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Identity, Transition, And High-Performing Veterans

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IDENTITY, TRANSITION,
AND
HIGH-PERFORMING VETERANS

By

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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IDENTITY, TRANSITION, AND HIGH-PERFORMING VETERANS

Abstract

Our identity is what makes us who we are. When a person joins the military, their identity is broken down and reshaped into a Soldier, Sailor, Marine, or Airmen. When a person exits the military, "veteran" status is placed in front of them like a mask or shield. This study examines a veteran transitional program designed explicitly for Post 9/11 High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Veterans) conducted at the Union League of Philadelphia. The program address's identity and brand presence along with traditional transition methods and tools. It is essential to state that this dissertation is not about veteran challenges such as suicide, homelessness, jobless claims, Military Sexual Trauma or other critical veteran issues which dominate the news.

The purpose of this paper is to explore veteran identity and how veteran transitional programs play an essential role in HIPO-Veterans successfully transitioning out of the military. This is important because there is a significant gap in veteran research on successful veterans. HIPO-Veterans are not addressed uniquely, nor are they distinguished from the whole veteran population. Instead, all veterans are lumped into one group, and typically only those with challenges and issues are singled out.

The Union League of Philadelphia generously provided access to the Veteran's transition program conducted yearly every January – June until January 2020. COVID-19 provided a unique opportunity for the program to pause and evaluate the effectiveness of its curriculum. Access to the program provided an insight into the veteran transitional process and the mentors serving the veterans. Two surveys were administered, and the data collected from the survey resulted in the development of a new model for the Union League of Philadelphia to implement. This model can be replicated in other veteran transitional programs as well.

Acknowledgements

Writing a dissertation is hard and lonely. This is the phase of the program where it's you and you alone to write. Throughout this dissertation I have received a tremendous amount of support from family, friends, and colleagues.

I would like to thank to my mother, Mrs. Barbara Huffine, who provided unconditional support throughout this journey.

I would like to Dr. John M. Kelley, my former professor at Villanova University. Dr. Kelley was the first professor I had when I decided to go back to school in August 2012. Throughout the next four years, Dr. Kelley and I became friends and he put me on my Doctoral track and graciously wrote a letter of recommendation for my program. Unfortunately, Dr. Kelley is no longer with us. I will be forever grateful for his passion, commitment, and friendship.

I would like to thank the Union League of Philadelphia for sponsoring me and my topic. Dr. Karen Lawson and Mr. Peter Gutekunst for their patience in waiting on the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. Their sponsorship was the catalyst for the amount of data received from this study. Additionally, the Union League of Philadelphia Veterans Cohort Program has also benefited the Union League and the mentors to improve the program.

Choosing the right chair is the most important act a Doctoral candidate can do prior to starting dissertation. The commitments, writing, and interactions are critical to successfully completing a dissertation. In choosing my first chair, I chose the wrong fit for me. The one takeaway for future students is do your due diligence and as Dr. Starr relayed to me, you are the

Queen or King and if your Chair is not meeting your expectations, it is up to you to change your environment.

I would like to thank my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Dominick Volini. We agreed to meet weekly on Fridays at 6:30 AM on Zoom. Sometimes our Zoom meetings were five minutes and some were for 45 minutes. Meeting weekly helped to focus my writing and turn the chapters and/or surveys into deliverables. Dr. Volini pushed where needed and pulled where needed to give me the support to continue through this process. Dr. Volini's excitement and passion for my topic helped me to push through this process and provided much inspiration for me to finish this project.

I would like to thank my Doctor of Management in Strategic Leadership Program Director, Dr. Larry Starr, who took the time to reach out and discuss my topic. Dr. Starr quickly brought me back from the stratosphere and into a much-narrowed dissertation topic and focus. Without his assistance, I doubt I would have I have finished.

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Author's Prologue

My decision to write and study High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) is deeply rooted in my self-identity. In June 2017, I retired with 30 years of service in the United States Army (active and reserve). I grew up as an Army brat. My father served 24 years in Special Forces which also included a tour in Vietnam with the Special Operations Group and Grenada. As a kid, I knew I wanted to join the Army and jump out of the airplanes. Additionally, growing up, I thought everyone's father was in the Army and we all had ID Cards to get into the Post Exchange (PX) and Commissary. I remember when I was ten years old, we moved for two years to Roanoke Virginia where my grandparents lived. At that time my brother needed extensive medical care and the Army granted my father a "compassionate" reassignment. I was walking home from school when I mentioned to a friend, I had to get my new ID Card. She asked, "What is an ID card?" Looking back now, my identity shifted. Not everyone's father was in the military. I have always remembered that experience. We lived in a civilian neighborhood where my family was the minority. We traveled extensively and my father's occupation was unlike my friends at school. When we eventually moved away and back on a military base, I remember feeling at home. Everyone in my neighborhood was like me. It is also important to note that "like me" does not pertain to race, gender, or religion. We were Army kids.

When a person decides to join the military, the top three drivers are a desire to serve, protect the nation, and college tuition (Hazard, 2009). After the September 11th Terrorist attacks, the US Military saw an increase in recruitment. In 2003, the Department of Defense accepted 176, 408 out of 352,839 applications of enlistment (Kane, p.15, 2005). This number does not include personnel at the U.S. Service Academies and the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) located on college campuses.

My reasoning for joining the military was familiarity and opportunity. As a young woman about ready to graduate college, I thought the Army would give me a strong foundation and work experience in a familiar cultural setting while I worked out "what I wanted to do with my life." What I didn't understand were the opportunities and the experiences I would gain in leadership, complex problem-solving, decision-making, and teamwork. I also didn't consider what life would be like outside of the military.

Fast-forward, I have transitioned five times within the military. The first as a young Army Captain from active duty and in later years, from deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and retirement. Each time I transitioned back into the military I added additional skills to my toolkit. Each time I transitioned out of the military and integrated back into a civilian position; I experienced the loss of my self-identity.

In December 2015, two-years before retirement, I was asked to apply to a new program assisting high-performing Post 9/11 veterans' transitioning into mainstream civilian life. The Union League of Philadelphia designed a program of cohorts. I was in the inaugural cohort, January 2016. Without any expectations, I filled out the application and was accepted. I was in a class of 15 veterans, all post 9/11 and a mixture of officer and enlisted, and service branches. The program design was innovative: Take high performing veterans who were or had just left the service, bring them into the Union League once per month for sessions and match them up with mentors in their chosen or interested fields. During the six months, mentors and mentees met offsite. My mentor, Sue, and I met several times to discuss careers, coaching, and networking. Her impact was so profound that I delayed starting my Doctoral program for a year to move to the National Capital Region in June 2016 for a position in an engineering and technology company that provides contractors to the Department of Defense. My experience with the Union

League and with my mentor helped me to examine my self-identity and how I had to change, shift, and rebrand myself to be successful within my new environment. I also learned the importance of networking and how conversations lead to opportunities. I firmly believe the Union League program was highly beneficial and could be replicated. My initial objective is to examine the current state of the program, survey the cohort members and mentors to see what they have learned and how the Union League assisted in propelling veterans into civilian life while providing an enrichment benefit to mentors. Second, I want to examine how the program could be replicated, and lastly, does the program need to be adjusted to continue to meet the needs of its future cohort members.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Human beings need three basic things to be content: they need to feel competent at what they do; they need to feel authentic in their lives, and they need to feel connected to others."

Sebastian Junger – Author, Journalist, Filmmaker.

Identity is like a building's cornerstone. How we view our role in society is determined by how we view our self. Stets and Burke (2000) and Rise, Sheeran, and Hukkelberg (2010) associate self-identity as taking on a role and establishing guidelines for their behavior. This doesn't mean a person is stuck in his, her, or their societal role, it means our values, behaviors, and attitude define who we are and how we present ourselves in our work and social settings. So, what happens when our identity is fractured? This can happen voluntarily or involuntarily to a person who changes jobs, loses a job, gets married or divorced and so on. In the military, I believe this occurs when service members exit the military (voluntarily, involuntarily, retirement). Their identity is now in conflict with a new role (s) they must assume in the civilian sector.

Identity will be discussed in depth in Chapter 2, however, in this chapter I argue it is a characteristic of High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets). I believe there is a link in how HIPO-Vet's successfully transition into the civilian sector and develop a new identity that compliments their military and civilian lives.

According to VeteransAdvantage.com, there are more than 45,000 veteran organizations across the United States. Additionally, there are numerous private sector companies such as Wells

Fargo, Citibank, Goldman Sachs, and Walmart that have developed programs for their new hire veterans.

For the veteran, the depth and breadth of assistance can be overwhelming when choosing to seek support and information. Many of the nonprofit programs focus on mental and behavioral issues or resume writing, interview techniques, and key job searches.

Comprehensive programs that address the multiple issues of identity, branding yourself, and building a new network within a community coupled with the normal offerings of translating your resume and understanding the US job market are few and far between except for the Union League of Philadelphia (ULP). In this paper, I will discuss how the ULP designed its program and how after five cohorts, the program is holding up to its original intent to provide a program that strengthens the veteran to achieve their professional and personal pursuits.

Additionally, I examine how HIPO-Vets use their Authentic Leadership (AL) skills to successfully transition. COVID-19 has given the ULP a rare opportunity to pause a successful program to evaluate its effectiveness and adjust to the new workplace realities.

Union League of Philadelphia Veterans Fellowship Program

In 2014, the Union League of Philadelphia began its Veterans Fellowship Initiative. For the past seven years, the League expanded its support to the Greater Philadelphia Area veterans by sponsoring an expanded job/career fair that not only connects veterans to companies, the League also provides professional attire to veterans in need, resume assistance, and training to companies wanting to hire veterans (www.unionleague.org/veterans-initiative.php). In January 2016, the ULP initiated its flagship Veterans Fellowship Cohort Program (VFCP) to assist HIPO-Vets and their transition into the Philadelphia job market. The program accepts Post 9/11

Veterans from all services and ranks. The accepted Veterans are matched with ULP members to serve as mentors. Additionally, mentors chosen are volunteers and are provided training and coaching to help them assist in coaching and mentoring veterans.

