experience and if their volunteer work while active help prepare them for leaving the military. Amanda found value in serving her community as a helpful change agent. "For me the value is making my community to be the type of community I want to live in. A community that supports people."

Volunteer activities were informative and instructional for the participants. They described volunteering as a reconnection to the civilian world and a way to exercise military knowledge in civilian contexts. Veteran participants often could not reflect on volunteerism without moving through the transition experience. The veteran participants often experienced multiple transitions at once when leaving the military. Military units were described as loci for friendships and close-knit family-like groups. Leaving the culture and community was a stressful experience. Volunteering introduced an activity for reintegration back to the civilian world. Jennifer explained that her capacity to engage in the civilian world is expanding. "Volunteer work shows a new context and capability to engage in a non-military setting and I think it gives a good perspective that we're able to function in the military and in the civilian world." Pat described only realizing her disconnection from the civilian world after completing an intense two-year

training program. She noticed stark differences between the military world and the civilian world while volunteering.

I think there's definitely a social aspect that it helps you with. Sometimes when you're on base all day, every day, and doing field exercises away from normal society, you forget what it's like to be around civilians for a long time. There's definitely a social aspect of interacting with civilians. Especially, like, I've been in training environments for two years, so I've been secluded away from the civilian society in a way. And so, it definitely helps on the social part like you said.

Sometimes when you're interacting with civilians you forget that they don't know this military world, they don't know this jargon, they don't run on like those standards, and so it does help with that. The Army runs on its own set of rules and we learn how it runs and the system that it runs on and the policies and everything as a soldier. But the civilian world doesn't run on those standards like I said before and you have to learn all of their systems and I definitely do want to learn.

(Pat, p. 12)

Volunteering Mechanisms

This section examines results from the document analysis that investigated policies, publications and programs related to service member volunteerism and transition. Resources for the analysis were clustered into three groups: awards and recognition, administrative systems, and military transition. The three themes below address emergent systems that influenced and reflected participant lives and experiences as service members and volunteers.

Military Volunteerism

The Army Volunteer Corps (AVC) is a program that helps soldiers and family members find volunteer opportunities on and off the installation. It also helps civilians find opportunities to volunteer on the military base. Community organizations coordinate with the AVS volunteer coordinator for access to service members who want to volunteer. AVC provides classes on how to volunteer and volunteer behavior expectations and operated the Volunteer Management Information System (VMIS) to manage volunteers and opportunities.

The Volunteer Management Information System

VMIS also is a useful tool to track volunteer hours. Participants with an account could keep track of their volunteer hours. Zachary had just started to volunteer and track his hours, “I track my hours. I just started with them. So, right now I got in VMIS, in total I got like 20 hours just from Wednesday through Friday.” Data was helpful for volunteer opportunities at Fort Riley over time, by organization, and by individual. The table below shows volunteer hours tracked in the VMIS system for any volunteer who reported volunteers to the coordinator. The data includes volunteer activities reported by Department of Defense civilian employees and contractors, military family members, non-Department of Defense civilian employees, retirees, active-duty service members, National Guard and Reserve service members, and others not fitting into these groups. Extracting service member volunteer hours from the data was not possible in the VMIS data. Therefore, the table is a snapshot of total volunteer activity at Fort Riley, Kansas for 2021 and 2022. Further analysis was not possible without the ability to break data further down (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Volunteer Activity at Fort Riley 2021-2022

Year	Number of volunteers reporting hours	Volunteer hours reported on-time	Volunteer hours reported retroactively	Total volunteer hours
2021	487	43,439	19,433	62,872
2022	722	53,332	18,301	71,633

Fort Riley has an active volunteer population organized by the Fort Riley volunteer coordinator. The coordinator work with units, the installation community and the regional community to find and publish volunteer opportunities for soldiers and family members. A review of the Volunteer Information Management System (VMIS) showed volunteer opportunities but limited information on the number of volunteers, the rate of volunteerism, and the number of volunteer hours completed. Service members could log in with an account in VMIS or search for volunteer opportunities using a guest account. The guest account revealed volunteer opportunities globally. A check on the website on 6 November, 2025 showed 55,008 posted volunteer events broken down by the title of the event (general volunteer, SFRG gift wrapping fundraiser, outdoor mentorship), the community (Fort Hood, Camp Humphreys-South Korea, Fort Riley), the organization that posted the event (1ABCT BDE 1CAV, United Service Organization, BOSS), the community (Onna Onna Village in Kunigami County, Fort Wainwright, Agusta), the region (Texas, Japan, Korea), and the date posted. The spreadsheet was searchable and could be filtered. Anyone can search for an event without logging in to the website or having an account. Participants described the ease of use, but the process could be challenging.

Searching it on the VMIS database, which sometimes is tricky. Like I don't know why like when I first applied to volunteer at the library it was denied. And then the volunteer

coordinator of the library, the woman who runs the library, had a like override that and accept my application. I don't know what happened there. (Pat p. 22)

Keeping track of hours was also an issue for some participants and when available, a designated or volunteer within a military unit person could get overwhelmed, as Jo described her unit point of contact needing help:

I could create a memo, but I would have to send it up too. I'm not allowed to input the hours. I don't know if that's because soldiers could forge their hours and it wouldn't be accurate. So, I think she's like just dedicated personnel for our Battalion to input our hours. I think also, just to alleviate some time from her, if one person like myself inputs everybody else's hours.

An expanded search through installation websites across the military, the Department of Defense, and the internet in general provided no information on active-duty volunteer statistics. I emailed Army Human Resources Command and the Office of Naval Research to ask if there was available data on volunteerism and the award of the MOVSM. The Army did not respond. But the Navy noted they did not have any data related to my request. In a request I submitted to the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) I asked for a list of all military outstanding volunteer service medals (MOVSM) awarded since its inception or as much data as possible. Their email response to me on 25 May 2022 clarified the issue and ended my search for aggregate data on the medal.

Dear Mr. Barnes,

This is in response to your inquiry to the National Archives.

Unfortunately, the National Archives does not compile lists, aggregate data, or generate statistics based on information contained within archival records. Information

relating to your request may be independently identified by organizations that make use of record material within the holdings of the National Archives. These organizations may include schools and universities, research institutions, corporations, government agencies or private researchers. Researchers are welcome to use publicly accessible records within the holdings of the National Archives to aggregate information on research topics.

We recommend contacting the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library for more information on records relating to the creation of the medal in their collection. The email address is library.bush@nara.gov

For more information on Executive Orders, please contact the Federal Register at fedreg.info@nara.gov

No information on the number of MOVSM medals awarded, for what, to whom, when and where, and the number of volunteer hours worked or any related impacts on service members, military units, or local communities. Fortunately, NARA's recommendation to contact the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library worked. I requested and received copies of the records, notes, opinions, and recommendations from the President's cabinet leading to the creation of the medal. Chapter 2 included a summary of that deliberation, and a sample of these documents is included in the appendices (Appendix K).

The Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal (MOVSM)

Most of the study participants knew about the MOVSM and a smaller number were working to earn it and only one of the 19 participants earned the award. Several veteran participants stated they did not know about the MOVSM until they left the military. I am a veteran with 24 years of active-duty service with the U.S. Army and I also did not know about the MOVSM until I began this study. I decided to explore the foundations of the MOVSM given the connection the award has to volunteerism, recognition, motivations, and military culture. The next section describes the origin of the MOVSM.

History of the MOVSM

President George H. W. Bush created the Daily Points of Light Award in 1989 to recognize individuals making a difference. The initiative later led to the creation of the Points of Light Foundation, a nonprofit organization founded to promote the spirit of service. Leading up to the end of his presidential term, the President wanted to recognize military volunteers through an award. The President approved the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal (MOVSM) on 9 January 1993 under Executive Order 12830. The medal was approved just before President Bush left office, but not before his executive staff and senior leadership considered another option. The internal coordination of that effort is described below.

Upon my request for official documents related to the creation of the MOVSM, the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library provided 105 pages of the founding documents. Analysis of the documents showed some dissension among the Presidents' top staff about whether to create a new award, the MOVSM, or to reinterpret the Humanitarian Service Medal (HSM), an award for individuals serving in units that were directed on orders to provide disaster response to civilian communities.

Mr. Gregg Petersmeyer, Director of the President's Office of National Service, a newly established office under President Bush, sent a letter to the President with his recommendation, stating that "no DoD program now exists to promote and recognize outstanding service to the civilian community by military men and women" and requested the President direct the DoD to authorize the award of the HSM to deserving service members for outstanding volunteer service to civilian communities (Petersmeyer, 1992).

In his responding memorandum, David Addington, General Counsel for the DoD, objected to Petersmeyer's assertion that the DoD had no program in place to recognize service members. "This statement is incorrect. DoD has for decades conducted community service programs and has recognized outstanding service by military personnel to their local communities" (Addington, 1992). He notes recognition for outstanding volunteer service includes the following:

- award of the Achievement Medals of the various military departments.
- certificates of commendation from commanders and senior officials.
- letters of appreciation from commanders and senior officials.
- community action awards.
- remarks on Fitness Reports for sergeants and above.
- awards of liberty (e.g., 72 or 96-hours passes).
- and verbal commendations in formation.

Addington recommended the President not extend the eligibility for the HSM award for outstanding volunteer service. In his opinion, Addington says while eligibility to earn the HSM required participation in a military act of operation of a humanitarian nature, that was distinctly different from voluntary service to the civilian community. He argued "it would not be

appropriate to have the same military medal awarded for military acts in the line of duty and private acts not in the line of duty” (Addington, 1992, p. 1) Addington recommends two separate awards. He then included with his memorandum an attached draft executive order to establish the MOVSM.

Petersmeyer redrafted Addington’s proposal to keep the MOVSM in line with the mission of his office and to purposefully influence the DoD to both recognize and encourage volunteerism. He specified only “sustained, direct and consequential volunteer service by members of the armed forces in neighboring civilian [ibid.] communities” (Petersmeyer, 1992, p. 1) would be qualifying activity for the MOVSM. He was also concerned that Addington’s draft was too vague and general, and that it would lead to mass awards for one-time episodes of volunteer service. He acknowledged that active-duty service personnel were restricted in terms of time to volunteer and the sacrifices they made to volunteer in the community were significant. With agreement from the Departments of Justice, Defense, and Transportation, the National Security Council, the White House Office of Domestic Policy, and the White House General Counsel’s Office Executive Order number 11030 to establish the MOVSM was issued by the President.

The MOVSM award was created to recognize and promote service member volunteerism in local civilian communities. The executive order and regulatory publications described the MOVSM as an incentive for individual service members to volunteer and was a statement of intent that the armed forces would commit to community engagement. The Secretary of Defense authorized each military department to establish standards for the number of volunteer hours required for military service members to qualify for the MOVSM. Consequently, each service branch arrived at different standards. The Navy and Marine Corps Awards Manual did not

require or recommend a minimum number of volunteer hours for the MOVSM, just that sustained, not one-time, community engagement within three years is required. Local Commanders determine if individual volunteer hours have met the definition of “sustained” volunteerism. This interpretation of the requirements for the MOVSM, sustained over one duty station, was the closest to the intention of the award as published in the presidential executive order. The Department of Defense, Air Force and Army publications included confusing language about what not to do.

The Air Force Military Decorations and Awards Program published an example for time investment to earn the MOVSM as 500 hours within 24 months as an example of what would not be a requirement. The Army Regulation for Military Awards directly quotes the Department of Defense Manual of Military Decorations and Awards description of eligibility for the MOVSM. The example provided by the Department of Defense and incorporated directly into the Army’s publication and reinterpreted into the Air Force set an expectation that led to confusion among the participants in this study.

The document analysis on military volunteerism related to transition preparation was evaluated for alignment in preparing service members for transition and (re)integration. Study participants affirmed volunteering had a positive impact on their lives and for transition. Military awards and recognition were a motivation for some of the participants to volunteer and was a benefit they would highlight when recommending volunteer participation to other service members. The MOVSM is awarded for sustained and impactful volunteerism in civilian communities, but another purpose of the award is to encourage and promote community service. The MOVSM enabled a permissive environment for service members to volunteer.

Values

Participants were asked to share what motivated them to volunteer and their answers were values-based, health oriented, and an altruistic provision of selfless service to civilian communities. Investigating motivations led me to analyze core values among all military branches and the Department of Defense. This comparative analysis of military values is below in the military values crosswalk (Table 4.3). Naming values has been done by both the participants internally, and externally by the military and through research on volunteering. Participants were aware of and acted upon values as they understood them. Each was able to articulate their meaning and apply them to their reflective experiences. Collecting and encoding values into codes of conduct, principles of leadership, oaths of allegiance, labeling and categorizing them, and building them into ethical guidelines is an externally constructed instrumentation by the organizations and the researchers.

Table 4.3. Military Values Crosswalk

DoD Core Values: Duty, Integrity, Ethics, Honor, Courage, Loyalty				
Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	Space Force
Loyalty	Honor	Honor	Integrity	Character
-Devotion	-Accountability	-Ethical & Moral behavior	-Courage	-Accountable
Duty	-Integrity	-Honesty	-Conviction	-Honor
-Teamwork	-Responsibility	-Integrity	-Honesty	Connection
Respect	-Ethical Conduct	-Respect	-Accountability	-Empathy
Selfless Service	-Honesty	-Responsible & Accountable	Selfless Service	-Respect
-Commitment	Courage	Courage	-Discipline	Commitment
Honor	-Selfless Service	-Strength	-Respect	-Diversity
-Army Values	-Conduct & Decency	--Mental, Moral	Excellence	-Achievement
Integrity	-Loyalty	--Physical	-Accomplishment	-Strengths
-Honesty	Commitment	-Personal Conduct	-Performance	Courage
-Moral Principles	-Respect	Commitment		-Accept Risk
Personal Courage	-Moral Character	-Discipline		-Fearless
-Physical	-Excellence	-Determination		
-Moral	-Competence	-Dedication		

Service members willing to volunteer found community organizations ready to receive them.

The combination of willing military volunteer and community nonprofit organization

volunteering to support the community aligned. The next step was to see if values for volunteerism were established and if they aligned with military values. Military values underlying participant motivations to volunteer did align with volunteer values identified in the literature.

The military-volunteer values crosswalk below groups military, volunteer, volunteer manager, and nonprofit organizational values into overarching themes that cross the civil-military divide (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Military-Volunteer Values Crosswalk

Category	Military values	volunteer values	Volunteer manager values	Nonprofit organization values
Service	Selfless service Benevolence	altruism Doing good helping others benevolence generosity community service Social responsibility Meaningful activity reciprocity (indirect)	Selfless service Caring leadership Service-oriented	Serve the public good Caring for others Caring work environment Social contract Service-oriented Reciprocity
Character	Moral principles Integrity Honesty Ethical Courage	Community spirit	Moral principles Honesty Trustworthy	Perform according to promise Integrity Honesty Trustworthy
Professionalism	Honor Accountability Loyalty Commitment Excellence Duty Respect Teamwork	Friendship Achievement Free will Collective identity Self-expression	Credibility Accountable Transparent Servant leadership Set the example Respect Democratic Accept constructive criticism	Answerable for failures Transparent Effective Personal service Democratic Subject to evaluation

To explain the table above I will start with the columns followed by the rows. In the categories column are three categories that represent the most common traits across military, volunteer, and nonprofit values. The values listed in the military values column resulted from analysis of the military values crosswalk table above. This column includes values that are

represented in the core values of each military branch and the DoD. The next three columns are values that were identified in the literature from studies on volunteer motivations, interests and nonprofit organizations. Three categories of values cross the columns, clustering values by theme. The service category contains values related to service, altruism, and benevolence. of selfless service and benevolence are related to a long list of values held by volunteers. Service values are most concentrated in volunteerism, reflecting a wide range of motivations to volunteer.