Unlike other veteran transitional programs, the Union League delivery model focuses on providing educational workshops on site that establish an atmosphere of professionalism, mentorship, and fellowship that allows veterans and mentors to share and exchange information. The workshops cover "topics such as Professional Presence, Increasing Your Influence and Navigating the Corporate Landscape. Through an open-ended style, the Fellows have the opportunity to share difficulties of transition into civilian work environments as well as identify their unique strengths within their new professional tracks" (www.unionleague.org/veterans-initiative-vetmentor.php). This program is unlike the many programs currently circulating across the United States because it is mainly focused on the veteran building their brand and enhancing their professional presence.

Problem Statement

HIPO-Veterans are not addressed uniquely nor are they distinguished from the whole veteran population. Instead, all veterans are lumped in a group and normally only those with challenges and issues are singled out. There is a gap in the research when it comes to veterans successfully transitioning out of the military. My intent is to show that even though the veterans' identity is fractured at time-of-service departure, there is a group of high-performers that regardless of how they depart the military, they face a complex task to use their leadership skills and/or acquire more necessary skills to transition while adjusting their identity and still owning who they are.

Harada et al., (2002) state that Veteran identity is defined as "*veterans' self-concept that derives from his/her military experience within a sociohistorical context."* In researching this topic, there is no general or unified definition of veteran identity, yet Harada et al., is often quoted, nonetheless. This is a high-level conceptual framework rather than a functional framework capable of behavioral testing. Gade and Wilkins state the research that exists on veteran identity is limited to veterans using the Veteran Administration (VA) for care. Because there is no single unifying definition of veteran identity, I will attempt to accurately define a new post 9/11 definition. When Harada et al., established their definition and published it in January 2002, the United States had only just invaded Afghanistan on 7 October 2001, and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) would not be initiated until 20 March 2003. I believe when Harada et al., coined their definition, they based it on their work experiences within the VA and the veterans they came in contact with. Prior to the invasion of Afghanistan, the only military campaigns were Gulf War One – Desert Shield/Desert Storm, 1990-1991, Panama, Operation Just Cause, 1989, Grenada, Operation Urgent Fury, 1983, and the Vietnam Conflict, 1955 – 1975 (History.Army.mil). Harada's definition doesn't truly capture the post 9/11 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore veteran identity and how veteran transitional programs play an important role in HIPO-Veterans successfully transitioning out of the military. A September 2019 Pew Research Center survey on *The American Veteran Experience and the post 9/11 Generation* reported that the veterans interviewed felt that the military had prepared them for life outside the military. The survey also reports that one in four veterans had employment lined up before leaving the military. Surveys like Pew are in direct conflict with

articles written on veterans transitioning. Keeling, Ozuna, Kintzle, and Castro (2019) discuss the cultural gap between the military and the civilian sectors. Because of this unfamiliarity on both sides, the veteran often doesn't know how to tailor military skills and experience to a prospective civilian position while the recruiter and/or hiring manager doesn't know how to interpret a military resume. Veteran underemployment is often the result of both sides not understanding what each side has to offer. The rate of veteran underemployment is 15.6 higher than non-veteran counterparts (Barrera and Carter). The veteran's identity is also called into question. The veteran goes from wearing his/her resume on the uniform to civilian neutral clothing and having to explain how skillsets are transferrable from the military. I believe everyone wants to be needed, connected, and have a purpose in their lives and family. In the military, purpose takes on another very clear meaning – responsibility and accountability for fellow service members.

Research Questions

RQ1. What role does identity play when High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) transition out of the military and into mainstream society?

RQ2. How do leadership characteristics of High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) fit into identity?

RQ3. How do current Veteran transitional programs assist High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) in their transition out of the military and into mainstream society?

Significance of the Research

The Department of Defense (DOD) Transition Assistance Program (TAP) reports that approximately 200,000 veterans' transition to civilian status each year (VA.gov). The Society of Human Resources (SHRM) reports that 68% of employers surveyed report that "veterans

perform better than or much better than their civilian peers." Additionally, 57% of veterans remain at their first civilian position for 2.5 years longer than their civilian counterparts.

The results dissertation has numerous applications for veterans and hopefully the DOD TAP. Findings can assist recruiters and civilian leaders wanting to hire veterans on the benefits of replicating the ULP program and adapting the program that will best fit their organizational needs. Findings may also provide an insight into how the DOD TAP program could be redesigned.

Conceptual Framework

Maxwell (2012) states that defining the research problem is the first step in developing a conceptual framework. It is important to note that the framework is constructed from research and "not found" amongst the research. (Maxwell, 2012, p. 41). Currently, there is no veteran framework attributed to how veteran identity is formed and therefore, this precludes ascertaining how high-performing veterans can successfully transition and form a new identity.

Veterans choose their branch of service, yet when military service members depart or retire, they become part of the unilateral veteran collective. The proposed framework (Figure 1) highlights in broad terms how identity is formed at the onset of military service and developed through work experiences, leadership, and presentation of self. Education is woven throughout the service members' tenure.

Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework on Identity
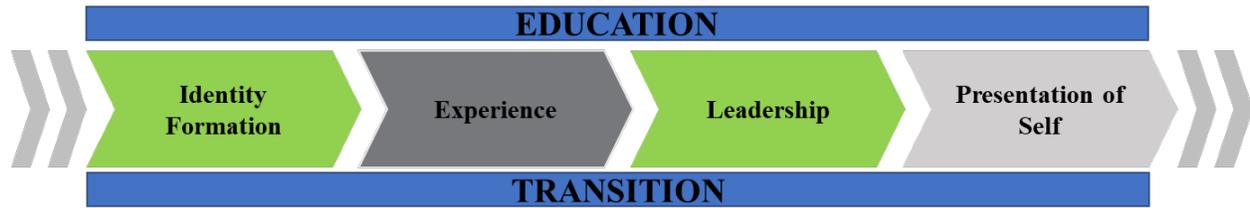
In Chapter 2, I highlight Schlossberg's Transition Theory (TT) as a way to describe transition. Through the data collection of cohort and mentor surveys I develop a better transitional framework that accounts for transition and identity.

Other Veteran Frameworks

The student veteran model developed by Van Dusen in 2011 shows educational institutions how to attract and inculcate veterans into the institutional fabric. Van Dusen suggests that the veteran must have a connection and belong to the campus he/she is attending Green & Van Dusen, 2012, p.5). In reviewing the model, the author starts at the Strategic level and works down to the institutional level offering ways to ensure the inclusion of veteran populations on campuses. In Chapter Two, we will outline a framework proposed by the Success In Transition (SIT) Model developed by Whitworth et al., and proposed to DoD TAP as a model to be integrated into a service members career.

Limitations and Assumptions

Maxwell (2012) approaches the qualitative method with two perspectives. The first is ontological realism which is the belief that the world exists independently regardless of our beliefs and perceptions. The second perspective and one which I believe applies to veterans is epistemological constructivism. This is how we understand our current reality and is designed by

our environment, value, and belief system. Maxwell (2012) states every model and theory is incomplete given the researcher/person's *"attempt to grasp something about a complex reality"* (p.43). When service members transition out of an institutionalized system, their world, beliefs, and perceptions are fractured. By definition, service members have been on the outside of the civilian system and now have to reintegrate back into that system he/she had departed a few or many years back and which may have changed appreciably.

In this research, I address only the Union League of Philadelphia veteran cohort members and their mentors. The population is small and restricted to vetted HIPO-Vets. This will provide a look inside a high functioning veteran's assistance program.

There are a certain number of assumptions in this study. As stated previously, there are more than 45,000 veteran assistance programs operating in a variety of delivery models across the United States. While these programs are assumed to be well-intentioned in assisting veterans, there is little evidence about effectiveness and to what degree do these programs help, confuse, or simply fail to deliver results?

Hypothesis 1: Veterans transitional programs positively affect HIPO-Vets in their transition out of the military and into mainstream society.

Hypothesis 2: Veterans develop a new self-identity through the Union League of Philadelphia Fellowship Program.

Definition of Terms

Veteran. The Veterans Administration on its website through Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations defines a veteran as "a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable."

Post 911 Veteran. A veteran who joined and or served in the United States Armed Forces after September 11th, 2001.

TAP. Transition Assistance Program developed by the Department of Defense after Desert Shield/Desert Storm to assist veterans voluntarily and involuntarily leaving military service.

Summary

Veterans have and are changing the landscape of American business through transition disruption. The veteran culture which includes values, behaviors, mannerisms, and a learned leadership style has slowly seeped into American business and its mainstream culture. This qualitative study explores and hopefully identifies the successful leadership traits and skills high-performing veterans transfer to their civilian careers and provide insight to recruiters and US companies who strive to integrate veterans into their ranks.

The lived experiences of veterans are often not captured and rarely understood by non-veterans. Negative stigmas and the political climate often play a role in how veterans are viewed and how valued are their skill sets.

Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) are coached, trained, and developed to lead at all levels. Each Service has its own culture and identity which often is not addressed by the civilian sector. Military culture and its differences are often compared with civilian culture

only (Mastroianni, 2006, p. 76). This is an important point because the majority of people in the civilian sector fail to realize that each service has its value system, leadership style, and identity that is based on its unique organizational culture yet they see only a monolithic "Military" culture. These branch differences need to be considered and honored to fully support a healthy transformation and will be addressed further in the proceeding chapters. The culture and identity of each service is very different, however, all service members, regardless of rank, are taught two basic leadership principles, 1 - to adapt and overcome obstacles to achieve the mission, and of equal importance, 2 - we are taught to take care of our subordinates. Many of the leadership traits and attributes found in Transformational, Servant, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), and Authentic Leadership Theories are engrained in America's military leaders. I believe that many of our military leaders exhibit a blend of leadership theories through their own Services model.

The results of this dissertation will show how a program designed by the Union League of Philadelphia for high-performing veterans helped cohort graduates shape and successfully transition, develop a brand, and discover a new identity while owning their veteran status.

Structure of Dissertation

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the available research and gaps in the research that are largely ignored when researchers examine the veteran population. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology and research design applied to answer the research questions. The focus is on surveys collected from the Union League veteran cohort members and their mentors. Chapter 4 presents the results and analysis of the data collected. Chapter 5 discusses the findings, interpretations, and future research opportunities.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore veteran identity and how it plays an important role in HIPO-Veterans successfully transitioning out of military service. This literature review examines and explores academic, practice and trade reports, surveys, articles, and books written on veterans, veteran transition, job transition, identity, leadership, and numerous transition theories created for other industries that could in some way apply to veteran transition. The research questions that guide the literature review are:

RQ1. What role does identity play when High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) transition out of the military and into mainstream society?

RQ2. How do leadership characteristics of High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) fit into identity?

RQ3. How do current Veteran transitional programs assist High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) in their transition out of the military and into mainstream society?

Much has been written about the many vicissitudes of veterans transitioning back into mainstream society. In reviewing the literature for this chapter, there is a tremendous amount of written work on Post Traumatic Stress (PTS), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Military Sexual Trauma (MST), and various other mental and health issues. As I narrowed my focus down to successful transitions and veteran identity – there was less literature to review. I wish to make the case that the connected tissue to veteran transitions is identity. The military is a

profession that firmly engenders a particularly strong sense of purpose, belonging, and identity to its members.

When looking back the past 25 years, service members have or had been in a constant state of the deployment cycle with wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and other operations. All service members with deployment experience are changed personally (Danish & Antonides, 2014, p.550). It is inevitable that changes will occur either for better or worse. Most people are aware that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a symptom that is attached to veteran status by the civilian population. However, most have not or have little knowledge of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG). Pietrzak et al., refers to Tedeschi and Calhoun's (1996; 2004) definition of PTG as the *"development of positive changes and outlook following trauma, including increased personal strength, identification of new possibilities, increased appreciation of life, improved relationships with others, and positive spiritual changes"* (Pietrzak et al., 2010, p.231). What is interesting about PTG is it doesn't stem from a singular traumatic event. Benetato referenced from Calhoun and Tedeschi (2006) that PTG occurs "from the individual's struggles with, and development of, a new reality or personal worldview following the traumatic event" (Benetato, 2011, p. 413). At this time there is no link between PTG and veteran transition and identity. I did feel the need to note the existence of PTG.

Pew Research Center has done extensive research into veterans and how veterans' transition from military to civilian life. To test a popular belief, that veterans have a hard time finding post-military employment, the Pew Research Center conducted its 2019 American Veteran experience in the post 9/11 era survey asking veterans about their difficulty in transitioning to civilian life. According to Pew, 73% of the respondents indicated that they

(veterans) experienced a relatively easy transition from military to civilian life, while one in four responded that their transition was difficult.

Veteran status is currently viewed with distinction as reported by the Pew Research Center. For example, in November 2019, 64 percent of Americans were reported to look up to people who have served in the military as opposed to not serving. Also, this supports the high number of private and public sector organizations wanting to recruit veterans in its ranks. Pew Research Center reported in 2016 there were approximately 20.4 million U.S. veterans, representing less than 10% of the American population. Additionally, Gulf War veterans have now surpassed Vietnam veterans in numbers. Post 911 (after September 11th, 2001) veterans make-up 4.2 million of which 2.8 million served only after September 11th, 2001 (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2018).

Veterans Characteristics

Veterans serve our country in uniform. Veterans are multi-generational and diverse in race, religion, gender, and varying socioeconomic status. Veterans also have multiple layers that include time and year of service, rank, military branch, deployments, and unit affiliation, all of which are elements of their identity. One day they are in uniform in a known military environment and the next day they are in "street clothes" in an unfamiliar civilian environment with a different set of rules and protocols.

This is not a new phenomenon. For over 245 years, veterans have consistently transitioned back into civilian society. In conducting earlier research, I examined and sought to understand the theories that apply to veterans and theories that were developed around the transition for adults in general. Each contributes fragments and perspectives to understand

veteran identity and the transitional process but none adequately and fully addresses individual

veterans transitioning in the 21st century civilian world. Figure 2 represents the theories and their

circular relationship.

Figure 2. Circular Presentation of Veteran Transition Theories
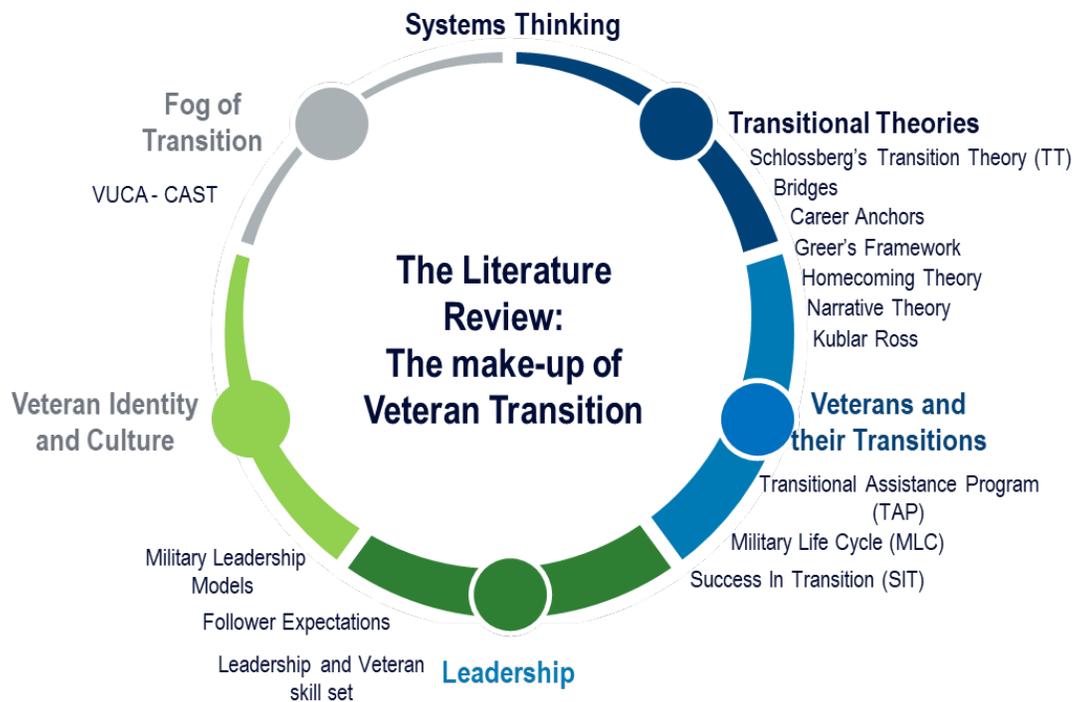
I begin with the philosophy of Systems Thinking and conclude with a proposed

framework that shapes an environment with a flexible architecture and boundaries that will help

guide veterans and others through a transition process.

Systems Thinking

Systems thinking is a mode of thinking and a philosophy of understanding that can

connect professional and social environments. There is much discussion on the theory's

origination and its definition which has produced varying meanings in different contexts. The

theory's origination can be traced back Aristotle and Lao Tzu (Cabrera et al. 2008, p.302) In the

modern era, General Systems Theory emerged in the early 20th Century and System Dynamics was developed in the mid-20th Century.

General Systems Theory developed by biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy, focused on the natural world and its living systems (Haines, 1998, p. v). The premise of this theory was to look at the world holistically.

System Dynamics developed in 1956 by Jay Forester. As noted by Hopkins (2009, p.9), the theory deals with how the structure of a system and its information flows determine behavior — the control of growth, stability, decay, success and failure. The field focuses on the way internal feedback-loop relationships cause a system to change through time. Understanding why a system behaves as it does permits redesign of structure and policies to improve that behavior. The field combines theory and computer simulation with a very practical application to real-world problems."

Richmond (1987) a system dynamics proponent coined the term *Systems Thinking* and defined it as *"the art and science of making reliable inferences about behavior by developing an increasingly deep understanding of underlying structure"* (Richmond, 1994, p. 6). Arnold and Wade (2015) examined numerous definitions testing two criteria: *"Purpose (description of purpose) – and Elements – (characteristics) Interconnections (how elements feed in and relate to one another)"* (p.671). The authors concluded that all of the definitions tested failed to meet their criteria and the definitions were either too ambiguous or watered down (p. 675). Arnold and Wade, therefore, proposed a new definition: "Systems thinking is a set of synergistic analytic skills used to improve the capability of identifying and understanding systems, predicting their behaviors, and devising modifications to them in order to produce desired effects. These skills work together as a system" (p.675). In reviewing Arnold and Wade's new proposed definition, I

believe their system test failed to address how parts of system must be co-dependent on each other. Even though "interconnections" was listed as a criterion, the author's failed to take it one step further in defining how the criteria listed cannot act independently.

While system dynamics which focuses on modeling remains popular, for the purpose of this dissertation, I use Ackoff's definitions which focus on social systems. Ackoff defines a system *"by its function (s) in one or more larger systems of which it is a part"* (Ackoff & Rovin, 2005, p.16). An example is the Union League Veterans Cohort Program which is embedded in the Union League as an initiative for its members to volunteer, mentor, and assist transitioning veterans. Ackoff also noted, *"Every system contains at least two essential parts without which it cannot perform its defining function"* (p.16). For example, the Union League could not manage and execute the Veterans Initiative program without its members. The members assist the program by providing a space to hold meetings and one-on-one sessions between mentors and mentees. The third characteristic concerns the important of systemic relationships: *"Every essential part of a system can affect the system as a whole, but the way an essential part affects the whole depends on the behavior of at least one other essential part. This means no essential part of a system has an independent effect on it and, at the same time, the essential parts all interact either directly or indirectly"* (p. 16). An example of interdependent parts is a Union League member and their interactions with the maintenance staff or potential new members and their interactions with current members. It is important to define and know how a system behaves. Ackoff also wrote that a "system must be either variety increasing or variety decreasing" (Ackoff & Emery, 2006, p. 216). This means that a system is not static or stagnate. It has to have parts that are interconnected and moving through it so it can grow and expand. If

parts of a system can be accomplished alone and without other parts, then there is no system. Therefore, let's consider how the types of systems interact.