The character category groups values are personal characteristics, intrinsic to individual beliefs, morals, and integrity. Honesty, integrity, trust, and principles are strong represented on the character of a service member and a volunteer coordinator. The last category, professionalism, captures the work values of volunteerism. Professionalism values get things organized and accomplished. The military values column weighs heaviest with professionalism values reflecting the mission-oriented and disciplined workforce required for combat. The professionalism values of the military in relation to a leadership role in a nonprofit and are similar but have important cultural differences. Democratic leadership is an important value in nonprofit organizations where military organizations are authoritarian and proscriptive, particularly where the obligation to enact duty. This difference may support leadership avoidance by some participant and leadership learning by others.

The results of voluntary military service on the national stage are not immediately recognizable when service in this sense lasts for many years. Volunteerism in community and nonprofit organizations is a way to engage in individual acts of service with a narrow but immediate impact. Shared values between military culture and volunteer culture underscores the experiences of the interview participants as helpful for transition support. The military-volunteer

values crosswalk presents a visual representation of how military values relate to volunteer values by way of service to the nation or to communities, personal attributes of character, and values within organizational functions. Alignment between interviews and document analysis contributes to volunteerism as a potential enhancement to successful transitions.

Individual-Organizational Values and Motivations

One theme transcended from the individual participant reports and emerged throughout and across timelines of participant experiences was their individual values. The overall theme from emergent information was the mechanisms of volunteering or what led participants to activate volunteering. Participant answers and descriptions about their motivations and the benefits of volunteering revealed information about their individual values, characteristics, and identities. This section will report findings about participants' values along with values reported by external organizations, research studies, and document analysis.

As noted in Chapter 2 and above values and motivations transcended identity and cultural groups. Military values and civilian values are often set apart. The difference in military and civilian values highlights the civilian-military gap. Civilian values are typically individualistic and liberty-based, tolerating a wide range of perspectives. Military values are coded and promote conformity over individualism. Volunteer values were a separate set of beliefs that centered on community, altruism and sacrifice. Volunteerism as a value-laden practice touched on both military service and community service, nestled somewhere in the middle of the civilian-military gap. Arlen said Army and nonprofit organizations share values even though the missions are very different.

I think there's a lot that matches. I think they match up really well. Selfless service and stuff like that. All those things. The Army values match up to the charitable

organizations, as well. It's just the focus, you know. The military is focused on 'I'm doing bad things to the to the other side.' Where the focus of these other organizations is doing good things for people for the most part and making it a good experience, you know.

(Arlen, p. 11)

The values crosswalk was created by comparing and analyzing military values and volunteer values. Military values are well defined work in conjunction with morals, professional ethics, individual behaviors, and principles of leadership. This professional military bearing is applied to individual service members and military organizations at all levels and hold legal consequences for violations. Unlike military culture, the values of volunteerism and nonprofit work are not centrally located or officially established. Academic research has found evidence of commonly shared values, motivations, and ethics for volunteers and nonprofit organizations and individual organizations have identified and promoted values and ethics for their own mission and workforce/volunteers. In literature motivations and values are linked particularly when volunteerism is done to support communities in need. Nonprofit values were tied to ethics, culture, and organizational philosophy rather than required personal characteristics. Participants were aware of the differences between military, volunteer, and civilian values and norms. Mary explained how she perceived the differences in cultures but similarities in the nature of volunteering in the military and for communities.

When we joined the Army, you already are volunteering to be in the Army, you know. So, if you're going to, I know it's a transition, like, you get out of the Army and everything is different. The Army has standards, and civilians have a standard, too. So, they only have to get used to it and think about it, like, have the mindset, like, 'I'm gonna

do that!’ So, civilians are different, yeah, are different and everybody has a different mindset. I think everybody has the same values. (Mary, p. 11)

The values and motivations to volunteer were complex in the data. The interview participants were asked what they thought was their motivation to volunteer. The answers to this question varied across the 19 respondents (Appendix H) as they discussed their personal values that fed to their motivations to volunteer. I grouped their responses about motivation to volunteer into 16 categories. Each interview participant shared thick, rich personal reflective experiences on their motivations for volunteering. Participants’ motivations to volunteer in this study aligned with prior research.

Both active-duty service members and veterans described giving back to communities as a valuable motivation to volunteer, with seven active-duty and four veteran participants naming this as a main motivation to volunteer. Several said they wanted to give back to communities because as youths they had benefited from community youth support organizations (Pat, Manny, Zachary). Others wanted to give back to the military community in appreciation for the opportunities they received by serving (Tony, Carlos, Stacey). Others were motivated to give back to communities without a specific reason but felt obligated or compelled to do so (Mary, Jo, Arlen, Sean, Jennifer). Manny, an Army veteran, benefited from the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization as a child. When he had the opportunity, he volunteered to give back to that organization, but when Big Brothers Big Sisters was not available where he lived Manny sought other ways to help kids through academic tutoring and coaching.

Carlos, currently active duty, plans to volunteer with Veterans Creed Outdoors after retirement. “I think it’s a great way to give back to my community, for the military, and to help

veterans out there in need.” Stacey, an active-duty participant, expressed giving back to communities when volunteering with the Knights of Columbus.

I began getting very involved with that to help with, one, it gave me a sense of purpose. Not that I didn't have a sense of purpose before, but I think it helped better focus my energy and tunnel focus my vision better than...I won't say I was lost when I came back, but I was very changed when I came back from that deployment. I was very irritable. I had several concussions during that deployment and escaped death multiple times. By volunteering, I felt like I was able to give back. The men who were there were all either current or retired military members, most of which were Special Forces or some type of special operations community. I was very involved with that. (Stacey, p. 1)

The camaraderie and inclusion he found with other military and veterans with similar combat experiences in the Knights of Columbus chapter was a ready-made community. Participating in the nonprofit organization helped Stacey readjust to life back home after a combat deployment and he in turn offered support and understanding to peers.

Some participants identified spending more time with their children as motivation to volunteer, typically through youth sporting activities or the scouts (Sam, Amanda). Supporting the less fortunate and children in need was another motivation. Two participants volunteered with orphanages while stationed overseas in South Korea (Carlos) and Poland (Bryan). Related to supporting children was the motivation to achieve life balance between the demands of military service and the priority of family (Pat, Bryan, Jo, Arlen, Amanda). One of Stacey's motivations was to balance his hazardous combat experience with a healthy mental, social, and familial life. Pat connected volunteerism to her passion for libraries. Some of the interview participants were highly selective about which organizations to support. Many of the

participants, veterans especially, currently volunteer with military and veteran service organizations, which provide continued membership in the military community.

Doing Good and Being Good

The Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) scale lists six motivational function areas for individuals engaged in volunteerism (Appendix L). The functional areas people are served by volunteerism are protective, values, career, social, understanding, and enhancement. For example, an altruistic desire to do good work for other people exercises a volunteer's value of compassion (doing good). Volunteering because it feels good and builds self-esteem is a personal benefit (being good). The values enshrined in military service are necessarily designed to advance the institutions and national security. Military values do not directly include elements of the motivational function areas of volunteerism. However, military values build character, integrity and leadership traits. In this intersection military values and the values of volunteering are similar and support each other.

Doing good and being good are terms expressed by several participants. An altruistic desire to do good work for other people expresses a volunteer's values of benevolence (doing good). Volunteering because it enhances the self, feels good and builds self-esteem is a personal benefit (being good). Doing good and being good were emergent codes that informed the category and thematic development. They encode and integrate morality and action that may conflict with values and faith, potentially causing moral injury.

Service in the military culture prepared participants for warfighting. An analytical tool within NVivo 14 allowed me to query "good" and generate word trees below.

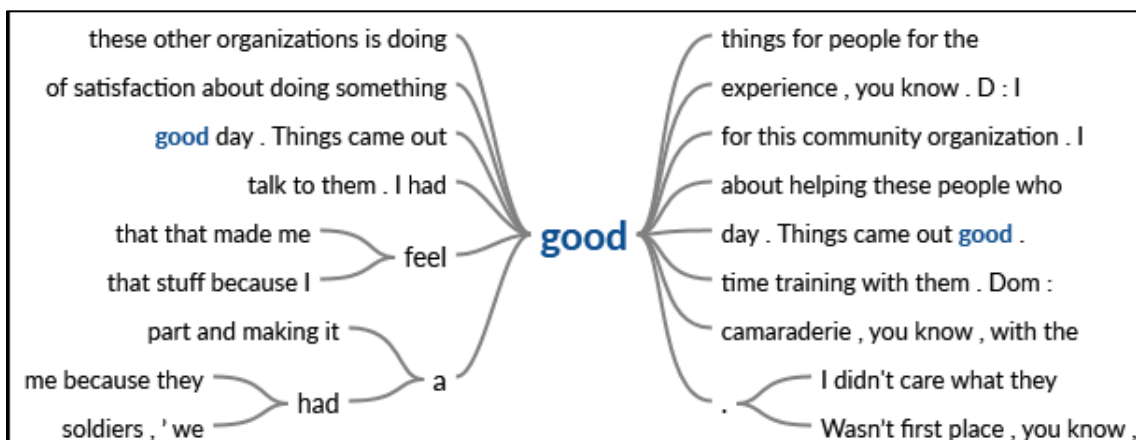
Running this analysis, searching for “good” within the category of “values” did not result in any analysis. However, I had several sub-categories that did respond to the analysis. Specifically, the sub-category named “volunteering for redemption” generated the word tree below, providing some insight to a few participants that sought life balance through volunteerism (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. Word Tree 1. "Good" Related to Volunteering for Redemption



Running the same search for “good” in the sub-category named “the value of volunteering” resulted in the word tree that follows, showing the need for participants to experience good (doing good, feeling good, good experiences, good results) through volunteering (Figure 4.2). These results were replicated to a lesser degree in other sub-categories, or not at all.

Figure 4.2. Word Tree 2. "Good" Related to the Value of Volunteering



I asked each interview participant to recall their volunteer activities and organizations. Among the 10 active-duty respondents, eight had prior volunteer experience before joining the

military and nine plan to continue to volunteer after they leave the military. Among the nine veteran respondents, six had volunteer experience before joining the military. Of the veterans who had prior volunteer experience, four continue to volunteer after leaving the military. Three of the nine veteran participants had no prior volunteer experience before enlisting but continue to volunteer now that they have left the service (Appendix I). Overall, 14 of the 19 respondents had volunteer experience prior to enlisting into the military and 16 will or do volunteer after separating from the military.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study are the first steps in investigating the impacts and experiences of active-duty service members who volunteer with nonprofit organizations. There is alignment supporting volunteerism between the military institution and civilian society. Volunteering to serve in the military introduces and relies upon codified core values that are replicated to some extent in volunteerism and nonprofit organizations. Nineteen participants, 10 active-duty and nine veterans, shared their lived experiences as both voluntary service members and volunteering community supporters. The intersection of military service and community service is a liminal space for transformative experiences.

Though only the veteran participants had experienced the military to civilian transition, all participants had experienced the civilian to military transition when they enlisted. Though the difference being that when entering the military specialized acculturation and indoctrination training is required through basic training or boot camp schools. Leaving the military had not such training or re-culturation for service members becoming veterans. Elements of the Adult Transition theory were present within participant experiences, compressed and controlled when entering the service, but fully present when transitioning out. The transition framework of moving in to transition (expected, unexpected, and non-transition), moving through transition (assessment of the 4 resources: situation, support, self, and strategies), and moving out of the transition were experiences in a larger way by veteran participants. Not single transitions, but multiple concurrent transitions were co-occurring for the veterans, adding complexity and frustration. Occasions of transition were not limited to entry and exit from the military. Three participants shared experiences of major life changes within their military careers, like returning from a difficult combat deployment, incarceration, and failed transition planning before the

transition began. Transition events are constant, overlapping, big and small. Leaving the military clusters them into a condensed and consequential life event, constrained to limited time and reduced control.

Findings concur with the conceptual framework of communication accommodations occurring while adults transition through major life changes. All participants were thoughtful and measured when communicating with civilians. Communication accommodation considered the civilian-military divide, interpersonal stance between them and non-military interlocutors, motives and goals, context, location, embodiment, and adaptive strategies with each utterance. The complexity of simple communication emerged when speaking with families and strangers alike. Identity, culture, and membership-otherness were experienced while volunteering, but not to the extent where participants were paralyzed with disfunction. Speakers usually found ways to reach positive accommodation, which was easier if they were working with other service members or veterans, or if the civilians knew military language practices and could meet them in the middle.

All participants had a basic understanding of leadership though multiple levels of responsibility, but each attended formal leadership instruction and values indoctrination. Principled and heroic leadership practices in the military institution gave way to principled collaborative leadership in practice during volunteerism. Participants at all ranks understood their personal and professional identities were fused within the military culture and expressed through military communications, which separated them from the civilian world and civilian norms of behavior. In Chapter 5 the findings, literature and applications will be discussed. Conclusions, recommendations, and future research will conclude the study.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

The purpose of this interpretive qualitative research was to explore the experiences of active-duty service members who volunteer in local nonprofit organizations. Focus was on volunteerism's impact on transferable skills, self-worth and identity, and reintegration into civil society. The second research question sought to understand how or if volunteerism affected transition readiness. I interviewed both active-duty service members and veterans to get rich descriptions of lived experiences, and to capture pre- and post-transition perspectives. The requirement for both groups was that they participated in volunteerism during active-duty service in the U.S. armed forces.

Chapter 4 presented the findings of 19 interviews and a document analysis. Analysis generated three primary themes with several sub-themes for each. The Preparation theme included subcategories on preparing for transition, enhancing military experience, realizing identity, and volunteering. Adaption, the second main theme, included adapting military KSA's, adapting leadership, communication strategy, and liminality as sub-themes. The third main theme, Transition, had four sub-categories: finding a purpose, learning about nonprofits, wellness, and identity transformation. Chapter 4 closed out with Volunteering Mechanisms. While not a theme from the lived experiences of the participants, this document analysis described the difficulty of finding data on active-duty service members who volunteer. Context was investigated in lieu of volunteerism data. The MOVSM is awarded for volunteerism, but as numbers of awardees were not available, I reported on the founding documents for the award, its requirements and purpose to promote volunteerism among the ranks. Finally, findings demonstrated that military values, volunteer values, and nonprofit organizational values are closely aligned.

How do active-duty service members experience volunteerism while serving? The first research question explored how the study participants personally experienced the intersection of military service and community service. Current and former service members participated in semi-structured interviews, where they were asked to talk about their experiences as volunteers. The interview data was supplemented with a review of documents related to the intersection of military service and community service. A review of military publications and websites related to programs, awards, and impacts of volunteerism performed by active-duty service members supplement and situate the volunteer experience within the military and veteran context. Individual experiences, motivations, and insights were analyzed as data for emergent trends and topics shared among the participants, and unique experiences of individuals. Respondents shared personal stories about their own identity transformations, how they understood the world and how they in turn were perceived by civilians to fit into the roles of volunteer or leader. Tony explained his experience.

That dynamic, officer, enlisted, civilian. The difference and whatever their perceptions were, or experiences were, that affected the leadership in that non-profit environment. Those expected roles affected things. So, it was kind of good because, for me it reinforced what, or taught me what they perceived as how I would be leading as a role and not really seeing me lead as a person. (Tony, p. 4)

Interviewees discussed their experience adapting and applying military knowledge, skills and abilities to a non-military, community service workplace. The second research question asked participants how volunteerism affected their transition experience if they were veterans, or how volunteerism would prepare them for separation from military service. The active-duty

service members found purpose and potential for continued service beyond the military through volunteerism. They perceived the inevitability of military exit and reintegration back into the civilian world and the possibility that volunteerism may help with that transition. Reforming identities was an element of transition revealed in the literature review and confirmed by the lived experiences of the veteran participants.

Interview participants told unique stories and expressed many motivations for volunteering. Most found the experience helped them reidentify with a prior civilian version of themselves. The differences between military service and community service were offset by the similarities in values and the work to benefit others, both in the abstract at a national scale, and the immediate face-to-face support in local communities. Every interview participant joined the military voluntarily as part of the all-volunteer force. Many of them (14 of 19 respondents) had community volunteer experience prior to enlisting. Two of the 10 active-duty respondents and three of the nine veterans had not volunteered in any way prior to joining the military. However, all participants stated a strong belief in the value of volunteerism and community service. The highest value related to volunteerism was altruism and doing work that benefited others. Veterans in the study (8 of 9 respondents) credited volunteerism during their active-duty service as helpful during for their transition out of the military into their civilian lives and careers.