There are two types of systems: Open and closed. An open system allows for the gathering of information from its environment, information is enriched, and return it back to the environment (Jackson, 2016, p.6) creating a living ecosystem. Another way an open system can be described is a living organism with porous boundaries. A closed system is the opposite. There is no information exchange outside the system (p.6). The environment is isolated with impenetrable boundaries that do not allow for input/output interactions. If we apply Jackson's definition of open and closed systems, we can state that members of the military live within a semi-closed or semi-porous system—an amalgam of both open and closed system aspects. Meaning service members live and work within their own hierarchy and communities with accesses and influence from mainstream society through social interactions with friends and family. Janowiz states that the military extends beyond the Service Member's occupation, it is a way of life (Janowiz, 2017, p.175) and, the Military system is interacting with the Union League system.

Transitional Theories

There are several theories that contribute to the military-to-civilian transition process. In looking at Schlossberg's (1981) Adult Transition Theory, she combines theory into practice and described it as a vehicle for examining humans' adaptation to new environments (Evans et. al., 1996, p.110). Bridges developed a three-step process Endings – Neutral Zone – New Beginning (Bridges, 2019, p.11) to understand how adults move through the stages of transition.

Transition Theory

Transition Theory (TT) was originally developed by Schlossberg (1981) to assist counselors with a structured counseling approach in a human development model that focuses on how people process life experiences that lead to changes in their personal and professional lives. TT also acknowledges how societal changes, whether real or perceived, can also affect the transition process. Greer uses TT as a theoretical framework to support her research in women veterans transitioning into civilian life. A transition as described by Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg is "any event, or non-event, planned or anticipated." "These events/non-events can be positive, negative, or dramatic (Schlossberg, 1981) that result in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles." For example, a service member leaves or retires from the military and is now placed in the veteran category. These events lead to major changes in status such as rank and respect and no uniform to showcase worth.

Everyone navigates transitions and change differently. Some make step-by-step plans and others choose to talk about it or ignore what is going on around them until they absolutely must face it. Military members are faced with change regularly with Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves, changing positions within the same unit or seeking out a new position on the same installation and, most importantly, making life and death decisions while serving in wartime environments. If military members can adapt to change rapidly while in the service, why do they have challenges when exiting the service? A thought may be that service members are institutionalized inside the military and their worth is tied to the institution. In this context, rank and status are tied to their own identity net worth.

Greer's Framework

Greer references a characteristic quadrant identified by Anderson et al., (2014) on how *"resources related the person's situation, self, support, and strategies"* can assist Human Resource (HR), career development personnel, and the veterans in managing change from military service to mainstream society. Greer incorporates the Anderson et al., model with specific military events – "voluntary/involuntary discharge from military service" (Greer, 2017, p57).

What is lacking in Greer's framework as well as in the Anderson et al., transition framework in applying to veterans is identity - who am I without the uniform? What leadership traits do I have to navigate this transition? And a fifth coping "S" resource of stabilizing. Let's use the Prosci methodology of ADKAR – Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement as an example and apply to Greer's transition theory for women veterans. Transition starts at the moment change occurs, at discharge from the service, and follows the Anderson et al., model. Organizational Change Management (OCM) models such as ADKAR or Lewin's model of Unfreeze – Transition – Refreeze, Kotter's 8-step model – all start with – what is changing and why the change – stakeholder analysis, change strategy, communications, training, and evaluation. These same change characteristics regardless of theory can apply to Greer's transition framework. The framework also doesn't address pre-transition. When service members enter the service, service is for a finite period of time.

Bridges Transition Model

Bridge's model states that every transition we go through starts with something ending (Bridges, 2019, p.11). This is true of everything in life, marriage/divorce, jobs end and jobs begin. Endings is where Bridges builds upon his model – Endings – The Neutral Zone – New Beginnings. Bridge's model resembles Kurt Lewin's change model – Unfreeze, Transition, and Refreeze.

- **Endings**— are the first phase of the transition process. By law, service members must start their transition process 24 months out from retirement and 12 months out from separation (voluntarily or non-voluntarily).

- **Neutral Zone –** Think of this phase as an active hibernation. Bridges describes it as "the gap between the new life" (Bridges, 2019, p.144). Think of it as a gray space to take a pause to examine life and what brought the person to this stage. This is an important stage that Bridges recommends taking time alone, keeping a log book, and discovering wants and needs. This is the phase in which identity is examined and the old identity is shed. It is a time to experience hanging on and letting go of the past.

- **New Beginnings –** Bridges final transition phase. Coming out of the Neutral Zone of hibernation, reflection, and alignment of goals to begin a new chapter. In this phase, it is important to note that when a person enters this phase, it is not linear but a loop. Bridges points out that this process integrates elements of our old identity to form a new one incorporating some aspects of the past.

In summary, Bridges offers a three-step process for individuals seeking change in their lives. He is one of the few theoreticians that address an identity, new, old, and the merger that is formed to enter the third phase. Bridges could be used to assist veterans in transition but falls short of providing a complete framework. Using Bridges alone is not enough to formulate an identity. If we combine Schlossberg's Transition Theory with Bridges and add in an executive coach to walk the veteran through and examine each phase to ensure it is processed prior to moving on as this would certainly help an already demanding process. However the coach and the veteran would have to look at their career anchors (see next) and how military experience and training translate into civilian industry.

Career Anchors

Schein and Van Maanen (2013) developed eight career anchors in the 1970s that are still relevant today. These anchors encompass, Technical/Functional Competence, General Managerial Competence, Autonomy/Independence, Security/Stability, Entrepreneurial Creativity, and Services/Dedication to a cause, Pure Challenge, and Lifestyle. Schein states that when the anchors are applied, most careers do relate to one of these anchors (p.19). Schein's contribution to organizational culture and leadership cannot be overstated. While research on it has no direct link to veterans, it is a part of the puzzle and could be incorporated into a transitional program or my proposed framework. The eight career anchors could provide a guide to help and assist veterans in choosing occupations that most resonate with their sense of being. It is important to note that, according to Schein, only one career anchor is chosen. A person cannot have multiple anchors.

Homecoming Theory

Homecoming Theory developed after the World War II (Schutz, 1945) is a veteran transition framework that focuses on the veteran returning home and experiencing disconnection and isolation (Lampka & Kowalewski, 2017, p.18). Veterans are disconnected and feel like strangers when returning to previous environments after wartime deployments. The same theory can also be applied to our Afghanistan and Iraq veterans returning home and experiencing disconnections from family and friends, a feeling of loss of support and structure, and purpose (Ahern, Worthen, Masters, Lippman, Ozer, Moos, 2015). The main difference between World War II and the current wars is the Solider was deployed for the entire war in the former, whereas, in the Vietnam and Post 9/11 Eras, military tours of duty were limited to between nine and twelve months. However, wartime deployment can be so intense and family members adapt to coping with life without the veteran, that reintegration is painful for both the veteran and family members.

Schutz (1945) "The Homecomer" compared emotions to "the wilderness" and when Soldiers returned from a wartime environment to what should have been familiar smells and surroundings, they were now unfamiliar. While Schutz had a romantic way of describing veteran disconnections, however, he offered no solutions for the problem. He told a story of a young man who before military service worked behind a cigar counter at a local store. The military gave this small-town man a chance to expand his horizons as opposed to his civilian occupation. In the military, the young Soldier had received many accolades for his service and bravery. Yet, upon return, Schutz recounts, that young man is now deprived of his uniform and his privileged status back in his community (Schutz, 1945, p.376). Schutz's theory is relevant to present day. Post 9/11 service members deploy multiple times and experience extraordinary events while

deployed and often do not want to return to their previous environment of family, friends, and a day-to-day routine. I believe this is the veteran internal struggle. A veteran survives the wartime environment with Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), incoming mortar fire, and the day-to-day austere environment of not knowing what will happen to oneself or friends only to return to normal circumstances and the expectation to fall back to their previous self.

None of the theories discussed thus far address identity reintegration. In this researcher's opinion and personal experience of returning from deployments, family and friends with little experience of the military want to celebrate and then go back to what they perceive as normal. To go back to Bridges and his transition model, this would be a neutral zone for the veteran, family, friends, work, community etc. However, in this neutral zone, the veteran is left being unfulfilled in an environment that they are no longer attached or members of. This is where Narrative Identity comes in – veteran reality.

Narrative Identity

What is a person's reality and how is it re-displayed? Narrative Identity, developed by Ricoeur (1984, 1985) focuses on reality and how it is interrupted and re-displayed in a person's life (Beech et. al., 2017, p.435). McAdams and McLean refer to it as a "person's internalized and evolving life story." Our past, present, and future is based on our life experiences interwoven with our beliefs and values in a known environment. These are the stories that we tell and construct to build our identity. McAdams and McLean argue that building a narrative identity is done through storytelling of our personal experiences (p. 235). When an individual enters military service, their identity is broken down and built back up to that of a Soldier, Sailor,

Airmen, or Marine. The uniform serves as both a shield and container as well as a résumé for their time in the service.

Bruner, a psychology researcher and professor looks at Narrative Identity through a domain lens. According to Bruner, knowledge and skills do not transfer from one domain to another domain (Bruner, 1991, p.2). This is interesting because it fails to address how leadership skills, regardless of industry, can be transferred from one industry to another like basic accounting and financial skills. In diving deeper into Bruner's thoughts, he argues a person's domain is like a *"prosthetic device,"* it can only be used for certain functions and not others (p.2). He sees this as its own *"little reality."* The prosthetic device only performs certain functions and doesn't exceed its programmed boundaries. Bruner also describes these domains as *"culture treasury tool kits"* (p.2). Culture plays an important role in a person's life and the domain he/she is currently in or trying to aspire to. I define culture as my belief and value system in my current environment. Swidler, an American sociologist views culture as *"symbolic forms through vehicles of meaning."* (Swidler, 1986, p.273). Swidler and I have the same viewpoint on culture – what is acceptable and not acceptable. In her paper *Culture in Action: Strategies and Symbols*, she offers up an alternative view on culture. The reason I added her to this review is she like Bruner references a tool kit. Her three-step alternative starts off with the *"tool kit"* She buckets rituals, stories, worldviews, and anything symbolistic into a person's tool kit. (p.273). I partially agree with Bruner, that a person's reality and environment is domain specific. But unlike Bruner, I believe that a person's knowledge and skills can be transferred from one domain to another domain successfully if the person acknowledges the change and seeks out to learn the new rules of engagement and how they are applied and consciously leaves or stores the skills and knowledge that are not needed in his/her tool kit and builds a new tool kit to store new stories

and experiences. Swidler's second step is to *"analyze cultures causal effects, persistent ways of ordering action through time"* (p.273). We can link this step back to Ricoeur, who sees Narrative Identity development as evolving through time where a person sees *"his past-present-future."* The third step is *"defining ends of action in cultural components"* (p.273).