Goodwill and altruism were the most common motivations for volunteerism among the participants, followed by a need to give back to society. All but one participant acknowledged the voluntary aspect of military service but did not see serving in the military as volunteerism. The single outlier considered military service as the ultimate form of volunteerism and serving their community. Most of the interview participants were aware of the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal (MOVSM), and some participants had earned it at least once. The

award was created to encourage and reward “outstanding volunteer service to the civilian community of a sustained, direct, and consequential nature” (Bush, 1993, p. 33). Yet, their motivations to volunteer were not primarily focused on the MOVSM, and some rejected the medal outright, refusing formal recognition for what was done out of goodwill and altruism.

The act of volunteering placed study participants in situated liminal spaces created between the military and civilian communities during moments of volunteerism. Participants built relationships and networks with civilians and peer service members that otherwise would not have been possible. This ties back to the collective activity and materiality of physical spaces that influence and affect practices of embodied leadership of Raelin (2016) and Sergi (2016), identity and behavior (Ropo and Salovaara, 2018), occurring within overlapping thresholds of social expectations and norms (Pöyhönen, 2018) allowing experimentation and liminal identities. Clothing represented an external expression of role identity for participants. Military uniforms accentuated the liminality and conflict between embodied ideals of soldiers and civilian identities. Flipping from uniform to civilian clothing coded a behavior shift by donning or doffing the uniform. The practical shift in identity associated with clothing was confounded for veteran participants. Study participants volunteer identity functioned as a liminal practice that allowed an overlapping expression values and ethics shared between military service and community service. The liminal identities and shared values helped veteran participants transition into the civilian world. Veterans in the study acknowledged a gap in support to prepare them for the adjustment to the civilian world. Geraci’s Deadly Gap occurs in this transitional/liminal space then service members become isolated, depressed and experience suicidal ideation (Geraci et al., 2022). Engaging in volunteerism was recommended by study

participants as a suicide intervention strategy during service, through the transition, and into civilian life, and is supported by research (Usbeck, 2018; Yonkman & Bridgeland, 2009).

Veteran participants were in a better position to reflect on the impact of volunteerism on their transition from active duty. A strength of this study is that it examined the entire experience of military service and community service, as much as possible, from pre-military to post-military. Among the nine veterans, eight stated volunteering contributed to a better transition from the military. Not all the participating veterans had volunteer experience before joining the military, but most continue to engage in nonprofit work, leadership, and community service. Volunteering had a positive impact on their transition experience and would recommend current service members to find time to volunteer.

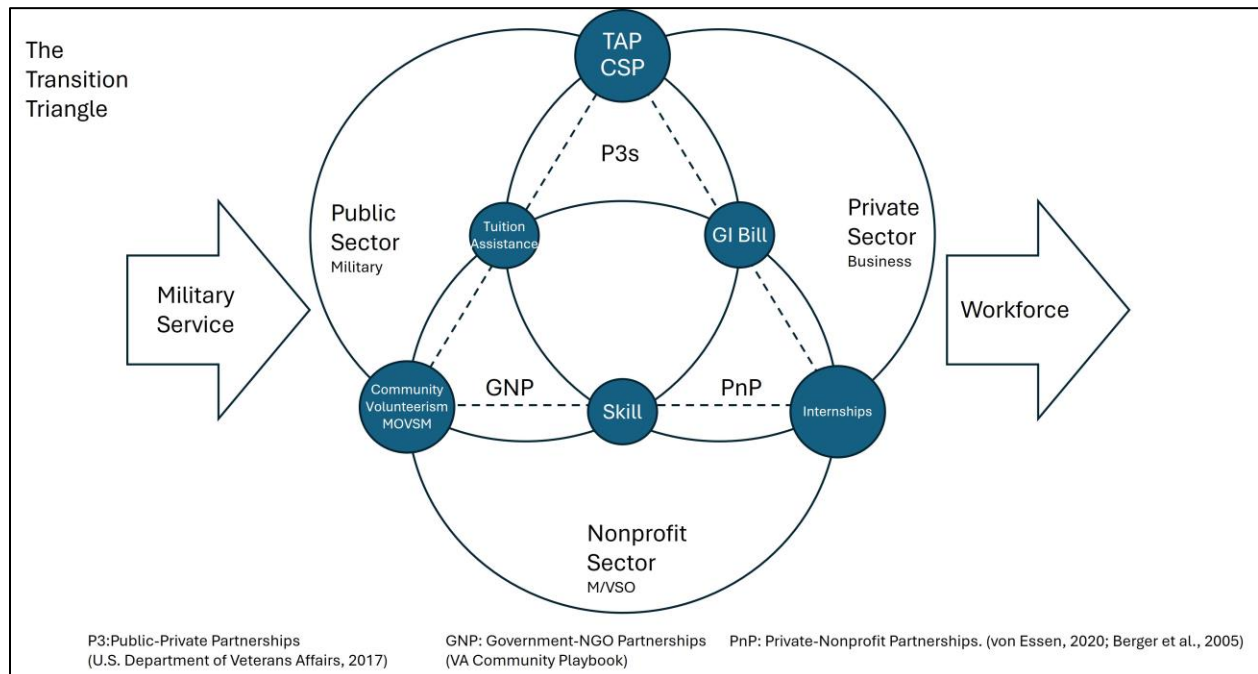
Interview participants who volunteered before they enlisted in the armed forces were likely to continue community service during their military careers. A minority (5 out of 19 respondents) of the interview participants had no volunteer experience prior to joining with military service. The remaining thirteen participants did have volunteer experiences prior to serving. All active-duty respondents (10 of 10) planned to continue volunteer engagement once they leave the military. Among the veteran respondents, 2 of 9 continue to volunteer now that they are out of the military. Mark, one of the veterans who stopped volunteering after transitioning out of the military, had recently retired. Mark volunteered up to his transition date and planned to transform his volunteer activity into job at the same location. Nashelle is the other veteran who stopped volunteering after leaving the military. She, like Mark, stopped volunteering to make time for a new career. Nashelle and Mark said they were still interested in volunteering once they were established in new jobs.

Interview participants described the number of volunteer hours to earn the MOVSM ranged from 100 to 500, depending on the unit commander. The variable commitment to sustained volunteerism is built into the MOVSM itself and added confusion when soldiers from different units talk about the award, or when a soldier moves from one unit or duty station to another, and the standards are different. Attaining the MOVSM was one motivation to volunteer for the interview participants. Wesley, who did not earn the MOVSM himself, observed mid-level sergeants volunteer for the medal to get promoted. Frank volunteered more as a veteran than when he was active duty, where he volunteered to gain official recognition and get promoted. “It wouldn't have really clicked in my mind if it hadn't been for that award system.” Frank, Jennifer, and Jo observed military units offering the MOVSM award as incentive to volunteer.

During the literature review I noticed the linear shape of the transition process from the military to the civilian world. Service members entered their transition window, often later than proscribed, processed through the Transition Assistance Program, and then reintegrated into civilian communities with the support of the VA and Veteran Support Organizations. The process is captured by the Military Transition Timeline image published by the Transition Assistance Program (Appendix M) and the Journey of Veterans Map (Appendix N) published by the VA. Many problems with the Transition assistance Program were identified in the literature but researchers and the Government Accountability Office. The challenges for service members are adaptive and reintegrative in nature. Needing more time, mental health and self-worth, cultural adaption and reverse culture shock, transferable skills articulations, and impoverished language gaps all related to individuals needing help to transform their identity, careers, social networks, and resources to the civilian context. Volunteerism can address these challenges as a

liminal experience, practice-based self-enhancement component to the transition process. Adding volunteerism to the transition process and contextualizing transition as a shift between social sectors is a recommended framework for transition planning, resourcing, and research. This dynamic is captured in the figure below, nominally labelled the Transition Triangle (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1. The Transition Triangle



The Transition Triangle shows multiple pathways for service members to engage in transition. Military service is set in the public sector and the civilian world (business/careers) in the private sector. Without volunteerism there are two transition routes: 1) directly through TAP, and 2) through college using tuition assistance, then TAP, then back to college with the GI Bill, leading to employment. The nonprofit sector adds volunteerism as a third route that can be done in conjunction with college and TAP. The nonprofit route is longer, builds/transfers skills, and can act as an internship for service members to learn how non-military organizations work. There are more route options, basically any two connecting intersections (liminal spaces) that an individual wants to pursue. The Transition Triangle also highlights the time invested in transition

preparation and re-culturalization. The quickest way, currently the typical route, is just TAP. Transition is quick and does not include time to relearn civilian norms. College experience contributes to reconnecting to the civilian world through coursework and social connections with student and faculty. Volunteerism can be done episodically and sporadically, or regularly over the course of a military career. Volunteerism is encouraged by the military, applied face-to-face altruism and hands-on. Volunteers encounter people from all walks of life looking to help others or to get the help they need. Volunteerism activates personal values, individual liberty, and basic humanity leading to purposeful and rewarding work.

Implications for Practice

Most service members know when they will exit the military, typically at the end of an enlistment contract, though some transitions are unexpected. Separating from the military is a difficult and challenging experience (Elnitsky et al., 2017b; Kleykamp et al., 2021; Raabe et al., 2024; Zogas. 2017). Anticipation of the need for resocialization through early planning can develop identity with new social groups, new jobs, cultural contexts, and new roles for transitioning service members (Kleykamp et al., 2021). With limited opportunities to build civilian employment experiences, volunteering may be purposed as an anticipatory action to help service members transition through the factors for coping with major life transitions and establishing a new identity and lifestyle.

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is an outcomes-based constrictive government program that does not address cultural losses service members experience when they disengage from the active-duty society. An affording military transition policy model would incorporate volunteerism as a bridge from the military world to the civilian world. A volunteerism bridge would build on professional military experiences while affording opportunities for learning and

adapting knowledge, skills, abilities, connecting military values with community values, and would help to develop new integrated identities. As a liminal idiom, volunteerism is a bridge built on shared values that would allow service members to explore in-between states and transitional identities without suffering the loss of purposeful living. Active-duty service members can build transformative coping strategies and adaptive practices before entering the 12-month military separation cycle.

Military service and community service bear similar marks of altruism and service to the community. Each interview participant served voluntarily in the U.S. military and concurrently volunteered in communities bordering their military installation and in the installation itself. The participants in this study frequently expressed an altruistic mindset, a sense of obligation to community service, and a sense of duty compelling them to volunteer. Altruism connected military and civil service for participants, who identified volunteerism as an extension of service and reengagement with a civilian identity. Some had volunteer experience prior to enlisting, but for others, military service was their first exposure to a value-laden culture. Through military service participants received training, mentorship, modelling, and rewards centered on the ideals of leadership and loyalty, integrity and respect, duty and selfless service, honor and courage.

Volunteerism is a liminal space and activity that serves as a bridge between military service to civilian life. The complex experience of transitioning from the military to civilian life involves changes in identity, relationships, routines, and roles, can remove a person's assumptions, self-worth, life purpose, and a loss of a sense of safety. In functioning as a liminal space and activity, volunteerism bridges cultures with shared values and altruistic service. Volunteering functions as a vehicle where service members learn new skills and adapt knowledge, skills, and abilities for new work environments. Volunteerism facilitates a temporary

scale of identity transformation, bridging the civil-military gap in values and mitigating the potential for crisis through temporary liminal identities, overlapping military and civilian identities for a time. Shared values are the bridge in the Volunteerism-Transition Model that allow for the gap to shift.

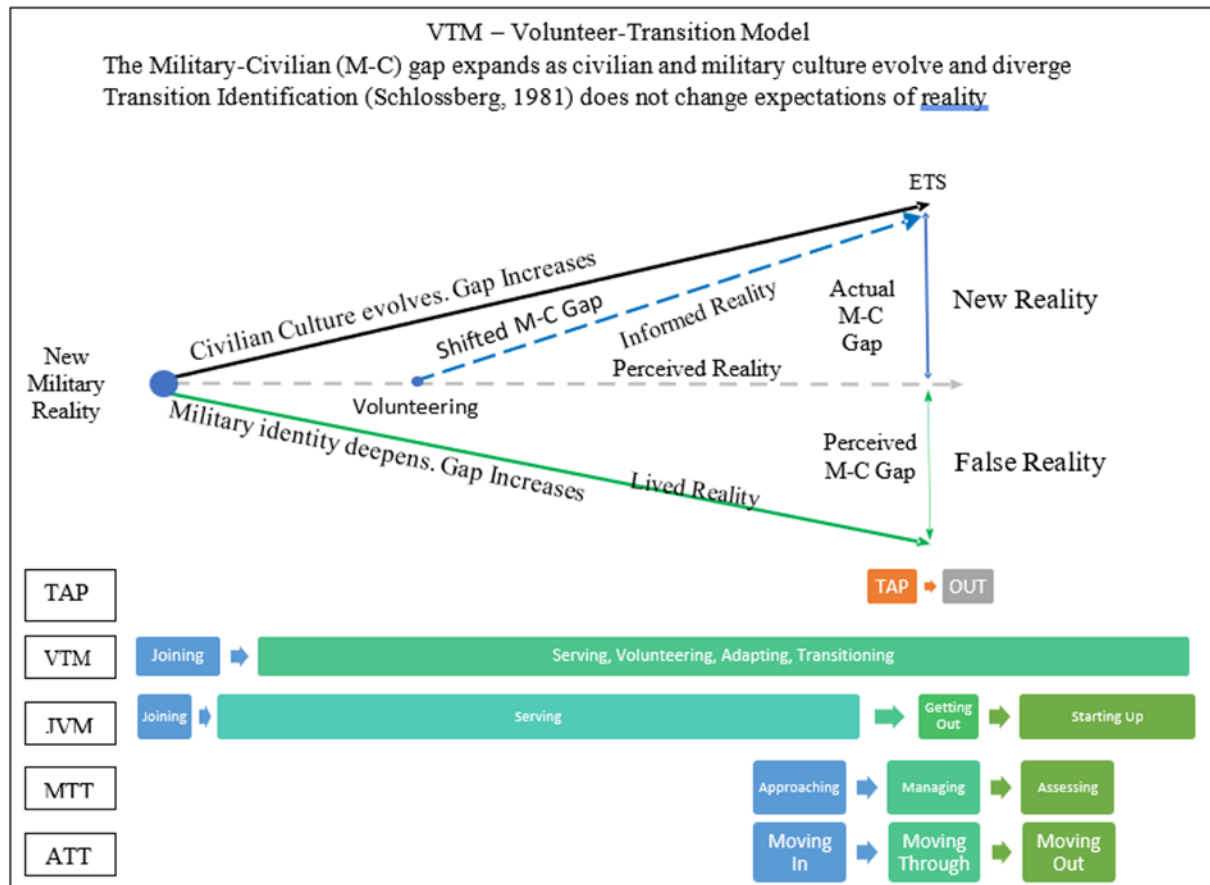
Volunteerism-Transition Model

The military-civilian gap is a phenomenon of lived and perceived reality variance that expands over time of an active-duty military career. As a service member's lived experience in the military culture is prolonged, their perception of civilian culture is rooted in the individual remembered pre-military life. Concurrently, society changes and evolves, diverging from the last individual point of reference for the service member. As the service members lived experience diverges from the remembered perception of society, society itself diverges from that same remembered perception at an equal rate.

From the service-members perspective, their military lifestyle only diverges from the unchanging memory of the past, originating from the diversion point when they enlisted. This is the service members perceived military-civilian gap that is expected reality upon separation from the military. They cannot perceive the unknown social evolution within civilian society as they are immersed in the sub-culture of active-duty military service. The unknown reality for the transition of active-duty service members cannot be prepared for as it is outside their lived experience. The true military-civilian gap stretches beyond the individual service members perceived gap, undermining any preparation for separation from military service and rendering those activities insufficient. Reintroducing active-duty service members to civilian society after they have completed initial entry training and advanced individual training engages individuals in society as they serve, allowing their perceived reality of civilian society to adapt as society

changes, reducing the military-civilian gap, and enhancing individual service members readiness to transition from military culture to civilian society. The Volunteerism-Transition Model below reflects this concept (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2. Volunteerism-Transition Model (VTM)



TAP-Transition Assistance Program Timeline (DoD)

VTM-Volunteer-Transition Model (author)

JVM-Journey of Veterans Map (VA)

MTT-Military Transition Theory (Kintzle & Castro, 2018)

ATT-Adult Transition Theory (Goodman et al. 2006)

The model illustrates military-civilian gaps, perceptions of reality, and the value of early engagement with society through volunteerism to adjust to the transition gap early. Since

volunteerism is encouraged to be practiced at all military installations active-duty service members can enhance their transition readiness. By integrating values, preparation, adaptation, and transition into a continuous effort throughout individual military careers through volunteerism service members reconnect with civilian society and reduce the military-civilian gap when it is time to leave the military.

Recommendations for Future Research

The present study initiates the volunteerism-transition model of research for military service. Prior research on active-duty service members who volunteer their time in nonprofit organizations in communities is underrepresented in the literature. Whereas volunteerism as a benefit for veterans, the unemployed, and as a continuance of value-laden service is well established. How volunteerism is experienced by service members and whether volunteerism affects successful transitions after leaving the service was unexplored at the start of this study. I encourage future research into this subject with the total military community, assessing connections with mental health, career readiness, and resocialization. Three mechanisms for volunteerism to benefit employment were identified as an increased in social capital, increased human capital, and signaling valuable personal characteristics on resumes (Spera et al., 2015). These pathways and the development of practical skills, adapting communication and leadership, and building identity through volunteerism allowed service members to travel through liminality, to create intersectional identities, and supported reintegration to the civilian world. This offers clear opportunities for future research on the pathways for practical application of volunteerism to military transition readiness and success.

I was limited by time, resources and the number of participants for a mixed-methods approach for this study, though the permission granted by AHRPO clearly recognized the value

of a survey instrument applied service-wide. A service-wide survey on the impact of volunteerism on military service and transition would support research in multiple fields of study. Research specifically on the activities, motivations, and impacts of the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal (MOVSM) would reveal the effect of the award on individuals serving in the military, local communities over time, and nonprofit community and veteran service organizations. Understanding the impact of volunteerism as connected to the MOVSM would provide an evaluation of the award that was designed to promote and reward community service.

Expand this Research to the Broader Military Community

A limitation of this study is that the Army is overrepresented among the 19 participants. Only one other branch of service, the Marine Corps, was represented by the interview participants. A large study across the Department of Defense would contribute to data on volunteerism at a top and granular level. Department-wide surveys, accounting for awards and recognition, and interviews of active-duty service members would enhance the current study and refine my conclusions. Future research on volunteerism within the military community should include spouses and dependents as well. Longitudinal studies would capture data on intergenerational and multigenerational effects of volunteerism within the military. Several participants volunteered when they were deployed or stationed overseas. Overseas community volunteerism effects would contribute to a more complete understanding of volunteerism within the military.

Policy Applications

Policy instrument constraints and affordances should be reviewed to improve the transition assistance program to understand how TAP as a policy impedes transition success and

could be improved by affording service members greater and earlier access to programs like DoD Skillbridge and the Arm Career Skills Program. Policy instruments within policies influence, facilitate, or inhibit actions of people governed by policy programs (Hellström & Jacob, 2017). Policy instruments embedded in the Transition Assistance Program constrain the separation process for service members to checklists and mandatory classes and training. The effectiveness of TAP and these instruments have been questioned by congressional oversight and accountability (Bascetta, 2002; Kamarck, 2017; Locke, 2023; Reed et al., 2021), the Department of Labor (O’Conner et al., 2023), and scholars (Faurer et al., 2014; Whitworth et al., 2020). Stukas et al. (2007) note matches between volunteer motivations and opportunities within the volunteerism activity environment that affords volunteers to meet motivational goals results in positive experiences.

Pre-Service Volunteerism and Transition Readiness

Initial and secondary data analysis resulted in codes that did not trend high enough to include in this study but may be good indicators for interesting phenomena for future research. Several of the study participants had volunteer experience before joining the military. What influence does volunteerism as children or young adults have on a propensity for military service? Other participants had no volunteer experience prior to enlisting in the armed forces but will or are continuing to volunteer. What influence does military service have on the volunteer workforce during and after military service?

Statistics and Impact of the MOVSM

Analyses of the Military Outstand Volunteer Service Medal (MOVSM) and the Volunteer Information Management System (VMIS), though long established, were not useful for analyzing the impact of volunteerism by service members locally, nationally, or over an

extended period. Reports generated by military installation commanders were produced, but no national database is in place. A future study could investigate the impact of the voluntary community service of the military. How does military volunteerism impact community relationships, statutes, and laws in collocated civilian communities? How many service members have earned the MOVSM and did the medal have the intended effect? Is there a reason volunteerism is not widely practiced in the armed forces?

Wellness

Nonprofit organizations “are a space for volunteers to fulfill their expressive potential and foster organizational values” (Hernandez Ortiz et al., 2021, p. 4). As a space for practicing leadership and identity configuration, volunteer sites are ideational, cultural, subjective, and experiential engagement with a material, physical place (Fisher & Robbins, 2015; Ropo et al., 2013). Through volunteerism, military and veteran volunteers build community, cultivate friendships, socialize, and continue valuable service to communities. Service, especially, is key to resilience and happiness, well-being, hope, and purpose (Yonkman & Bridgeland, 2009). Volunteerism intervenes with depression, isolation, suicide, perceived burdensomeness, and thwarted belongingness (Castro & Kintzle, 2014). It built opportunity, community, and connection for participants, which are important for well-being, mental health, community reintegration, and sense of purpose (Creaven et al., 2017; Usbeck, 2018).

Identity

Joining the military and leaving the military are significant transition experiences, ingraining a military identity that lasts beyond service and potentially causing disparity and hindering transition (Binks & Cambridge, 2018). Identity development or change for

military service members occurs during initial military training and transition out of the military liminality when they transition from civilian to soldier, and then back to civilian, in between two social identities in the liminality of two cultures, creating a civil-military gap in values (Demers, 2011) and the potential for a crisis of identity and disorientation during transition (Collins, 1998). This soldierly rite of passage creates a liminal in-between status (Van Gennep, 1960, & Myerhoff, 1985, as cited in Goodman et al., 2006, p. 46). The military-to-civilian liminality leaves service members “caught between who they knew themselves to be in the military and who they are now that they are in the civilian world” (Demers, 2011, p. 174).

Isolation

Zachary is resilient, but he sees service members experiencing isolation through disinterest in learning about the local community. He observed the barracks’ thick concrete walls interfere with cell phone connectivity to the point that soldiers must walk outside to make a call, so many don’t bother. Service members who are isolated may experience isolation as veterans, potentially increasing susceptibility to a variety of well-being and quality of life problems (Castro & Kintzle, 2014; Hunnicutt, 2018; Joseph et al., 2023). Social isolation and unmet social connectedness, combined referred to thwarted belongingness, is “one of the strongest and most reliable predictors of suicidal ideation, attempts, and lethal suicidal behaviors across the lifespan” (Van Orden et al, 2010, p. 581).

Isolation related to gaming is a theme that emerged from the interviews. Some of the respondents, one active-duty and two veterans, identified video gaming as a contributor to social isolation. Wesley, one of the veteran respondents recalled difficulty

getting his soldiers to do anything after the duty day. “Personally, I think it's a lot of social media and stuff and technology causing people to become more detached. They don't feel like they need that social interaction anymore because they have their phone and they have their video games.” Frank, a veteran, remembers his leadership encouraging him and others to get a letter of appreciation to get them out of the barracks. As he describes it, this was a deliberate strategy to “get them out, get them off their video games.” He stated, “Video games are designed to train your brain to want more of what it gives you.” Zachary, currently serving in the Army, described soldiers complaining that they had nothing to do with their personal time, but volunteering was not worth their time.

Social isolation as a precursor to depression and potentially suicide was mentioned by several interview participants. Zachary and Wesley believe social media and technology cause soldiers to become more detached and isolated. They stay inside and disengage from society. Reflecting on his Army days, Wesley remembered building connections beyond his military circle of relationships. He also describes nonprofit environments as safe spaces where regular volunteers and those willing to take up a leadership role are valued. Bryan described living in an age of loneliness and loss of belonging. He said without a communal bond, people become distraught and question their own value and reason for being. Volunteerism, he noted, helped him develop warm relationships that were very different than his functional military relationships.

Qualifying what is a good use of personal time was an underlying theme related to isolating behaviors. “People think there’s nothing to do here but just stay in your room.” Zachary noted this in his interview. He is frustrated with fellow soldiers who complain

there is nothing to do but resist activities like volunteerism. “They’ve locked themselves in instead of looking for opportunity.” Having something to do that is worth their time is subjective but can have unintended effects if service members living in the barracks, usually single, do not integrate in their social environment. The respondents were concerned that the isolated lives of these service members would lead to negative experiences and see volunteerism as an alternative.

Suicide

“The most dangerous form of suicidal ideation is caused by the simultaneous presence of two interpersonal constructs - thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness” (Van Orden, 2010, p. 575). Suicidal ideation may increase with veterans who experience social well-being challenges and at least one other difficulty when transitioning (Borowski et al., 2025). Jennifer and Mary noted that soldiers talk about suicide prevention “all the time.” Mary indicated that suicide prevention training is embedded in everything she does for the Army. Jennifer stated the best way to “get after” suicide prevention is to build community. “One of the best ways to build community is to go through volunteerism so you have a connection, you have a purpose.” Sam, a veteran with knowledge of veteran support organizations, noted several of them intervene in instances of veteran suicidal ideation. Sam highlighted Reverent Warriors and Stop Soldier Suicide, both national nonprofit organizations for veteran suicide prevention. Sam identifies the importance of partnering with community organizations to prevent military and veteran suicides.

Conclusion

A conclusion can be drawn from the study that volunteerism is a teachable and value-laden skill that contributes to quality of life and reinforces coping strategies for adults in transition. Functionally, military service members are effective boundary spanners, bringing leadership, values, ethics, resources, culture, and structure to nonprofit organizations (de Wit et al., 2019). Service, in the military and in communities, is not a concept constrained to just one identity or one culture for most of the study participants. Their desire to volunteer is personal and for many participants continues a tradition of goodwill begun as children.

Service members and veterans who volunteer report lower rates of depression (Albright et al., 2020). Stacey turned to volunteerism rather than alcohol to recover from post-deployment stress. Mary is a Zumba class instructor and Zachary teaches cultural awareness classes. Frank and Mark, both veterans, acknowledged experiencing depression when approaching their transition from the military. Frank separated unexpectedly among legal issues that ended his military career. Volunteerism was his road to redemption, giving him hope during incarceration. Mark struggled with his decision to re-enlist or leave the military. He described the struggle as “standing over a black hole precipice of disaster.” Though their circumstances leading to transition are very different, each found renewed purpose and motivation through volunteerism.

Volunteerism while serving is a beneficial experience for active-duty service members and prepares them for their successful transition and reintegration back to civilian society. The motivations to volunteer were multifaceted for the military and veteran participants. Volunteerism helped with identity formation and transition readiness and was generally perceived as good personally and for the communities they served, both military and civilian. Volunteerism acted as a liminal space that, for the veterans, was crucial for formulating a smooth

transition and reintegration back to civilian life. As volunteers, both active-duty and veteran participants exercised transferable skills, built networks for acceptance and reintegration to civilian communities, and provided valuable purpose outside the military community with the same or similar values.

Community organizations, veteran support organizations, and government organizations like the Department of Veterans Affairs are reactionary for veterans with predictable problems. Traditionally, government organizations like the VA are constrained until a service member separates from the military and asks for help. Community organizations and VSOs are willing to engage with service members before they leave the military. Volunteerism can be a useful enterprise to prepare service members for the civilian world by exposing them to value-laden activities, community and business networks, skill-building experiences, and safe liminal spaces to rehearse and adapt communication practices.

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Appendix A - Data collection timeline and government approvals

I received help and support from government personnel at each approval level of the process. Without their help I would not have been able to include active-duty soldiers' experiences for this study. The process of connecting with veterans for interviews was much easier. If I had not received permission to interview active-duty service members, this study would only contain the perspectives of veterans and lack the depth and breadth I wanted to examine. Fortunately, I was able to interview both active duty and veterans who volunteer, providing perspectives from both sides of the transition experience. This holistic approach helped me see connective tissue between them within the data, where volunteerism as an enriching experience that helps with bridging the gap in transition. The 19 semi-structured interviews I conducted spanned experiences from pre-military civilian life to their active-duty military service, the transition process, and into veterans' life after service.

I collected nearly 15 hours of interviews and transcribed them into 376 pages of transcripts. Data from the Volunteer Information Management System was minimally informative, mainly showing reported volunteer hours and the number of volunteer opportunities for Fort Riley soldiers.

Interview schedule

Interview date	Pseudonym	Status	Interview time	Total Pages	Total words
6 July, 2023	Sam	Veteran	0:57:48	22	7,482
7 July, 2023	Pat	Active Duty	0:57:10	24	6,793
11 July, 2023	Mary	Active Duty	0:50:13	20	5,767
12 July, 2023	Manny	Veteran	0:34:34	14	4,060
13 July, 2023	Nashell	Veteran	0:33:16	19	5,416
14 July, 2023	Wesley	Veteran	0:37:54	20	5,329
21 July, 2023	Stacey	Active Duty	0:51:37	21	6,364
26 July, 2023	Frank	Veteran	0:45:42	20	6,448
1 August, 2023	Sean	Active Duty	0:42:50	15	4,634
4 Aug, 2023	Arlen	Veteran	0:53:14	20	7,315
4 Aug, 2023	Mark	Veteran	0:51:32	22	6,854
9 Aug, 2023	Tony	Veteran	1:02:59	26	11,159
10 Aug, 2023	Carlos	Active Duty	0:44:48	18	6,288
12 Aug, 2023	Jo	Active Duty	0:39:38	16	4,862
18 Aug, 2023	Bryan	Active Duty	0:46:38	17	5,739
21 Aug, 2023	Jennifer	Active Duty	0:52:55	26	7,316
21 Aug, 2023	Zachary	Active Duty	0:42:03	22	6,650
24 Aug, 2023	Amanda	Veteran	0:37:52	13	4,016
24 Aug, 2023	Abby	Active Duty	0:46:08	21	6,546
			Interview time 14 hrs., 49 min	Total Pages 376	Total words 119,038

My timeline for data collection was influenced by government requirements and constraints built into the process for requesting access to Department of Defense information and

personnel. Where available, documents and information available through publicly accessible means were gathered throughout the study. Publicly available government sources included Department of Defense publications, U.S. military publications, Fort Riley policies and regulations, websites for the various branches of the armed forces, and the Volunteer Management Information System operated by the Army but utilized by all military branches.