Without going down several rabbit holes with Bruner and Swidler, each brings something different to establishing a unified veteran framework. The first is Bruner's domain lens and cultural tool kits and second is Swidler's reference of a tool kit. It makes sense that our reality is made up of our current environment and our culture is tied to our reality through acceptability, symbols, ceremonies, and rituals.

Where I disagree with Bruner is I believe when individuals move from one domain to the next, our identity which is tied to our realty becomes fractured and it is up to the individual to remove silos or in Bruner's reference, their prosthetic arm which limits their boundaries to move forward. Bruner and Swidler do not address veterans, however their arguments add to describing veteran identity.

Kubler-Ross

As a researcher and an Organizational Change Manager, I would be remiss if I didn't mention Kubler-Ross and the five stages of grief. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross first identified the model in her book, *The Five Stages of Grief* in 1969. The model is depicted in five stages – denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Rivas & Jones, 2014, p.7). This model is used in numerous fields and has a wide application. Organizational Change Managers will often refer to this model when organizations are going through a change whether it is at the enterprise or tactical levels, all changes are viewed as significant and have a human side. When applying

this theory listed in figure 3 to veteran transition, you can map out how a service member leaving

an institutionalized setting like the military would experience a series of the below events. Rivas

and Jones point out that Lewin's change model provides us with the framework to understand

change and Kubler-Ross's work provides the insight to the human experience (p.7). However, in

this researcher's opinion, it is only part of the transition process, and it seems linear whereas the

service member must move from one stage to another in order to experience growth. This model

doesn't specifically address identity but is loosely connected with the last stage of integration.

Figure 3. Kublar-Ross Change Curve
(Retrieved from https://www.ekrfoundation.org/5-stages-of-grief/change-curve/
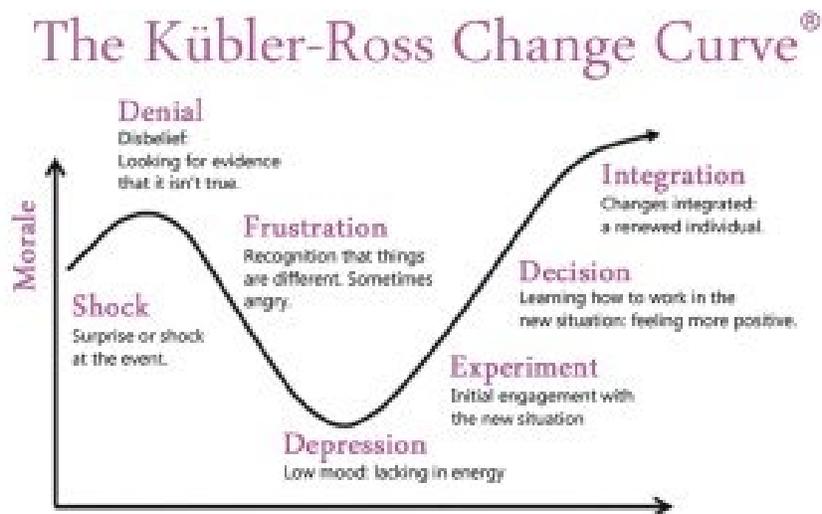
Throughout this review, I have addressed several theories that either directly reference

veteran identity or are adjacent and can add to developing veteran identity. In this next section,

we will examine veterans and their transitions.

Veterans and their Transitional History

Who are Veterans? As stated above, veterans are a heterogeneous population made up from many relatively homogeneous groups. Their one defining commonality that defines these people is their status now as a veteran. Every year, 200,000 veterans transition out of military service with 19 million US citizens identifying today as a veteran (Lampka & Kowalewski, 2017, Veterans Administration, 2018, Whitworth et. al., 2020). Half of the US veteran population are under 65 and ten percent are women (VA. Secretary Robert Wilke, 2018). To reiterate, Veterans have and are changing the landscape of American business through their lived military experiences. When veterans transition out of the service, I believe, they experience a disruption in their normality. There have been many articles and studies that focus on veteran transition as it relates to Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), homelessness, alcohol, and drug addiction. Little is researched on veteran identity and how that identity must shift upon their entrance into mainstream society.

The veteran culture which includes values, behaviors, mannerisms, and a learned and practiced leadership style has slowly and consistently seeped into American business and culture. The successful leadership traits veterans learned while serving, coupled with veteran-lived experiences, often are not noticed and rarely understood by non-veterans. Negative stigmas and the political climate often play a role in how veterans and their skillsets are viewed.

An early observer of American society, Arnold Toynbee, believed that meeting the challenges of society comes from the ideas and methods developed by the creative minority and adopted by the majority. This statement is directly applicable to veterans and how veterans

interact in society and how this group achieves success. Morris Janowitz believed that the American military culture rides below mainstream society (Janowitz, M., 2017).

American society and the veteran have always been at odds. Veterans have and continue to change the landscape of the American workforce since the American Revolution. Many sociologists, writers, and politicians have written about the veteran problem from the Civil War, where military pensions were viewed as handouts, through to today's Post 9/11 veterans. During the Revolutionary War, America's first Soldiers were promised money to those wounded in battle. This was an enticement to build America's first Army (Blakemore E., 2018). The first Continental Congress failed in this respect because of obvious reasons, no money to give. These actions exhibited by our nation's founding fathers were not popular. According to historian Lester D. Langley, bitterness over pensions spurred on a military coup. In his book, *The Americas in the age of revolution, 1770-1850*, Revolutionary officers demanded: *"lifetime half-pay"* (p.33). Afterward, and according to Langley, reputations were marred and the general view of a veteran deteriorated in the eyes of America's newest founding citizens. At the very beginning of our nation's creation, our own founding fathers appeared ungrateful for the profound sacrifices some of its newest citizens gave to America. Thirty-five years later, Congress established the Pension Act of 1818. America and mainstream society continue to wrestle internally with those who choose to wear the uniform.

During the American Civil War (1861-1865) 624,511 service members (Union and Confederate) were killed and 475,881 wounded (OSU.Edu, ehistory). According to the Ohio State University Department of History website (ehistory.osu.eu), *"A Civil War Soldier's chance of survival was one in four."* This was due to how the Soldiers were arrayed on the battlefield.

Additionally, the OSU History Department states that until the Vietnam Conflict, the American Civil War *"surpassed all other wars combined"* when it came to causalities and wounded.

During this time, many advancements were made to help veterans. For example, in 1866, the state of Mississippi spent 20% of its budget to fund artificial limbs for wounded Soldiers (Reilly, R., 2016, p.138). The most famous and important act to help veterans was founded by President Abraham Lincoln. President Lincoln stated, *"To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."* At the end of the Civil War, he established the National Asylum for Volunteer Soldiers (Brown et. al., 2003, p.135). This asylum was a precedent to the Veterans Administration (VA) which was established in 1930. President Hoover created a cabinet position for evaluating the VA and its veterans (p.135).

During America's conscription years 1940 – June 1973 minus a year in 1947-1948 (Henderson, 2005, p.372) up to today's all-volunteer military service, the United States has struggled with its treatment of veterans, especially its Vietnam veterans mixing in the politics of that time. In Scurfield's book – Vietnam Trilogy: War Trauma: Lessons unlearned from Vietnam to Iraq, (2006) cited that many Vietnam veterans in the late 60s and 70s were angry and bitter and mistrustful of the government as they felt they had been thrown away (Scurfield, 2006, p.14). After Vietnam and during the height of the Cold War years from 1975 to 1990 and the start of the Gulf War, America took little interest in its veterans. With only a few skirmishes 1981, Grenada, Operation Urgent Fury and in 1989, Panama, Operation Just Cause, American Veterans were virtually invisible to the American public and when transitioning out of the military, veterans received little to no support.

In summary, this history of the veteran transitional landscape from the Revolutionary War to the Gulf War is meant to highlight the veteran transitional landscape from an

institutionalized system into mainstream society. This section is also a build up to the Department of Defense (DOD) Transition Assistance Program (TAP) enacted after the Gulf War 1991. Coincidentally, as a Gulf War Veteran and a member of the famed 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Division, stationed at Fort Campbell, KY, we returned home in 1991 to fanfare from our families unlike my father when we returned from Vietnam.

In this next section, we will review the standing transitional program available and mandated by DOD for all service members prior to separation or retirement. It is interesting to note that the Transition Assistance Program origins only date back to 1991. This could explain the lack of research in veteran transition and most importantly provide an explanation for and to call into question on why our Vietnam and Vietnam Era service members received no assistance for their service.

Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

TAP is a joint venture between the Department of Defense (DOD), Veteran Administration (VA), and the Department of Labor Veteran's Employment and Training Service (VETS). The US Congress established TAP in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) in 1991 after Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Its purpose was to assist service members selected for non-promotion and facing involuntary separation due to military drawdowns (Kamarck, July 2018). The original TAP focused on five major areas: counseling and transition planning, education resources, health, and financial planning. The program was typically delivered in person with service members attending classes. The majority of the classes focused on resume development, interview techniques, and how to dress, and understanding VA benefits. The TAP

program delivery remained the same for 20 years. It wasn't until 2011 that the Veterans Administration partnered with the Department of Defense (DOD), Department of Education, Department of Labor (DOL), and the Small Business Administration (SBA) to form a team to re-examine and make recommendations on the TAP. The goal was to create a web-based and interactive program (House Hearing, 112th Congress, 2012).