Data collection timeline

Timeline	Dates	Design	Location	Purpose
March 2021	9 March	IRB approval	KSU Research Compliance Office	IRB approved
April 2021	8 – 16 April	Interviews for pilot project	Pilot Project	Pilot Project complete
March 2022	14 March	Recruiting veterans	Frost Call	asking to help find volunteers for the study
May 2022 Oct 2022 April 2023	26 May 6 Oct 14 April	Document Analysis	George H. W. Bush Presidential Library	Copies of MOVSM founding Documents
Sep 2022 Jan 2023	9 – 27 Sep 25 – 26 Jan	Research Design and Process	KSU Military and Veterans Affairs	Research experience of Dr. Art DeGroat
Oct 2022 Jun 2023	7 Oct 20 June	Coordinate with Fort Riley	Fort Riley Public Affairs Office (PAO)	Permission to interview active-duty soldiers
Oct 2022 Dec 2022 Jan 2023 Feb 2023 Mar 2023 April 2023 May 2023 Feb 2024	25 Oct 20 Dec 26 – 27 Jan 28 Feb 1 – 30 Mar 13 April 15 – 23 May 2 – 7 Feb	Coordinate with Fort Riley	IMCOM, Garrison Command	Permission to interview active-duty soldiers, Brief to Garrison Commander
Nov 2022 Dec 2022	18 Nov 5 Dec	Coordinate with Army, Department of Defense	The University of Alabama College of Education	Research experience of Dr. Karl Hamner
Dec 2022	14 – 22 Dec	Recruiting veterans	Veterans Administration (VA) and the ETS Sponsorship Program	Research experience of Dr. Joseph Geraci
Jan 2023	25 – 26 Jan	Research Protocols with active duty	KSU Research	Research protocols with Dr. Paul Lowe
Jan 2023 April 2023	25 – 30 Jan 3 April	Recruiting veterans	Noncommissioned Officers Association (NCOA)	Post study on NCOA website asking to help find volunteers for the study
Jan 2023 Feb 2023	27 Jan 7 Feb	Research Design and Process	KSU Dept of Applied Human Sciences	Research experience of Dr. Brianna Goff
April 2023	5 Apr	Research Protocols with active duty	Cornell University Military Programs	Research protocols with Dr. Teresa Duncan
April 2023	6 -12 April	Research Protocols with active duty	KSU Educational Leadership	Research protocols with Dr. Jim Martin
Jan 2023 Feb 2023 March 2023 April 2023 May 2023	30-31 Jan 6 – 28 Feb 1 March 14 – 18 April 4-15 May	Coordinate with Army	Army Human Research Protections Office (AHRPO)	Permission to interview active-duty soldiers
Feb 2023	27 – 28 Feb	Research Protocols with active duty	KSU University Research Compliance Office	DoD Assurance or FWA to conduct human research

Feb 2023 March 2023	7 – 8 Feb 3 March	Document analysis	Fort Riley MWR	Request data from the Volunteer Information Management System (VMIS)
March 2023	30 March	Document analysis	Military One Source	Request data from the Volunteer Information Management System (VMIS)
Feb 2023 March 2023 May 2023 June 2023	8 – 28 Feb 6 March 23 – 24 May 5 – 21 June	Document analysis	Fort Riley Army Community Service	Request data from the Volunteer Information Management System (VMIS)
May 2023	15 – 23 May	Coordinate with Army	Army Information Management Office	Permission to interview active-duty soldiers
June 2023	13 - 27 June 17 Aug	Coordination with Fort Riley	USO	Post recruiting flyer
June 2023	27 June	Coordination with Fort Riley	Transition Assistance Program	Post recruiting flyers, man table
June 2023 August 2023	21-28 June 17 Aug	Coordination with Fort Riley	Army Community Service	Post recruiting flyers, help with recruiting through emails to soldiers in VMIS, and collecting VMIS volunteer data
June 2023	29 June	Recruiting active duty	Grunt Style	Referral agreed to participate
July 2023	7 – 27 July	Recruiting active duty	Junction City Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Council	Present and hand out recruiting flyers
July 2023 August 2023	19 July 2 Aug	Recruiting active duty	Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce Military Relations Committee	Present and hand out recruiting flyers
Aug 2023	2 Aug	Recruiting active duty	Fort Riley Garrison CDR and BOSS President	asking to help find volunteers for the study
June 2023 July 2023 August 2023	29 – 30 June 1 – 31 July 1 – 24 Aug	Recruit and interview study participants	Active duty at Fort Riley and veterans	Interviews complete on 24 August 2023

I was unable to find any prior research that investigated the personal lived experiences of active-duty service members who volunteered, or how volunteerism affects military to civilian life transitions. I identified a number of fields of study related to this phenomenon. I reviewed literature in the fields of leadership, communication, volunteerism through history, military awards for volunteerism and community service, veteran studies, adult transition, military transition and the Transition Assistance Program, nonprofit organizations, veterans in higher education, veterans in civilian communities, veterans in nonprofit organizations, veterans and families, veterans and mental health, women veterans, military culture and the history of

volunteerism and conscription, military and veteran suicide, imposter phenomenon, impoverished languages, democracy and citizenship, community engagement, and qualitative research methods.

I had access to Fort Riley as an Army retiree and though my military service has come to an end, I still engage with the military community there through work and a nonprofit for military police soldiers. The process for approval to interview current service members was detailed and time-consuming. I also requested access to data from the Volunteer Information Management System (VMIS). In order to conduct research involving Army personnel I was required to obtain permission from the Fort Riley Garrison Commander, the U.S. Army Human Research Protections Office (AHRPO) under the Department of the Army Office of the Surgeon General, and the Information Management Control Officer (IMCO) under the Department of the Army. Once completed I conducted interviews and collected information from VMIS. Copies of the approval documents are included below.

Fort Riley Garrison Commander approval memorandum



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON, FORT RILEY
500 HUEBNER ROAD
FORT RILEY, KS 66442-5000

AMIM-RLG-ZA (70-25k)

14 April 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR Army Human Research Protection Office

SUBJECT: Research Access Permission

Name of Researcher: Mr. Dominic Barnes, Graduate Student Researcher, Kansas State University

Title of Protocol: Volunteerism for Enhanced Transition Success

Protocol Number: IRB-10528

1. References:

- a. Title 32 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 219, Protection of Human Subjects
- b. Department of Defense (DOD) Instruction 3216.02, Protection of Human Subjects and Adherence to Ethical Standards in DOD-Conducted and -Supported Research
- c. Army Regulation 70-25, Protection of Human Subjects in Research

2. Background. Many non-profit organizations are located near and directly support military communities and installations. Non-profit organizations provide a space where service members can practice active citizenship, promote community integration and community engagement, and invest in purpose and self-worth unrelated to military activities (Usbeck, 2018). Service members engaging in community non-profit organizations may be better prepared for transition and have strengthened resilience and reduced social and mental stressors resulting in enhanced transition success. The investigation will seek to understand the experiences of active-duty participants, how volunteerism prepares service members for transition, and how their participation impacts local nonprofit organizations.

3. Approval. I hereby approve the request for support described below.

4. Scope. I give permission for the 1st Infantry Division and Fort Riley, Kansas to provide support to the above-referenced research through the administrative provision of select data from the Volunteer Management Information System (VMIS) and access to active-duty soldiers who voluntarily agree to be interviewed about their volunteerism experiences. Interviewing soldiers during duty hours is approved.

5. Conditions of approval for research involving human subjects: This approval is provided on the condition of, and with the understanding that the researcher's institution will

- a. Provide to my command any human research protection program-related support necessary to implement and oversee the above-referenced activity.

AMIM-RLG-ZA (70-25k)
SUBJECT: Research Access Permission

b. Obtain and comply with the terms of its IRB and Federal Assurance for the Protection of Human Research Subjects for this DOD-assisted research involving human subjects.

c. Inform me through my point of contact below regarding any relevant unanticipated problem involving risk to subjects or others, or serious or continuing noncompliance.

d. Obtain publication clearance review from my command before publishing or otherwise releasing findings from this research.

6. Affirmation. By endorsing this request, I affirm I have determined that participation in the above-referenced activity will not impact the execution of the 1st Infantry Division and Fort Riley mission. While not mission critical, this effort will be worth the time/cost of Army support and/or assistance. The results of the research may provide information to future leaders on soldier volunteerism activities in neighboring communities. I acknowledge that my office assumes responsibility for ensuring the portion of the activity supported by my area of responsibility meets all applicable regulatory requirements.

7. The point of contact for this memorandum is the Fort Riley Garrison Plans, Analysis, and Integration Office Director, Mr. Ben Van Becelaere, at 785-239-3823, or email at benjamin.r.vanbecelaere.civ@army.mil.


MICHAEL J. FOOTE
COL, SF
Commanding

Army Human Resources Protection Office approval memorandum



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL
7700 ARLINGTON BOULEVARD
FALLS CHURCH, VA 22042

DASG-HRPO

15 May 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR Mr. Dominic Barnes, Fort Riley Education Services, 211 Custer Ave, Room 111b, Fort Riley, KS

SUBJECT: Assistance Review Completion for Protocol, a-FY23-32, "Military leaders in nonprofit organizations," Key Investigator: Trisha Gott, Ph.D., tcgott@k-state.edu

1. Review Outcome.

The Army Human Research Protections Office (AHRPO) Assistance Review of the above referenced protocol is complete, and AHRPO accepts the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval of the protocol.

The AHRPO assistance review is required to ensure that Department of Defense (DoD) assisted human subjects research (HSR) is compliant with DoD requirements in DoD Instruction (DoDI) 3216.02 and the AHRPO policy for the provision of assistance titled, "Department of the Army Review Requirements for Research Assistance to Non-DoD Institutions". Assistance is defined as non-financial resources that are provided by the DoD to non-DoD institutions for research, including, but not limited to facilities, equipment, access to information about DoD-affiliated personnel for recruitment, access to DoD-affiliated personnel, data, or specimens. Funds that are provided by the DoD through a contract or similar arrangement subject to the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS); grants, cooperative agreements, technology investment agreements; or other non-procurement awards are not considered assistance. Assistance is a subset of support.

The DoD is providing assistance for the above referenced activity through the administrative provision of select data from the Volunteer Management Information System (VMIS) and access to active-duty soldiers who voluntarily agree to be interviewed about their volunteerism experiences. Interviewing soldiers during duty hours is approved.

2. Requirements.

Substantive Changes to the Protocol: The AHRPO must review and accept the IRB's determination when substantive modifications are made to this research protocol and any modifications that could potentially increase risk to subjects, before the changes are implemented to ensure compliance with the DoDI 3216.02. Substantive modifications

SUBJECT: Assistance Review for Protocol, a-FY23-32, "Military Leaders in Nonprofit Organizations," Key Investigator: Trisha Gott, Ph.D., tcgott@k-state.edu

include a, change or addition of an institution, elimination or alteration of the consent process, change to the study population that has regulatory implications (e.g., adding children, adding active duty population) or a change that could increase risks to subjects.

Furthermore, if after project initiation, the project changes such as that it is no longer in the scope of the AHRPO assistance policy, the project must receive additional DoD Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) review before the expenditure of funds and/or the initiation of revised activities. Such activities that would require a different type of review include:

- Addition of any activities that will be supported by the DoD through funds provided to non-DoD institutions through a contract, grant, or similar agreement
- Addition of DoD-affiliated personnel serving as investigators in such a way that engages the DoD institution in HSR.
- Addition of study procedures involving DoD-affiliated personnel as subject when those study procedure are determined to involve greater than minimal risk to subjects, and/or test articles subject to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations 21 CFR Parts 312 and 812.
- Addition of any activities that require a Component Level Administrative Review (CLAR) in accordance with DoDI 3216.02, §3.6.a(1)(a)-(f).
- Addition of prisoners as subjects.

Access to Records. Records maintained by non-DoD institutions IAW the non-DoD institutions' record retention policies as specified by 45 CFR 46/32 CFR 219 that are directly related to the DA assistance must be accessible for inspection and copying by AHRPO.

Notification. The investigator should immediately notify the AHRPO of the occurrence of any of the following:

- When the IRB used to review and approve the research changes to a different IRB;
- Suspension or termination of this research study by the IRB, the institution, the sponsor, or any regulatory agency;
- Substantiated unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others related to this research study; and
- Substantiated serious or continuing noncompliance related to this research study.

3. Other Considerations.

If your activity includes an information collection (IC) (i.e., surveys including focus groups, questionnaires, etc.) IAW AR 25-98, DoDI 1100.13, and DoDI 8910.10, review

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of the activity by the U.S. Army Records Management and Declassification Agency (RMDA), Records Management Division (RMD), Information Collections Branch, may be required. This is a separate review from AHRPO's review. For more information, contact the Army Information Management Control Officer (IMCO), Mr. Kurt Hedberg (kurt.e.hedberg.civ@army.mil).

4. Caution.

Do not construe this AHRPO memorandum as IRB approval, DoD Institutional approval, or other DoD support agreement. This review confirms only that the above reference project is deemed by AHRPO to be compliant with the requirements identified in the AHRPO assistance policy and DoDI 3216.02.

5. Point of Contact.

The AHRPO Point of Contact for any questions regarding this memorandum is Name, at phone number or email.

John Morais, MBA, CIP
Research Ethics and Compliance Officer
Army Human Research Protections Office

Information Management Control Office approval & survey control number

Dominic Barnes

From: Hedberg, Kurt Ernest CIV USARMY HQDA CIO (USA) <kurt.e.hedberg.civ@army.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, May 23, 2023 11:24 AM
To: Dominic Barnes
Subject: SCN for the Academic Study Titled "Military Leaders in Nonprofit Organizations"
Attachments: Army Internal Survey Support Statement for IRB 10528.docx; IRB-10528 Interview Guide for Active Duty Soldiers.pdf

This email originated from outside of K-State.

Sir,

The information collection collated under the title "[Military Leaders in Nonprofit Organizations](#)" has been approved IAW AR 25-98 by the Army IMCO. You may begin data collection activities as soon as you receive this memo, pending any other necessary approvals. If you plan to make any changes to the approved protocol, please consult with an Army IMCO at usarmy.belvoir.hqda-rmd.mbx.information-collections-certificatio@army.mil to determine whether the proposed changes alter the status of the project and thus potentially require an amendment or a new application. Since this is primarily an "personal academic" study that has DA crossover interest in, any collected data published outside of DA must be reviewed by the authors Command Legal and Public Affairs office before publication. The SCN should be put within the body of any recruitment materials and on the top margin of any materials the participants will receive. The Survey Control Number information (SCN) is provided below.

SURVEY CONTROL NUMBER: **AAES-RMC-23-150**
AGENCY IDENTIFIER: Personal Academic Study
Expiration Date: 05/18/24

V/r

Qualitative document analysis sources

Awards and Recognition	
♦	Requested documentation from the George H.W. Bush Library on 26 May 2022Founding documents on the establishment of the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal (MOVSM)
♦	MOVSM vs the Humanitarian Service Medal (HSM)
♦	Government publications
Volunteerism	
♦	Volunteer Informatin Management System (VMIS) website
♦	Army Community Service Fort Riley Coordinator policies and publications
♦	Family, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation events and publications for volunteer recognition
♦	DFMWR. Garrison approved private organizations authorized to operate on Fort Riley policies and publications
♦	Nonprofit organizations that coordinate with Fort Riley for active-duty military volunteers
Transition and Retirement	
♦	DOD Transition Assistance Program (TAP) website
♦	Fort Riley TAP Policies and publications
♦	Journey of Veterans Map
♦	Managing Your Transition Map
♦	Navagating Military Retirement Map

Appendix B - Keywords, acronyms, and definitions

Active duty. Full-time duty in the active military service of the United States

Armed Forces. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, and Coast Guard

Enlisted member. A person in an enlisted grade

Military Speak. Military style of communication including jargon and tone

Officer. a commissioned or warrant officer

Regular Components. Describes enlisted, appointed, officer, or agencies or the armed forces

Reserve Components: Army and Air National Guard; Reserve elements of the Regular components of the Armed Forces

Terminal leave. Vacation days used immediately before separating from the armed forces

Uniformed Services. The Armed Forces: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration commissioned corps; the Public Health Service commissioned corps.

CSP. Career Skills Program

DoD. Department of Defense

DoL. Department of Labor

ED. Department of Education

ETS. End of Term of Service

GAO. Government Accountability Office

HSM. Humanitarian Service Medal

MOVSM. Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal

MSO. Military Support Organization

NPO. Nonprofit Organization

OPOC. Organizational Point of Contact

TAP. Transition Assistance Program

VA. Department of Veterans Affairs

VFW. Veterans of Foreign Wars

VMIS. Volunteer Management Information System

VSO. Veteran Service Organization

Appendix C - Literature review summary chart

Folder name	# of articles-references	# of subfolders	Subfolder name	# of articles-references	Totals
Active-Duty Volunteerism	2	2			5
			Army	2	
			Navy	1	
All-volunteer force	5	0			5
Army publications	39	0			39
Communication	37	2			39
			Communication Accommodation Theory	1	
			Conversation Analysis	1	
Democracy	81	0			81
DoD	3	0			3
Engaging Community	45				45
ETS or Onward Ops	7				7
Families	1				1
Fort Riley	4				4
FRGs	0	2			13
			Army	4	
			Navy	9	
Imposter Syndrome-Phenomenon	6	0			6
Impoverished Language	4	0			4
International Journal of Qualitative Research Methods	5	0			5
Leadership articles	178	14			233
			Classic-Traditional Leadership	1	
			Collective Leadership	5	
			Complexity	3	
			Embodied Leadership	2	
			Ethical Leadership	1	

			Flower (2008) book on Rhetoric of public engagement	1	
			Heroic Leadership	1	
			Leadership as Purpose	1	
			Leadership Development	7	
			Leadership as Practice	21	
			Military Leadership	8	
			Momentary Leadership	1	
			Relational Leadership	1	
			Servant Leadership	2	
Listening	2	0			2
Mental Health	7	3			30
			Military Suicide	1	
			Redemption of Absolution	4	
			Suicide	18	
Military and Adult Transition articles	55	0			55
Military Culture	15	1			20
			Military Speak	5	
Military Transition	29	11			426
			...to Career	69	
			...to Civilian life	60	
			...to College	176	
			...to Nonprofits	53	
			Anticipatory Socialization and Resocialization	1	
			GAO reports on TAP	2	
			Leadership in military transition	8	
			Military reenlistment references	2	
			Military Transitioning	8	
			Penn State Research	1	
			TAP articles	17	
Military Volunteer Agencies	0	2			7
			Army Volunteer Corps	5	
			Navy Community Service Program	2	

Military-Civil Relations	3	0			3
MOVSM	11	0			11
Nonprofit Articles & Books	93	0			93
Points of Light	19	0			19
Policy Articles	2	0			2
Qualitative Research - Articles	4	0			4
Research	307	21			364
			Acculturation	6	
			Appreciative Inquiry	1	
			Case Study	2	
			Coding	2	
			Cognitive Dissonance Theory	1	
			Conceptual Framework	3	
			Critical Leadership Theory	1	
			Veteran Critical Theory	5	
			Document Analysis	4	
			Grounded Theory	4	
			Interview Guide	4	
			Interview Studies	1	
			Mixed Methods	11	
			Sampling	3	
			Spaces and Places	2	
			Subjectivity	6	
			Triangulation	1	
Folders	28		total Articles	1526	
Subfolders	54		total categories	82	
	82				

Appendix D - Informed Consent

IRB-10528 Informed Consent Form

PROJECT TITLE:

Military Leaders in Nonprofit Organizations.

**PROJECT APPROVAL
DATE:**

Oct 2022

**PROJECT EXPIRATION
DATE:**

May 2024

**LENGTH OF
STUDY:**

2 years

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Trisha Gott, Ed. D. | tcgott@ksu.edu | 785-532-6085

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:

Dominic Barnes, dombarnes@ksu.edu, 785-341-1393

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION:

Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224

Brad Woods, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224

RESPONSIBLE GRADUATE STUDENT:

Dominic Barnes, graduate student researcher, Leadership Communication Doctoral Program, Kansas State University

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

This study investigates the lived experiences of active-duty military service members who volunteer in nonprofit organizations, their adaptive leadership and communicative practices, and effects of volunteerism on successful transition preparation from military services to college, careers, and communities.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

1. Interviews are conducted with eligible participants: active-duty service members who volunteer in nonprofit organizations and veterans with that experience during their service. An opportunity to review a transcript of the recorded interview to make additions and corrections will be provided to each participant.
2. Interviews are planned for 30-45 minutes though can go longer if the participant wishes. All interviews will be conducted in person or online and recorded. Recordings will be transcribed into a text document and analyzed for themes and concepts across the varied experiences of the participating service members and veterans.
3. Personally Identifiable Information (PII) will be collected for the interview. To protect participants, all original recordings and documentation will be secured during transcription and analysis and destroyed thereafter. All participants will be de-identified in all products and publications. Until destruction, documents and recordings with participant PII will be stored on a secure Kansas State University server.

Ph.D. candidate Dominic Barnes will conduct all interviews and follow-on reviews of transcripts with participating parties. He is the primary point of contact for this study for all activities including interviews, scheduling, documentation, coordinating with personnel, offices, and agencies, and securing data IAW standards policies in the IRB and interested parties to this study: Participating Soldiers and Veterans, Kansas State University, and the Army.

Trisha Gott, Ed. D is the principal investigator for this study. Dr. Gott is a Kansas State University professor overseeing and advising Dominic Barnes in the development, design, and conduct of the study. Dr. Trisha Gott advises Dominic Barnes as Chair of his supervisory committee for the Leadership Communication Ph.D.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:

1. No risks or discomforts are expected to occur during this study.
2. You may at any time withdraw from participation at any time.
3. We will maintain anonymity in any reports or publications arising from this work through de-identification. De-identification to FERPA standards requires that all direct and indirect identifiers that could be used in combination to identify an individual be removed.
4. Video and audio recordings will be transcribed and then destroyed. Future researchers may use de-identified data. They will not have access to names, locations, or other personally identifiable information.
5. Raw data will only be accessible to the research team: Dominic Barnes and Dr. Trisha Gott.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:

A better understanding of the experiences of active-duty service members who volunteer in nonprofit organizations adds context to the story of military service, service members, and communities. Phenomena related to service members who volunteer in nonprofit organizations, who volunteers, why they volunteer, and related benefits of volunteering has yet to be studied. Volunteerism may lead to successful transitions to college, careers, and communities. Beyond recognition, the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal may be a transformative path to civilian success.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

1. Your personally identifying information will be removed from transcripts of recordings. The original recording, after they have been transcribed, will be erased and irretrievable.
2. Verbatim transcripts of the interview will only be accessible by the Dominic Barnes and Dr. Trisha Gott. Reports and surveys will not include your personally identifying information or that of individuals incidentally named during interviews.
3. De-identified transcripts of interviews and data may be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from the research participant or legally authorized representative.
4. This consent form will be locked in a secured file for three years and then destroyed.

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this pilot study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this pilot study under the terms described and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

PARTICIPANT NAME:

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE:

WITNESS TO SIGNATURE:
(PROJECT STAFF)

DATE:

DATE:

Appendix E - Creed of the Noncommissioned Officer

No one is more professional than I. I am a noncommissioned officer, a leader of Soldiers. As a noncommissioned officer, I realize that I am a member of a time honored corps, which is known as "The Backbone of the Army". I am proud of the Corps of noncommissioned officers and will at all times conduct myself so as to bring credit upon the Corps, the military service and my country regardless of the situation in which I find myself. I will not use my grade or position to attain pleasure, profit, or personal safety.

Competence is my watchword. My two basic responsibilities will always be uppermost in my mind—accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my Soldiers. I will strive to remain technically and tactically proficient. I am aware of my role as a noncommissioned officer. I will fulfill my responsibilities inherent in that role. All Soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership; I will provide that leadership. I know my Soldiers and I will always place their needs above my own. I will communicate consistently with my Soldiers and never leave them uninformed. I will be fair and impartial when recommending both rewards and punishment.

Officers of my unit will have maximum time to accomplish their duties; they will not have to accomplish mine. I will earn their respect and confidence as well as that of my Soldiers. I will be loyal to those with whom I serve; seniors, peers, and subordinates alike. I will exercise initiative by taking appropriate action in the absence of orders. I will not compromise my integrity, nor my moral courage. I will not forget, nor will I allow my comrades to forget that we are professionals, noncommissioned officers, leaders!

(Department of the Army, 2025, p. viii)

Appendix F - Recruiting Flyer

K-State IRB# 10528

Army IMCO: AAES-RMC-23-150

Study on Volunteerism

Who is Eligible?

Active-duty Soldier or Veteran as below...

- Active Duty Army who volunteers on or off post
- Any Veteran who volunteered while serving

What do I have to do?

- Sign an Informed Consent form
- Be Interviewed for 30 minutes in-person or online
- Agree the interview can be recorded
- Review the interview transcript when ready

What about my personal information?

- Only the Informed Consent form will have your name
- All identifying information is removed from the interview
- All identifying information is removed from publications

INTERVIEWS CAN BE DONE IN PERSON OR ONLINE

TO SCHEDULE YOUR INTERVIEW CONTACT:

DOMINIC BARNES

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

DOMBARNES@KSU.EDU | (785) 341-1393

Appendix G - Brainstorming

Leadership
 WORK →
 TALK →

Civic
 Military Leaders in Nonprofit Organizations

Engagement
 APPROX

Framework
 Appreciative leadership
 Adaptive leadership Theory
 Leadership-as-Practice
 Interview Studies
 Mixed Methods
 Document Analysis
 Social Constructionist
 Semi-Structured Interviews
 Communicative
 Relational
 Systemic
 Materialism

MPRA Chapters (22)
 NOT JUST
 Kevin - Army MP OSM
 Billy - Army MP OSM
 Marina - Navy
 Shred - ~~Army~~ ~~MP~~ ~~OSM~~
 Isabella - ~~Army~~ ~~MP~~ ~~OSM~~
 Viola - Army Nat/Guard

Transition / Retention of Leadership Style / Communication
 Mundane leadership | NCO + Enlisted
 Hero → Relationship → Organization
 • Conflict in Multi-modal Approaches?
 • Transplant Success in variable Settings?

Where + Who
 Agenda + Positions

Mil → Vet Transitions to
 What is the observations?
 What happens to leadership in transition from Military to campus/nonprofit?
 • Campus
 • Non-Profit

Survey for MPRA Chapters

Leadership	Engagement
EDLE4820	EDLE4845
Report	Report
MPRA	Audie Murphy
Vet & Tech	TOASTMASTERS
	Retirement Council

Pilot Project Spring 2021
 Military leaders in nonprofit organizations
 COMM405
 EDLE4838
 Chapter 3 Diss Draft

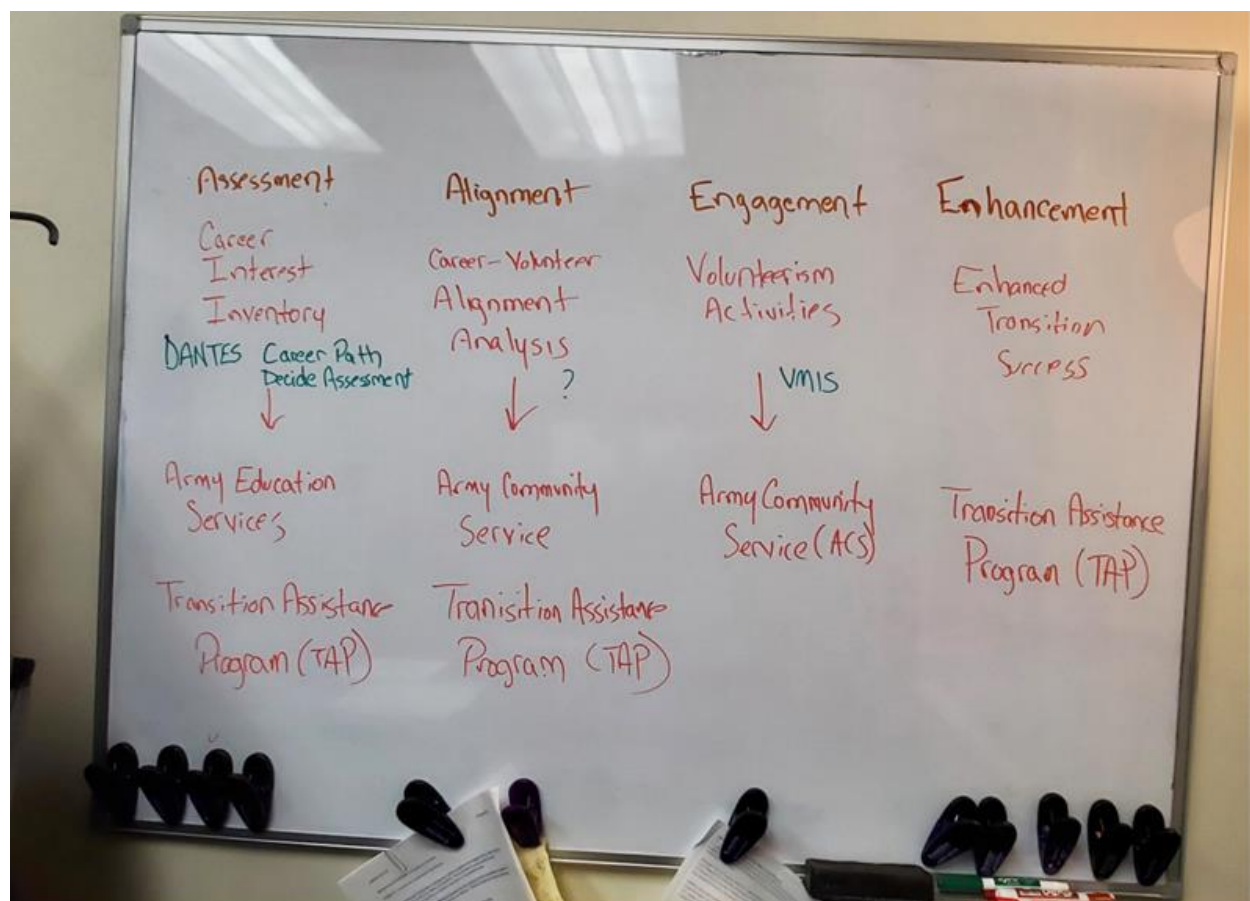
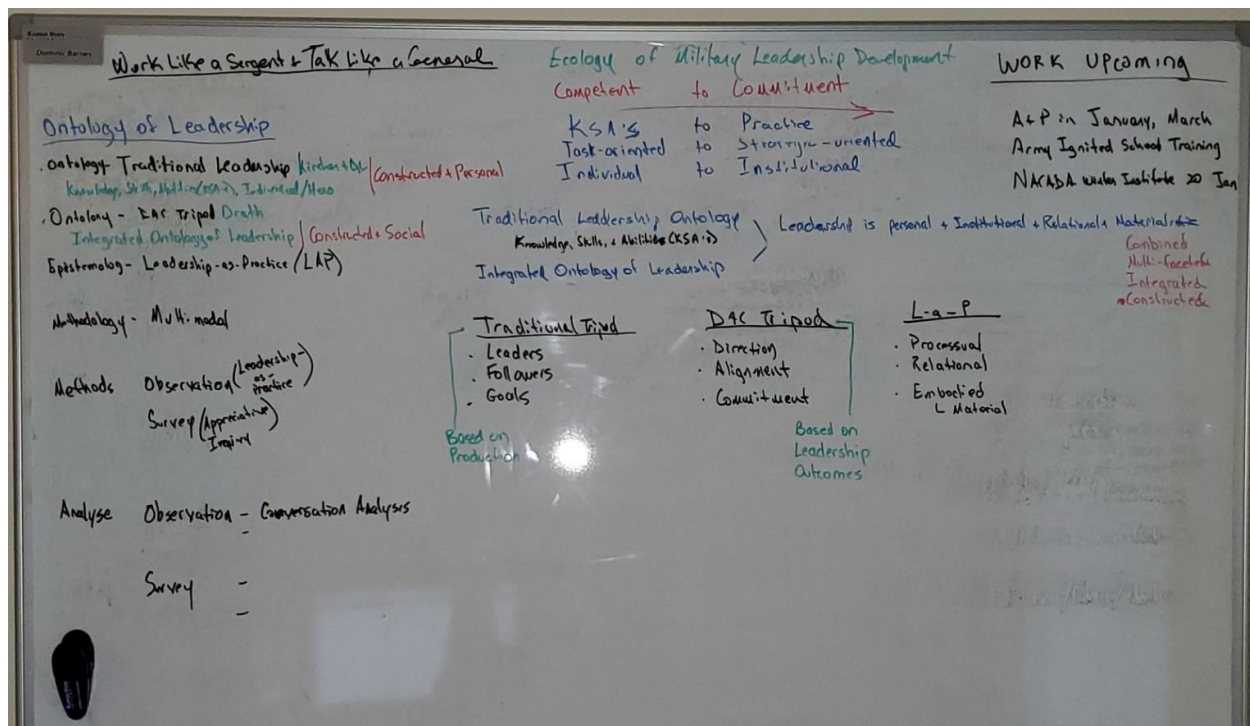
Wildcats STATUS +/-