In 2011, Congress passed the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act (PUBLIC LAW 112–56—NOV. 21, 2011). This act redesigned and broadened the original TAP to provide a more holistic approach and resources to transitioning service members. The above law states that service members must attend TAP 24 months before a retirement date or 12 months before a separation date. In 2012, DOD rolled out the newly redesigned TAP curriculum referred to as "Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success). The goal of the new TAP is to provide service members and spouses resources for planning transitions not only in the service members remaining 24 months but through the Military Life Cycle (MLC). Additionally, the program is web-based for those service members unable to attend in-person classes. (Military.com). Today, TAP is 31 years-old and DOD still struggles with how to effectively deliver this program. The missing component in TAP and DOD ignores is how a service member's identity changes through transition.

Compliance in the program is mandatory. In 2017, DOD reported a 92-97 percent compliance rate. That same year, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that attendance rates were 47% lower for Reserve Component service members (Kamarck, 2018).

Military Life Cycle (MLC)

The MLC is a model designed to give service members key gates and touchpoints throughout their careers. It intends to align a service member's goals with their civilian career goals (MLC Transition Model, 2018) and to prepare service members for their eventual departure from their service. The below model is intended for service members to map out their careers, regardless of separation or retirement. The Career Readiness Standards (CRS) are a set of preparation activities service members must complete before the end of intended separation (dodtap.mil). The goal of MLC and CRS is for service members to remain engaged throughout their military careers in mapping and refining their individual development to achieve their goals (dodtap.mil/careers). Below is the MLC model depicting Active duty and Guard and Reserve touchpoints. The issue with the MLC and CRS is this model fails to address identity and culture. It takes a systematic approach and one size fits all for service members (Whitworth, 2020, p.27) and does not address the full-range of potential veterans' challenges. Additionally, monitoring and ensuring service members are using the MLC is difficult for DOD. In reality, service members will engage TAP in the remaining 12-24 months of service only because it is mandated by law.

Figure 4. Military Transitional Lifecycle Model

Military Life Cycle Model (MLC)
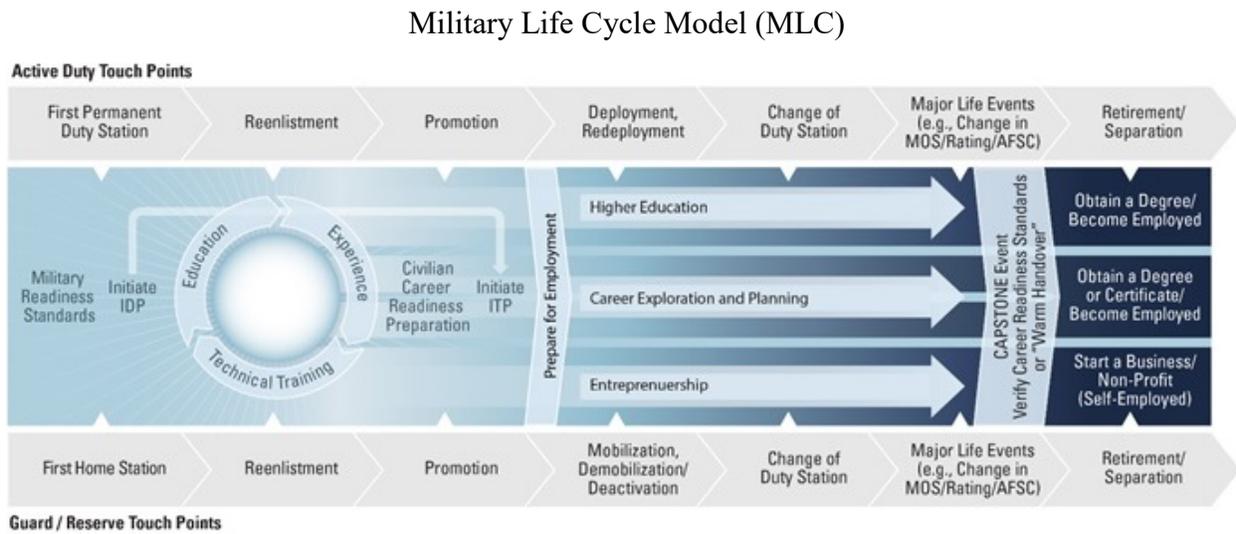
The Success in Transition (SIT) Model

The SIT developed in 2018 was proposed as a guiding framework for the TAP (Whitworth et. al., 2020, p. 25). SIT is designed to create a more holistic transition program for TAP but fails to wrap veteran identity around the model. To date this model is one-step closer to addressing veteran identity factors and how veteran identity is fractured and new identities are built and shaped in the civilian community. At SIT's core, it mainly addresses the transition phase of a Service member's career/time in the service and not onboarding and the state steady portion of a career where a Service member will have time to engage and utilize civilian resources either on the military installation or in the civilian community.

Figure 5. Success in Transition Model (SIT)
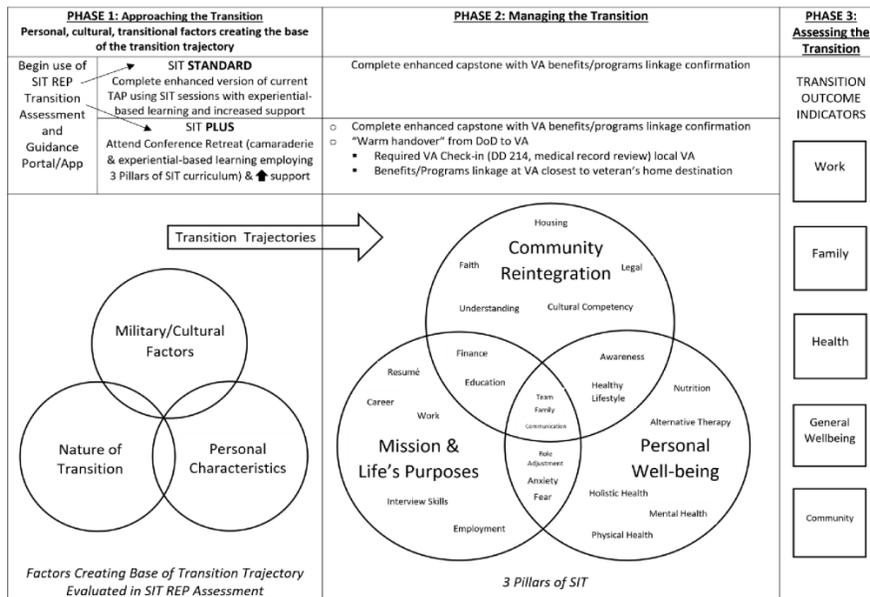
We have looked at established theories, programs, and models that address transition. However, I need to address how leadership is woven into the transitional process. Leadership and the skills surrounding leadership are important because these skills are probably the most common, most pertinent, and transferrable by all veterans, and play an important role to understanding transition. Not all leadership theories are addressed. Only those I felt pertinent to the transitioning veteran.

Leadership Theories and Concepts

Leadership and the military are often synonymous. Young service members are given opportunities to practice and hone their leadership styles as opposed to most of their civilian counterparts. Leadership is inculcated into the fabric of a service member's time in the military. It is important to discuss the most relevant theories and how the military is using and teaching these theories since these are of great value in all careers.

The literature surrounding leadership and veterans is rich in content, theory, and practice. Leadership (good and bad) surrounds service members, and it is in everything they do. Day and Halpin (2001) noted that all leadership is based on all actions which are a function of participation and interaction with others. Bass (1990) commented three decades ago that leadership "is one of the world's oldest preoccupations" (p. 3) and in understanding leadership, it leads to a quest for knowledge. Leadership is an elusive word. Many people strive to define it, as they become leaders. Unfortunately, there is no conclusive definition of leadership. Indeed, Kellerman (2012) believes there are over 1500 definitions.

In reviewing the history of leadership, Northouse (2016) argued that leadership is a process of influence that has been explained through lenses of traits, skills, styles, behaviors, and context. He defines *leadership "as the process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal"* or moving a group towards achieving a goal in a given situation (see Hersey and Blanchard, 1982), or activities where leaders and followers work towards achieving common goals (see Clark and Clark, 1996). The U.S. Army defines leadership in its 2015 *Field Manual (FM) 6-22* as the *"process of influencing people by providing propose, direction, and motivation while operating to accomplish the mission and improve the organization* (p.1.3)."

Leadership theories continue to emerge. While Northouse (2016) focuses on 16 theories, Kellerman (2012) states there are 44, and Meuser, Gardner, Dinh, Hu, Liden, and Lord (2016) have identified 66 distinct theories. Mango (2018) argues that we have too many leadership theories with redundancy and overlapping practices. He eliminated 44 theories and presented 22 as a good representation to study. Mango also argues that leadership is built on six foundational

elements: character, characteristics, people practice, institutional practices, context, and outcomes.

Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009) summarized traditional and modern leadership theories, research, and practices, and its future direction. The authors commented that leadership and its practices are constantly evolving. In the past, theorists focused on the individual leader. Today theorists, practitioners, and leaders focus efforts on followers, peers, supervisors, work-settings, and organizational cultures (Avolio et. al., p. 422). As organizations continue to evolve, leaders, followers, peers, and managers will need to practice a more holistic style of leadership. A good example of embracing new leadership trends in the digital age is an article by Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009) on e-leadership, technology, and the need for leaders to develop "digital skillsets." At the time the article was written, US companies were on the cusp of moving from the exceptional of teleworking to workplace mainstream. Avolio et al., defines e-leadership as "leadership where individuals or groups are geographically dispersed, and interactions are mediated by technology." Five years later, Avolio et al., modified the definition as "a social influence process embedded in both proximal and distal contexts mediated by AIT (Advanced Information Technology) that can produce a change in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behavior, and performance" (Avolio et. al., 2014, p.107).

Authentic Leadership as a Veteran Skillset

The premises and meanings of authentic leadership theory build on the leader knowing him/her or their selves and using their experiences to shape, support and improve their leadership practices. According to George (2003), authentic leaders empower their followers, genuinely care, and show compassion. Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May 2004) argue that

authentic leadership is a *"root construct"* (p.805). Meaning, this theory weaves in aspects from other leadership theories such as Transformational Theory, inspiring others to achieve greatness and Servant Leadership, incorporating its tenants of team over self. Followers can relate to their leader as someone who cares about them on a deeper level. The authentic leader demonstrates authenticity in their actions towards others and their work.