What does this mean?
 Citizen-Civilian
 what am I trying to say?
 American Automatic
 Immigrant
 Not Automatic

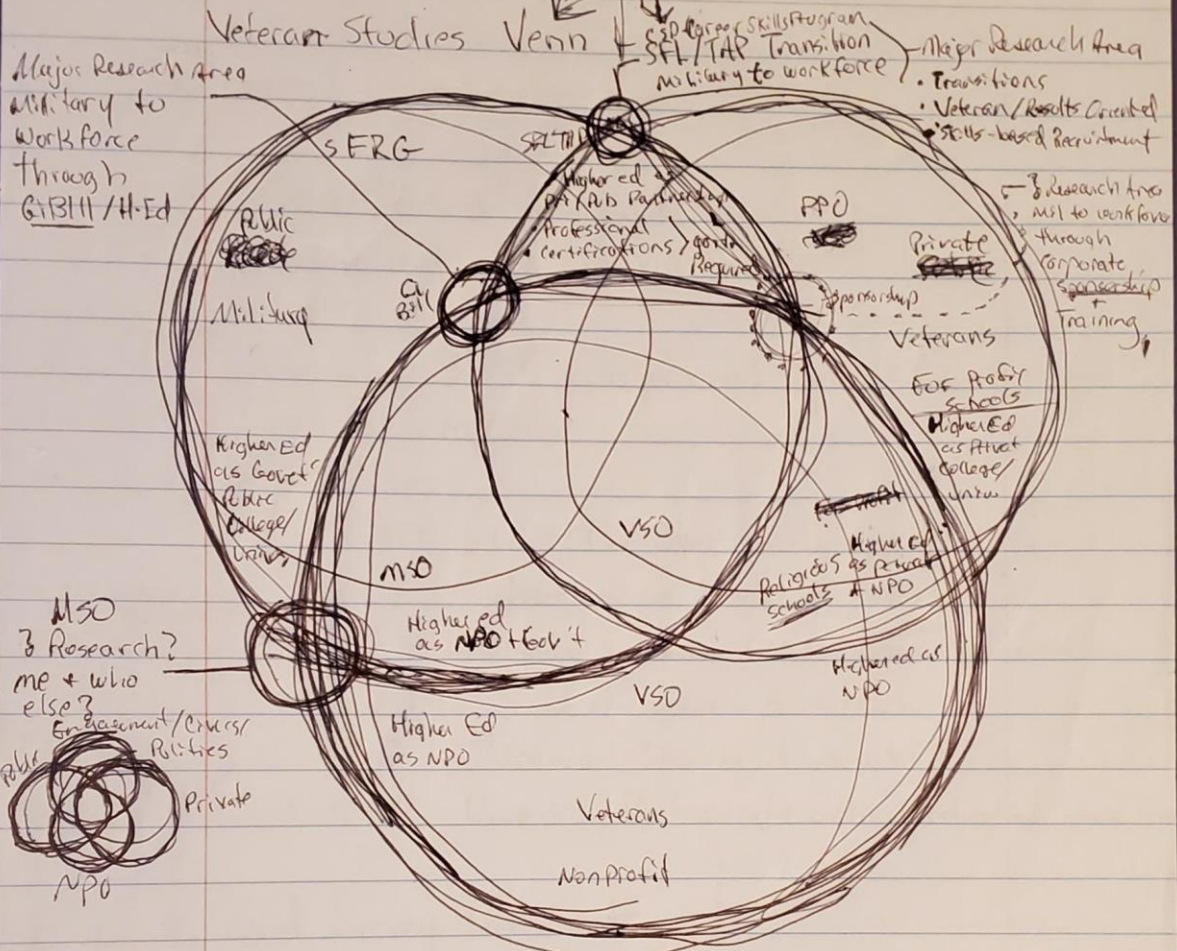
Military
 Super-Citizen
 Sub-Civilian
 Patriotism
 Survival
 Historical
 Pathway
 Patriotism(?)
 Survival

Veteran
 Super-Civilian
 Sub-Citizen
 Patriotism
 Benefits
 Patriotism
 Benefits

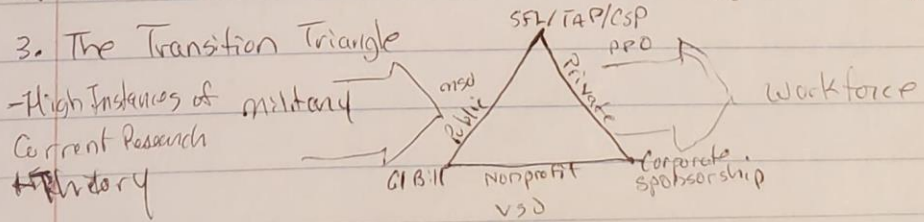
Citizen
 Default
 Civilian
 Occlusion
 Forces
 Heroism

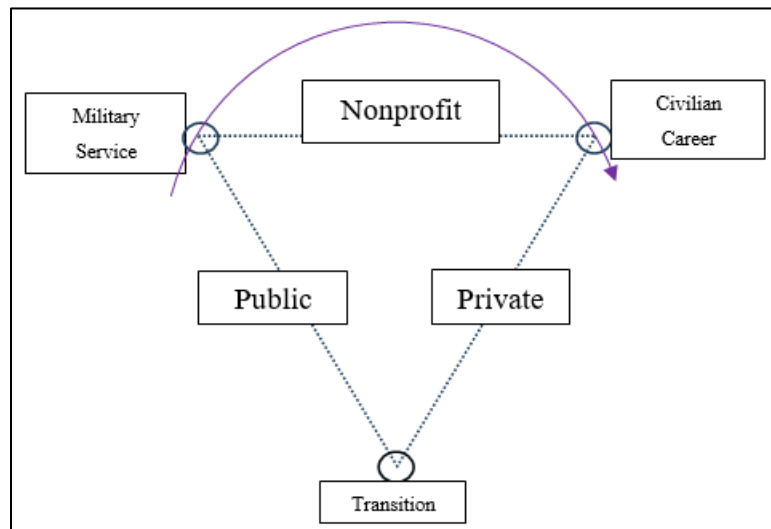
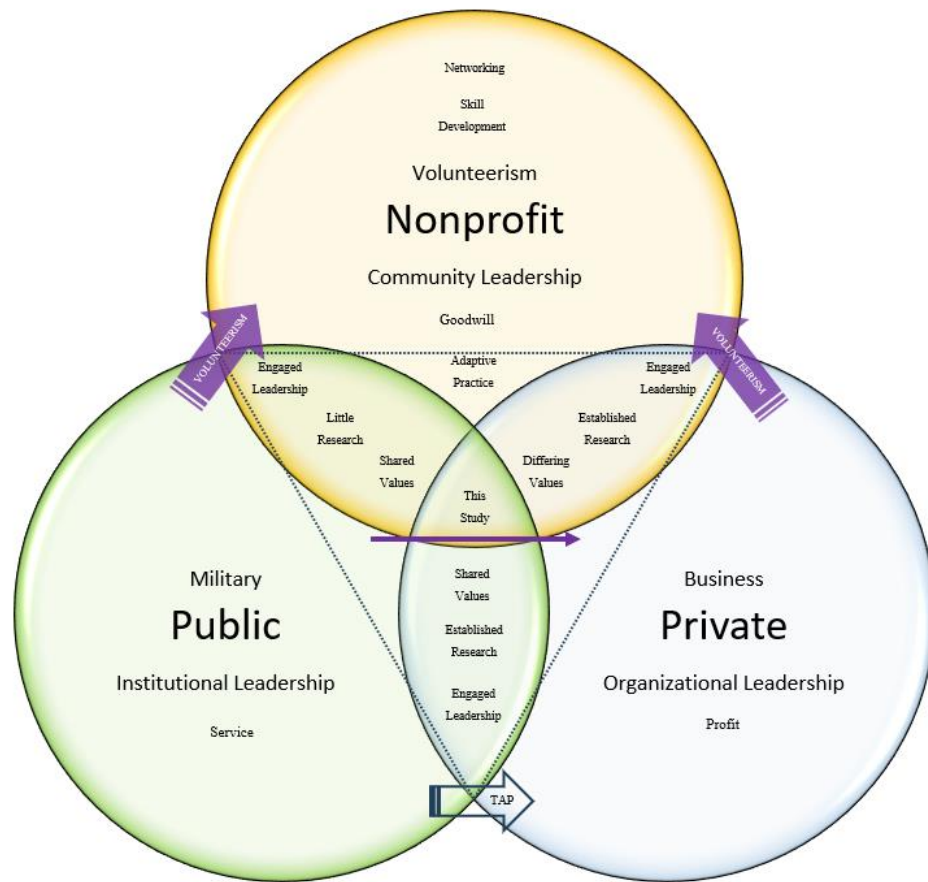


Veteran Studies Venn



1. Are there solely NGO Colleges / Universities not government or Religions based?
2. Who does MSD Research? What are the Major Themes?
3. The Transition Triangle





Appendix H - Participant motivation to volunteer

Category	Participant	Codes
Giving back	Active: Stacey, Mary, Pat, Sean, Jo, Zachary, Carlos Veteran: Manny, Arlen, Tony, Wesley	Give back, giving back, I want to give back, it's more my responsibility to give back, give back, giving back, give back, no excuse why I can't give back, gonna go do it, it was an organization that helped me so much the time when I really needed it, give back my thanks, give back for my time with the United Nations.
Mental health	Active: Stacey, Mary, Carlos, Jo, Bryan, Abby, Jennifer, Zachary Veteran: Frank, Wesley, Nashelle, Mark, Amanda	get outside of my own head, focus my energy and tunnel focus my vision better, happy, enjoyed, selfless, good feeling, joy, a return that is immeasurable, I needed something for my mental health, do something positive, joy, happy, joy, joy, joy, love, love, enjoying, great, enjoy, enthusiastic, enjoy, love, enjoy, nice, nice, good, good, good, I don't have that much connection, fulfillment, like, really great, hopefully, likes, love, enjoy, interested, believe, there's nothing to ever do, believe, a different mindset, enjoy, vibe, It's fun, my mindset, I love, I loved, a good feeling, to share my passion, helped me so much
Transition preparation	Active: Stacey, Sean, Bryan, Jennifer Veteran: Manny, Sam, Arlen, Mark, Amanda, Tony	Transition, I'm going to step into a job, now that my time in the Army is short, so I can be a competitive person when I applied to college/medical school, have a job and volunteer, transitioning, volunteering aids in transition, how good it looks on a resume, a foot in each world - both the military space and the civilian space,
Networking	Active: Stacey, Sean, Bryan, Mary, Jennifer, Zachary Veteran: Sam, Manny, Tony	reconnect, networking, connections, a lot of people know me, it's like, we are like computers: connections, resources. Reaching out to people, helping to network, opportunities would open up with people you network with, expands your social and professional networks,
Learning	Active: Stacey, Mary, Abby, Bryan, Zachary	gain experiences, learning from the elderly, interested in learning about the cultures, got to learn to understand people, see different stuff and experience different things, learn more about Junction City, to check out the

	Veteran: Nashelle, Sam, Amanda, Arlen, Wesley	experience, you learn to do things better. we learn doing it, You don't know what you don't know, I'm always available to learn, : It educated me on how nonprofits should absolutely never run, I learned by trying
Community	Active: Stacey, Mary, Pat, Carlos, Jennifer, Jo, Bryan, Abby, Zachary, Sean Veteran: Nashelle, Sam, Wesley, Amanda, Manny, Tony	with folks, have other people, doing something for my community, to see how many different families there are on base, to be part of something, involved in the community, spaces and those communities, community cleanup, being a part of a college organization, mentor my children as well as others, the community, building that camaraderie with those 18 other strangers, a great show for the community, out there helping the community, I can be a part of it, the local community, the community, help those organizations, meet those people and understand, a community, to really get connected, communities, community events, community events, to see a community come together, involved in the community, supporting your community, a local community event, live in your community, the power of community, supporting your local community, bring a different regional perspective, meet somebody at an event, I put my boots on and I give back to my community, get involved, participate as an adult, get involved, help out, being involved, get involved within the community, helping people, helping seniors, get out there with you guys, They need help, they need bodies, they asked me, People were coming to me, having a home is everything, to help others, for community type of stuff, Being involved in community, building the type of community that you want to live in, to help people that are in a sort of hell, community a better place
Life Balance	Active: Stacey, Pat, Bryan, Jo Veteran: Arlen, Amanda	Deployment/escaped death multiple times/trauma/PTSD-TBI, helping me to be, I think, more involved with them my children and spending time with them, give back to those spaces and those communities that I also benefit from, understand a deeper

		appreciation while you're there, with my kids, attending the group after losing my son, my kids participating, Trying to balance my work life and my personal life,
Supporting children and the less fortunate	Active: Mary, Jennifer, Pat, Carlos, Bryan Veteran: Wesley, Manny, Arlen, Tony, Amanda	give toys to the children, you give something to somebody, everyone has a need, The kids were all really fun to be around, My biggest joy is helping the kids, we did the orphanage, or we're at the boys and girls home, always somebody in need, an orphanage, my kids to have good experiences, my kids are going to benefit, needed coaches for youth programs, help with coaching
Communication	Active: Stacey, Abby, Pat, Mary Veteran: Wesley, Manny, Nashelle, Arlen, Amanda	have other people with which I could speak, just talk about the differences, I have an accent and some people mock me sometimes, they don't know this jargon, I do adjust talking, I have to remember before I talk to them, I'll say things like DFAC, when you spoke you kept the vernacular, I was a different person talking to civilians than I would have been talking to soldiers, challenging especially when you speak a lot of military terms, you learn to adapt to the culture and the situation you're in, when he gets tired sometimes that old military comes out, somebody invariably will say, 'No, it must be an army thing.' and then you try to translate it.
Value laden	Active: Stacey, Mary, Abby, Bryan, Jennifer, Jo, Carlos, Zachary, Veteran: Wesley, Nashelle, Manny, Tony, Mark, Amanda	important, selfless, continue to have a sense of purpose, helping others, helping people, serving other people, want to be here for everybody, see smiling faces, give other people joy, everybody can be successful, giving my time to other people, helping other people, I motivate a lot of people, a reward within itself, needs you, to make sure they're not getting mistreated, servant, make somebody else a little bit more comfortable, let them know the feeling is normal, A compassionate support group
Qualifying and Quantifying	Active: Mary, Pat, Jennifer, Bryan, Abby, Zachary, Jo, Carlos,	It's the best, it was cool, it's cool, fun, fun, fun, to get the MOVSM, fun, feather in my cap, personal, phenomenal, phenomenal, camaraderie, great experience, awesome,

	Veteran: Manny, Arlen, Mark, Sam, Wesley, Nashelle, Frank,	amazing, face time [with leadership}, a good thing, a tangible benefit, propaganda for the U.S, it was nice, It was nice, had a good time, tangible, a meaningful contribution, do something constructive, harmony, rewarding, fulfillment, opportunity, important, is really great, that does make a difference, opportunities, enjoyed it, chasing that ribbon, fun, good clean fun, opportunity, opportunity, opportunity, opportunity, I'm with it, doing something good, Do something good, opportunity, having fun with my friends, volunteer badge, promotion purposes, commendatory correspondence, letters of appreciation, certificates of appreciation, Fitness reports, do good things, our chance to go do another good thing, The opportunity
Service and time	Active: Mary, Stacey, Jo, Bryan, Zachary Veteran: Arlen, Tony, Sam, Wesley	doing without pay, giving my time to other people, I could help mentor, I'm here...Use me...I'm an able body, to be utilized for the benefit of the organization, giving my time to somebody else, providing for others, we do what little we can do, need a little help, I've got some time, discretionary time, more convenient, proximity, weren't willing to put time into volunteering,
Personal development	Active: Mary, Jo, Abby, Pat, Stacey, Zachary Veteran: Manny, Nashelle, Arlen, Tony, Amanda	defined as a person, push myself, I want to be well-rounded, get me out of my comfort zone, we work at improvement, soldiers to improve themselves, a conscious effort, I also realized, to gain something, I always wanted to, it became personal, bad excuses, I wished I'd done it sooner, I stepped in, I was able to do it
Unit support	Active: Mary, Sean, Carlos, Jo, Abby, Pat, Zachary Veteran: Wesley, Manny, Nashelle, Frank	my unit let me go, I made the Battalion look good, I didn't even know we were volunteering, the military will accept it, First Sergeant asked, did a class project, The Garrison Command. So, it's all soldiers, your commander doesn't have someone to organize an event, our battery Commander said 'Hey, we're gonna collect toys," the company commanders will push it out to people, the First Sergeant gave me time to

		make all the speeches, Company Commander would call to help him out with coaching, It was like lower enlisted, plus a sergeant, 'hey if you do this, you'll get a letter of appreciation'
Bridging and enabling	Active: Stacey, Pat, Jo, Mary, Bryan, Sean, Zachary, Carlos, Jennifer, Abby Veteran: Tony, Manny, Nashelle, Arlen,	it's going to help me, I was able to, it may help, it helped, being able to, when you got to give, I could, doing something, you do something, be involved, to those spaces and those communities, not [to] hoard that [my experience and education] and not do anything with it, we did the, trying to help somebody, If I wasn't in the Army I would never have thought about volunteering, get out there, I am out there, I put my name out there. afforded, a part of it, being a part of, being able to do it, push myself out there, to be a part, go out to seek them, you can do with your free time, keep myself busy, instead of just hanging in the barracks, I go in or call ACS, invest that time, to get out there, yeah...I'll do it, I just go and seek out and ask, I wanted to, show up, I can bring, I can bring, take a part in, I'm always gonna participate, let me go volunteer
Emotional engagement-obligation	Active: Stacey, Mary, Carlos, Jo, Bryan, Abby, Jennifer, Pat Veteran: Tony, Amanda, Wesley, Nashelle, Mark, Arlen, Manny,	I felt like, have a sense, feel happy, I enjoyed, grateful, good feeling, brought me joy, I just love, where my passion is, I love, I thoroughly enjoy, like engaging in the community, like to do community service, I'm proud, I really like libraries, it's the feeling that you have, I like bringing joy to other people, it always brought me joy to see them come through and get a nice hot meal, I just love it, I wish I had more, I enjoy how it feels, my kind of work, I like community events, hopefully volunteering more, likes to volunteer, I feel like we should all try to take a part in fixing [social problems], how I was raised, when someone helps you you have help them, You must give back, just something that you do, a course requirement, once and always, I don't look for the thanking, not asking for a pat on the back, I was called, enjoyed, I should go help, they asked me, I felt like I

		was sound enough, I was confident, I could offer, I'd be relevant, I believed in it, it needed to be successful, I can fix this, I felt like, I felt, I needed to really step in, I felt strongly, I stepped up, parents that were always involved, it was what I knew growing up, just part of our family
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Appendix I - Participant Volunteer work

Synonym	Before Military	During Military	After Military
ACTIVE DUTY			
Stacey	Through school and church.	Scouts, Knights of Columbus in a leadership position-Scribe, Church, Student Veterans Association-leadership role, Fundraising for Nonprofit, Make Food Baskets for on and off post, Make Holiday Gift Baskets for on and off post, Special Olympics, helping Challenged Children	It's going to help me continue to have a sense of purpose, but also, be able to engage with folks who are not in the military.
Mary	Church, Salvation Army	Teaching Zumba, USO, Church, Food for Soldiers thru the USO, Operation Santa Claus	provide food for everybody else, like homeless people,
Pat	College Food Pantry, Alternative Spring Break	Language tutoring, Laguna Seca Volunteer Association, Library, A&H Farms, Blood Drive, Reading Out Loud	I would want that to continue. I want to give back to those spaces and those communities that I also benefit from.
Sean	Red Cross coordinator, fundraising	Volunteer Firefighter and EMT, youth group advisor, Masonic Foundation, community health screening, blood donation, coach youth sports, Noah's Band Aid Project	Probably something in the emergency management field. Even if that's not my job. I like that kind of stuff.
Carlos		Toys for orphans in South Korea, Halloween haunted house for the community, boys and girls club, retirement home, veteran and first responder hunting/fishing events, park clean-up, Veterans Creed Outdoors, Church events, creating home-like environment while feeding troops while deployed to combat	So, as I retire and transition to my civilian life, I'll be working with them, to volunteer and help out veterans.
Jennifer	Food to local homeless shelter	Fundraising for Nonprofit, coach youth sports, Community Clean-up, MPRA leadership, USO, Church nursery and Parent Connection (Jennifer does not consider this volunteering)	Not necessarily in the nursery, but always with some sort of children's ministry
Jo		Fundraising for Nonprofit, Flint Hills Breadbasket	I don't have a plan yet on what that would be, or even what kind of volunteering thing I would do, but it could definitely be something I could see myself doing
Bryan	Health Occupation, Students of America, Interact, Rotary Club	Meadowlark Retirement Community holiday decorations, Teaching English to the Polish community	I do see myself volunteering after I leave.

Zachary	Federation of Liberian Youth, Local Initiatives	Army Community Service Multicultural Program, Victory Welcome, Army Readiness Program, coach youth soccer at the YMCA, Church	
Abby	School/Camp Counselor	JC Street Market and Freedom Fest, Library, Animal Shelter, Fundraising for Nonprofit, BOSS Program	I would like to do other kinds of volunteering

Synonym	Before Military	During Military	After Military
Veteran			
Sam	Through church.	Amateur sports organization nonprofit on board of directors and serving food, church (Sam does not consider this volunteering)	Grunt Style Foundation leader, donating groceries and household items to active-duty service members, helping veterans with Warriors Rising, helped write the PACT Act Bill, Stop Soldier Suicide, Burn Pits 360 board member
Wesley		Sergeant Audie Murphy Club, highway cleanup, Community Clean-up, Feeding Community, Habitat for Humanity	JROTC Program drill team training, Fundraising for Scholarships, Red Cross Blood Drive Coordinator, Blood Donations, VFW leadership and fundraising, American Legion
Manny	Big Brothers Big Sisters	Scout Master, Army Community Service parenting courses, tutoring within the school system, community yard maintenance, Special Olympics	Church, food drives, clothing drives, coaching 8-man football
Nashelle	Nursing homes and helping seniors	Community Clean-up, pack up free food for needy children, cleaning the community food pantry, YMCA	
Frank	Docent and Reenactment, auxiliary police officer, tarping rooftops for disaster relief	MWR events, Scout Master, Volunteering around animals, blood donation, fundraising for Marine Corps unit at mud run and motocross events to fund military ball, color guard for a high school	Rotary Club, Samaritan's Purse, Sheep Dog Impact Assistance with disaster response, disability construction, distributed food and clean drinking water, wildfire prevention and Warrior PATHH, Team Rubicon strike team leader
Arlen		Scouts, Watch D.O.G.S., bike rodeo	Red Cross disaster assistance resettling and feeding US hurricane refugees
Tony		President of the Fort Riley Horse Riding Club, Site Council for Chapman Middle School, Community Clean-up	AUSA Leader, Fundraising, Combined Scholarship Fund of Greater Fort Riley, Military Officer's Association Leader, Flint Hills Veterans Coalition Leader, USO Kansas Leader, Friends of McCain, We Defy Foundation, En Garde Arts, Community Health, The All-Glory Project, War Horses for Veterans, Fundraising
Mark	Habitat for Humanity	Automotive educator at Midwest Dream Car Collection	
Amanda	Fort Riley Welcome Wagon	Coaching youth sports, Scouts	The General Foundation of Women's Clubs, The Compassionate Friends, Optimist Club, Daughters of the American Revolution, Fairy Godmothers, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Fundraising

Appendix J - CPS survey compared to participant experiences

CPS volunteer activity category	CPS study Civilians	Current study participants			Veteran after service (out of 9)
		Combined (% of total)	Active duty (out of 10)	Veteran During service (out of 9)	
Fundraise or sell items to raise money	36%	79%	8	4	5
Collect, prepare, distribute, or sell food	34.2%	68%	8	3	4
Collect, make, or distribute clothing, crafts, or other goods	26.5%	32%	4	1	2
Mentor youth	26.2%	42%	4	5	2
Engage in general labor; supply transportation for people	23%	63%	6	5	2
Tutor or teach	23%	58%	6	3	3
Provide labor or management assistance	20.5%	89%	8	7	6
Usher, greeter, or minister	15.8%	37%	5	1	1
Engage in music, performance, or other artistic activities	14%	37%	3	2	1
Coach, referee, or supervise sports teams	12%	37%	4	3	1
Provide general office services	11.4%	42%	4	3	4
Counselling, medical care, fire or EMS, or protective services	9.5%	26%	2	1	6
Other types of volunteer activity	8.4%	74%	7	7	7

Appendix K - Sample of MOVSM Founding Documents from the
George H.W. Bush Presidential Library

	EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
DATE: 11/12/92	
TO: DOSG	
FROM: ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS	
Subject: Comments on Staffing Request Regarding Criteria for the Award of Humanitarian Service Medal	
I agree with Addington's recommendation (attached) that the eligibility of the award should <u>not</u> be extended to cover volunteer service. I would have no objection to the establishment of a separate medal, as suggested by Addington.	
Attachment	

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

November 6, 1992

2 NOV 9 AID: 45

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: GREGG PETERSMEYER *GP*

SUBJECT: Award of the Humanitarian Service Medal to
Recognize Outstanding Community Service By Military
Service Members

- I. ACTION-FORCING EVENT: Although you have called on government institutions to honor community service, no Department of Defense (DOD) program now exists to promote and recognize outstanding service to the civilian community by military men and women.
- II. BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS: The Defense Department routinely authorizes large-scale awards of the Humanitarian Service Medal (HSM) to service members who participate in approved disaster relief operations at home and abroad. However, the HSM is not currently used to recognize outstanding volunteer service to the community by military units and individuals. As a result, service members can receive the HSM for directed service at home and abroad, but not for outstanding volunteer service at home in the community.
- III. RECOMMENDATION: The Office of National Service recommends that you direct the Department of Defense to authorize award of the Humanitarian Service Medal to deserving service members for outstanding volunteer service to the civilian community, subject to screening criteria established by DOD. This action will further your goals by recognizing and promoting outstanding service to the community by military volunteers using existing means. as in the HSM
- IV. DECISION:
- ____ Approve ____ Approve as amended ____ Reject

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

1/9/93

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 7, 1993

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: GREGG PETERSMEYER *GP*

SUBJECT: POINT OF LIGHT CEREMONY - JANUARY 14, 1993

You will be pleased to know we have invited one Daily Point of Light from each state to the East Room Ceremony on Thursday, January 14, 1993. Already Daily Point of Light representatives from 47 states, including Hawaii and Alaska, have confirmed their attendance. We await final notification from only Wisconsin, Kansas, and South Dakota.

Each Point of Light will pay his or her own way to Washington, D.C. I suspect that the response to this invitation surprises you. It reminds me of Field of Dreams -- "If you build it, they will come."

1/11/93
Copy 2 memo
went
Petersmeyer
TW

Gregg
I does surprise
me - I. It; how's
how well you in
done your
work!!
Good!

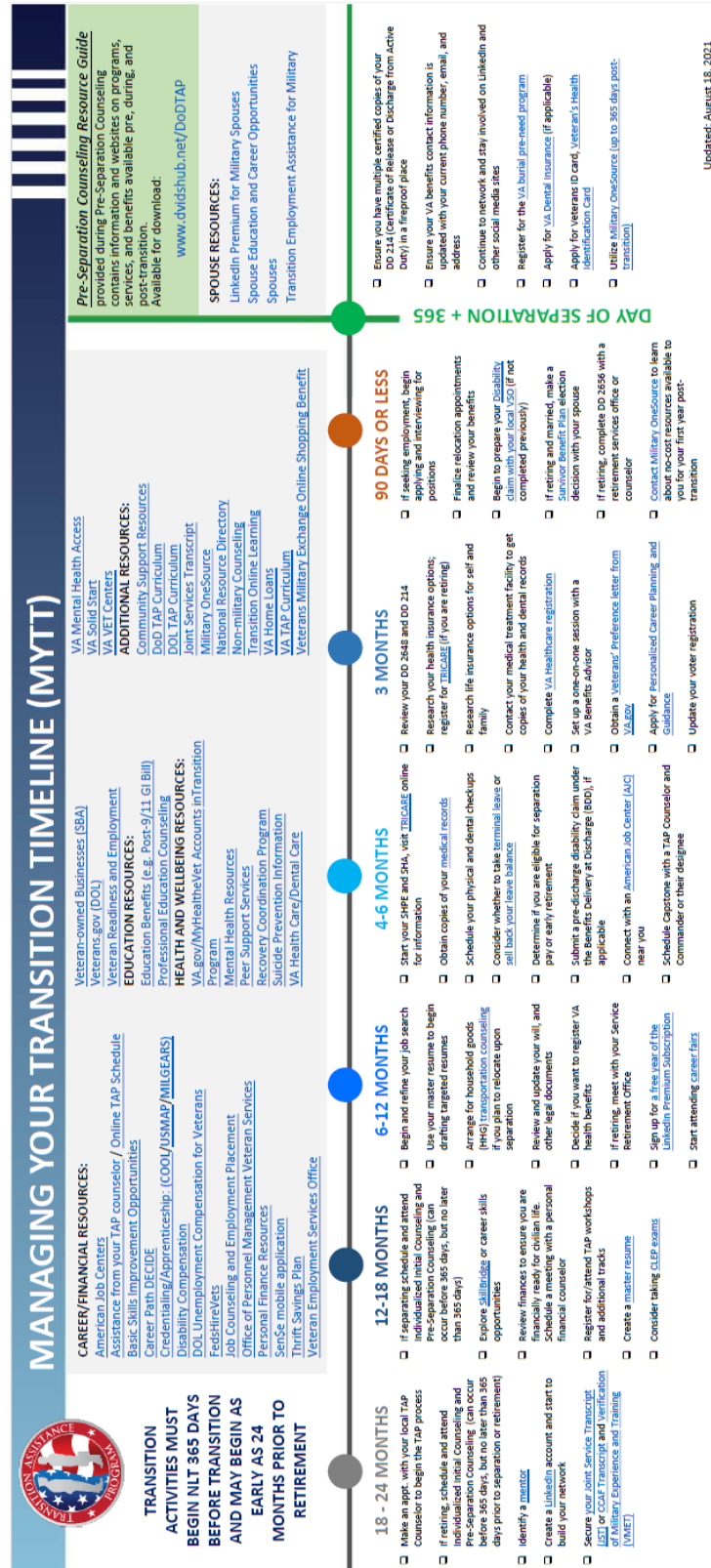
GP

Bush Library Photocopy
George Bush Handwriting

Appendix L - VFI scale and emergent categories from the study

VFI Scale	Categories of Volunteer Motivation
Values	Giving Back, Mental Health, Community, Life Balance, Supporting Children and the Less Fortunate, Value Laden, Qualifying and Quantifying, Service and Time, Unit Support, and Emotional Engagement – Obligation
Learning New Skills	Transition Preparation, Learning, Communication, Personal Development, Bridging and Enabling
Engaging in Social Networks	Giving Back, Transition Preparation, Networking, Community, Communication, Service and Time, Bridging and Enabling, Emotional Engagement - Obligation
Preparing for a New Career	Transition Preparation, Networking, Learning, Communication, Personal Development, Value Laden, Qualifying and Quantifying, Personal Development, and Bridging and Enabling
Reducing Guilt	Giving Back, Mental Health, Life Balance, Supporting Children and the Less Fortunate, Value Laden, Personal Development, Emotional Engagement - Obligation
Personal Growth	Giving Back, Mental Health, Learning, Community, Life Balance, Value Laden, Qualifying and Quantifying, Service and Time, Personal Development

Appendix M - DoD Military Transition Timeline (TAP)



Appendix N - VA Journeys of Veterans Map