The concept of authenticity can be traced back to the Ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates who emphasized "knowing yourself." In the 20th century, authenticity can be linked-to organizations and organizational behavior. Chester Bernard (1938) made the first authentic leadership reference in *The Functions of the Executive* in which he linked authenticity and executive qualities.

Authentic leadership theory focuses on the process of how the leader becomes his/her true self, achieves self-awareness, and shows genuineness. Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, and May (2004) describe authentic leaders as "deeply aware of how they think and behave and perceived by others as being of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths" (p.802). This approach was born out of the transformational leadership theory. Hoch, Bommer, Dulebohn, and Wu (2018) contend that ethical and value-based leadership approaches add to positive leadership with "transformational leadership being the dominant theory since the 1980s" (p.502). Unlike authentic leadership, the underlying premise in the transformational theory is weak in explaining how a leader becomes or is recognized as behaving authentically. Northouse defines transformational leadership as the process a leader uses to influence and raise his/her, and their follower motivation and morality levels (p.162). Bass, Avolio, Jung, and Berson (2003) view transformational leaders as inspiring followers to achieve collective goals. Burns declared that leadership should be reserved for those

leaders who exhibit goodness only. This was the opposite of Bass' (1985) original conception that any leader – good/bad – positive/harmful could be transformational (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 13). The opposite of a transformational leader and coined by Bass is a pseudo-transformational and McGregor (Bass & Riggio, 2006) struggled over the transformational leadership definition during a meeting at the University of Maryland that turned into a debate over leadership (good and bad). Eventually Burns and Bass came to an understanding and after Bass defined *"pseudo-transformational"* it later provided a context in defining authentic and inauthentic leaders. Bass defined the inauthentic leader as a person who only caters to one's self-interest, power-oriented, and displays warped moral principles (pp. 13-14). The authentic leader emphasizes the team over self-approach which could be viewed as the leader showing his/her/their authentic self. In *Interrogating Authentic Leadership: Identity does Matter*, Lee (2017) considers if authentic leadership is about the quality of the leader or about followers' perceptions, values, and belief systems and how they attribute this characteristic to a leader. She also considers how authentic leadership can be appreciated in terms of women in leadership positions.

Among the first to describe authentic leadership was George (2003). The core of George's theory is how the leader's life story and experiences are most important and play a central role in the leader presenting him/herself as authentic. George (2010) states that the leader's authenticity is more important than the leader's style. Central to this are five qualities: understanding your purpose, practicing solid values, leading with heart, establishing connected relationships, and demonstrating self-discipline (Kohnen 2005). He subsequently added building an authentic company by including additional qualities of defining purpose – mission and vision, values – organizational belief systems, heart – empowerment of employees to better serve its customers, and self-discipline – responsibility to stakeholders (Kohnen, 2005).

Reviewing the authentic leadership approach taken by George (2003, 2007, 2015), Kohnen (2005) referred to "George's passion for leadership." George's new eBook -*Lead True* (2018) reflects on his 50 years of leadership experience at Litton, Honeywell, and Medtronic, and afterward. George states that he is forever grateful for his opportunities at Litton and Honeywell, but knew that big corporations with commercial missions were not for him. When he accepted the position at Medtronic, a smaller company, which focused on "restoring people to full health, alleviating pain, and extending life" (George, 2018, p. 299). He commented that he knew it was the right decision.

When George described his theory in 2003, the US economy and political environment were still responding to the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001; national threats that had not occurred since December 7th, 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor which guaranteed US entry into the World War II. As well, the US economy was in the process of rebounding from major corporate debacles, most notably Enron (2001), WorldCom (2001), and Arthur Andersen (2001). Additionally, the US Congress was wrestling with defining better corporate governance laws in the wake of these scandals such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (2002). This act, enacted by the 107th Congress set public accounting rules in how organizations recognize revenue (Linck, J. S., Netter, J. M., & Yang, T., 2008, pp. 3287-3288).

When George published his second book in 2007, the US was in a financial crisis heading towards panic and entering its "Great Recession" (Kilman 2011, p.1) with big names and banks such as Lehman Brothers, Bear Stearns, and Countrywide failing due to investments in the sub-prime mortgage markets followed by one of the biggest Ponzi schemes in US history propagated by Bernard Madoff Investment Securities. George offers leaders an approach to building faith and trust with their followers. Consequently, followers see a moral compass in their leaders.

Walumbwa, F., Wang, P., Wang, H., Schaubroeck, J. & Avolio, B. (2010) state that followers will identify and bond better with their leaders and feel "psychologically empowered" if the leaders are seen as authentic (as cited in Covelli and Mason 2017).

George (2003) proposed that a leader's life experiences develop his/her authenticity and self-awareness. Previous and current research support George's argument. Table 1 summarizes the authentic leadership with slight variations from leading researchers, theorists, and George. The conceptualized four elements for authentic leaders are Self-awareness, Unbiased processing, Relational authenticity, and authentic behaviors. Many articles (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, Avolio et. al.., 2009, Avolio, 2010; Gardner et. al.., 2011; Datta, 2015; Tibbs, 2016; Sagnak & Kuruoz, 2017) which draw from the Kernis (2003) model identified his four core authentic leadership elements with slight modifications and definitions: 1. Self-awareness, 2. Self-regulation, 3. Balanced processing, and 4. Relational transparency. Avolio and Gardner (2005) used balanced processing instead of unbiased processing arguing that all leaders make decisions through a bias processing lens. Their reasoning stems from the research of Fiske & Taylor (1991) and Tice & Wallace (2003) in cognitive psychology. Leaders process information from multiple sources and make decisions in a relatively balanced manner (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 317). The other point Avolio and Gardner argued was comparing Kernis' relational authenticity to the authors' relational transparency. Kernis views relational authenticity to openness and trust as the leaders' relationships (Ilies, R., Morgeson, F. P., & Nahrgang, J. D. 2005., p. 389). While these two terms are similar, Avolio and Gardner (2005) state that transparency provides more opportunities for leaders to be open and conduct information-sharing with followers and peers (p.318). Additionally, transparency is not solely based on relationships but the leadership position. Connections can be made from the authors' authentic leadership core elements listed in Table 1.

George's approach seems to be more commercialized and relatable to leaders serving in

leadership positions and giving leaders the latitude to make decisions with heart and based on

their value system.

Table 1. Authentic Leadership Characteristics

Kernis 2003	(Avolio & Gardner, 2005, Avolio *et. al..*, 2009, Avolio, 2010; Gardner *et. al..*, 2011; Datta, 2015; Tibbs, 2016; Sagnak & Kuruoz, 2017)	George 2003
Self-awareness	Self-awareness	Understanding the purpose
Unbiased processing	Balanced processing	Practicing solid values
Relational authenticity	Relational transparency	Leading with heart
Authentic behaviors	Self-regulation	Establishing connected relationships
		Demonstrating self-discipline

Northouse describes two of his three authentic leadership perspectives that can be viewed

through intrapersonal and developmental lenses.

1. The intrapersonal perspective focuses on the leaders' life experiences and their effect on
    their leadership style. Additionally, self-reflection and self-knowledge are also
    incorporated (Northouse 2016, p.196).
2. The developmental perspective focuses on experiences and life events to define how a
    leader is his/her authentic self. This approach depicts how a person can be educated,
    trained, and nurtured as a leader rather than the leader inheriting or having a leader
    defined fixed traits (p.196).
3. The third lens looks at the interpersonal processes and the relationships of the leader and
    followers. A reciprocal arrangement forms where leaders and followers affect one
    another (p.196).

Authentic leadership has many strengths. This theory helps to appreciate the relationship

between leaders and followers/subordinates. The theory indicates that leaders draw their

strengths from their values and beliefs. Questions arise on how morality, beliefs, and values influence this theory (p.269). Leaders are shaped by their upbringing, environment, and experiences. Yet weaknesses include questions on the role of positive psychological capacities. The authentic leadership model does not clearly define these components.

Authentic leadership provides a roadmap for leaders wanting to practice authentic leadership; it embraces morality; and can be measured and validated through the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) (p. 268). Gaining and keeping trust with superiors, peers, and subordinates is a big element and those leaders who display sincerity and remain above the fray have a better chance of being successful. However, this theory lacks the discussion on gender and other stereotypes that leaders may encounter.

Kindred values based approach to assess authentic leadership and its core elements is Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI is an approach inspired by the positive psychology movement (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). This approach focuses on the self-reflection of personal experiences and the conditions surrounding those experiences. Kaye, Conklin & Allen (2008) state that these experiences lay the groundwork to create transformation (p. 634) in the leader. AI is also an alternate approach to action research used in developing organizational change management plans (Kaye et. al., 2008, p. 634). This approach only addresses the leader and their experiences, not the follower experiences, and how followers relate to the leaders. The approach also does not address gender or any other constraints. Northouse does state that authentic leadership can be viewed through an interpersonal lens. The third lens looks at the interpersonal processes and the relationships of the leader and followers. A reciprocal arrangement forms where leaders and followers affect one another (p.196).

Gable and Haidt (2005) define positive psychology as the processes and conditions that contribute to the optimal obtainment in people, groups, and organizations (p.103). The pillars that this movement are based on is a subjective experience, positive individual characteristics, and positive organizations and communities (Seligman, 2002). This movement focuses on ten positive human characteristics - Well-being, Optimism, Forgiveness, Self-esteem, Fascination/flow, Creativity, Resilience, Savoring, and Wisdom. Spirituality (Sachau, 2007. p.378), Human-strengths, and Well-being instead of weaknesses (see Snyder & Lopez, 2002 for an expanded explanation).

Another aspect of authentic leadership is genuineness. For leaders practicing authenticity, there is truthfulness (Harter 2002). The leader's actions reflect no agenda and are not prejudiced. Shamir, Eilam, Luthans, and Avolio (2005) call these leaders' actions genuine. Leaders show honest interest in their subordinates' well-being. Kernis (2003) states that leaders can show their genuineness because they have self-esteem.

When applying authentic leadership in the military, service members are taught and placed in leadership positions at the beginning of military service regardless of rank. Additionally, service members also learn leadership from their peers and superiors – good and bad traits. These experiences help shape the service member to emulate good leadership behavior or serve as an example of what not to do. In an article written by Horval (2020) for the NCO Journal, he argues that Soldiers will *"imitate or model leaders they aspire to be like"* (p.3). Horval links authentic leadership and follower emulation to self-identity. He references Avolio et al., (2004) and how leader/follower events can change a person's self-identity and create *"alternative possible selves"* (p.812).

In summary, leadership is a learned skill and it must be practiced. I believe military leaders who are authentic can transfer these skill sets and experiences when the service member leaves the military. The gap may be how military leadership is viewed by civilians and can the veteran adapt quick enough to their new environment.

When addressing leadership theories, follower expectations must also be addressed. How leadership is approached determines their follower behaviors. However, followers do have expectations of leaders and often those expectations are not as forthcoming.

Follower Expectations are Critical to Understanding Leadership

All followers have expectations of their leaders and most see their leaders through a biased lens whether it is conscious or unconscious. Followers also attach their expectations to this lens. In reading Bellou's article on examining *if women followers prefer a different leadership style than men?* She examines Ekvall and Arvonen (1989, 1991) argument that the transformational style of leadership manifests two leadership behaviors: employee/relation and change orientations (Bellou 2011, p. 2820). There is research in measuring the success of organizations and their employees' health. Underwood et al., in their research has suggested that the leadership style practiced by the leader is related to the attachment style of a follower. Attachment style is how a follower relates to the leader. It is based on the person's early interactions with caregivers, parents, teachers, etc., (Underwood et. al., 2015, p.101). Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) describe attachment styles are secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful. We can also infer that the attachment styles can be further consolidated into two main categories: secure, knowing yourself, and having a good balance and insecure

driving the preoccupation, dismissive, and fearful attachments. The authors describe the insecure attachment style as the opposite of secure and with individuals displaying anger, low self-image, and self-esteem (p.101). The authors link transformational theory to a follower's attachment style to explain the leader-follower relationship. According to the authors, the limited amount of available research focuses on how leader/follower relationships develop using transformational theory and combining it with secure attachment. The study does not address, nor does it dive deeper into the specific attachment characteristics of followers, such as gender. However, the authors did recognize that race does play a factor in a leader being perceived as transformational or authentic. Further studies would have to be conducted using the Authentic, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Hersey-Blanchard, and Adaptive leadership theories to compare, contrast, and establish linkages between leader and follower.

Thus far, we have discussed authentic leadership as a veteran skillset and follower expectations to set the stage to discuss Military Leadership Models. There are two Military Leadership Models that draw from the above theories and are good examples at how two Services – the US Army and US Air Force developed models and how each approaches leadership.

Military Leadership Models

Military leadership models are not new or unique. Military leaders often take their models from the civilian sector and vice versa. The below models are examples of how the Army and Air Force have taken different approaches to build, develop, and train the best leaders. Why are these models important for this chapter? This is where veterans are first exposed to leadership principles, and the expectation of leadership. These are also the first experiences that veterans will carry with them through their working life.

The Army Leadership Model

The Army updated its leadership manual, field manual (FM) 6-22, Army leadership in an Army doctrine publication (ADP) in 2012 and again in 2015. This ADP expands and outlines leadership principles. For the first time, the Army has identified toxic leadership and leading through change. This could be a sign of the Army moving towards a more humanistic approach in training its leaders at all levels. In the foreword, former Army Chief of Staff, General Ray Odierno writes about meeting the challenges as the Army transitions and must meet new requirements in a complex, and uncertain environment. The first expectation of an Army leader is to have a vision and lead change (ADRP 6-22, p.3). Figure six depicts how three domains are encompassed by peer and developmental relationships surrounded by a changing environment.

Figure 6. The Army Leader Development Model, *ADP 6-22, Army Leadership*
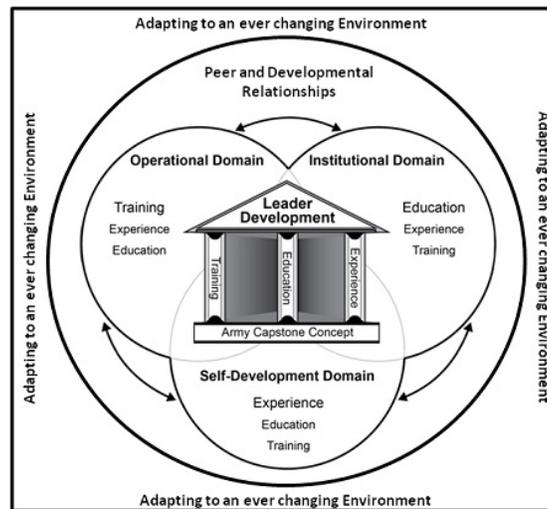
In contrast to the Army model, the Air Force takes a more traditional approach to training leaders. Where the Army emphasizes how the environment will shift and leadership must be

adaptive, the Air Force is moving toward training their service members how to be more authentic in their decision-making.

The Air Force Leadership Model

Beginning in 2011, Air Force University faculty examined leadership models and theories and asked what the best leadership model is for the Air Force? In 2017, the Squadron Officer School (SOS) located at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama decided to indoctrinate the tenets of Transformational Leadership with a path towards achieving authentic transformational leadership (Arenas, Tucker, and Connelly). SOS has integrated the Full-Range Leadership Model (FRLM) into its SOS curriculum with the purpose of establishing a leadership lexicon to develop better Air Force leaders at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels (p. 31). It is interesting that the Air Force is taking this approach and implementing FRLM. This model is more in line with the civilian sector. The Air Force weaves in elements from George's Authentic through Bass and Riggio's FRLM to create an Authentic Transformational Leader (ATL). A question to ask as the Air Force continues down this path in training its officers is, how about identity? If the Air Force is successful inculcating this leadership style throughout its ranks, its service members may have an easier time transitioning as well as their veteran identity may not have to be recreated.

Figure 7. Full Range Leadership Model

Adapted from Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E Riggio, 2006

Laissez-Faire	Transactional			Transformational			
Hands-Off Leadership	Management by Exception (MBE)		Contingent Reward (CR)	Individual Consideration (IC) *Caring*	Intellectual Stimulation (IS) *Thinking*	Inspirational Motivation (IM) *Charming*	Idealized Influence (II) *Influencing*
	Passive MBE	Active MBE					

Up to now, we have examined current theories, leadership theories, and two military leadership models. Now it's time to look at fresh ideas and a proposed framework.

Veteran Identity and Culture

Military life is highly structured with its own traditions, cultural expectations, and beliefs. These beliefs are central to one's military identity and influence how a service member sees him/herself, others, and views society (Cooper et. al., 2016). Indoctrination into the military is simple. The process of making a Soldier, on-boarding, has been refined for hundreds of years, it's a one-size-fits-all model. For enlisted Soldiers, attendance at basic training is the beginning with an assessment for military fitness. For officers, there are three options – US Service Academies, Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), and Officer Candidate School (OCS). On the flip side, the off-boarding or transitioning of a Soldier is still difficult as one model doesn't fit all. Not all service members' experiences are the same and not all transitions are the same.

Fog of Transition

The "Fog of Transition" encapsulates a series of events which run concurrent with veteran transition activities of resume writing, career searches, life after the military, and veterans' benefits. According to Graham, it is the "peripherals" that are not addressed and largely

ignored. What is a peripheral? I define it as the outer layer of the transition process. It is not

linear and there is no one-size that fits all scenarios. An example of a peripheral is understanding

yourself, your identity, and how your environment will change and shift. Additionally, the ability

to read and understand your environment and audience is also key. The peripherals are the

intangibles that will affect any transition if not recognized and dealt with appropriately.

Understanding these peripherals can assist veterans in navigating through the various stages of

transition. In an interview with Mr. Eddie Dunn, a consultant and veteran transitional expert, he

sees veteran transition as a transformational process. Dunn referred to "elevating his thinking

beyond transition" Why – *"this is where identity sits."* I believe Dunn is referring to a parallel

process in that standard transition is transactional like a quid pro quo approach to the process.

The veteran receives approval to leave the military and must attend TAP or help is given on a

resume and the veteran is called in for an interview. All very transactional and tactical. When

Dunn refers to transformation, he is referring to the veteran moving beyond the process to a level

where identity can be addressed and reformulated. Using Burns' Transformational and

Transactional leadership model where the focus is on two levels, one creating motivational

actions – Transformational and the other focusing on the exchange between leaders and their

followers (Northouse, p.162), we substitute out followers for the veteran/self to understand how

the veteran transition process is linear (transactional) in nature.

Veteran transitional services focus on a series of steps to get the veteran a job. For

example, there are Military Occupational Skills (MOS) translators or crosswalks that correspond

with similar civilian skills sets. Using the Careeronestop.org military translator sponsored by the

United States Department of Labor, I typed in my former Army Military Branch – Civil Affairs.

The results came back to probable jobs that might match my Civil Affairs background such as –

Business Continuity Planners, Fundraising Managers, and Political Scientists and so on. Typical education, wages, and how bright the outlook might be was also listed. When clicking into a career field, the information given was helpful with statistics, education, licensing, skills, and activities. However, it failed to mention building a network, branding, knowing your audience, and where to find people in the field. This process turns the veteran from a transformational leader in uniform to a transactional person trading a military skill set for a like or similar civilian skillset. Companies such as Boeing (https://jobs.boeing.com/military-skills-translator) use a translator to help with the job search and career websites such as Indeed.Com provide guidance on which military skills are most transferrable (https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/military-skills). I am not implying these military translators or crosswalks are bad. It is one tool that accompanies this process, and it should be used in conjunction with other services such as executive coaching, research, and outreach to recruiters to name a few.

In this fog of transition, the veteran is moving through unfamiliar territory with no or limited rules of engagement and a feeling of being powerless and unable to control the change occurring. Bennis and Nanus refer to power in the context of a leader's ability or inability to lead. They define it as *"the basic energy to initiate and sustain action translating intention into reality"* (Bennis& Nanus (2003), p14)*. If we substitute "leader" for the "veteran" the acronym that best fits their reality is (VUCA) - Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity.

Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity – (VUCA)

Figure 8. VUCA

What is VUCA? The United States Army War College lists the VUCA acronym as being

derived from the writings and ideas of Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus. Their book *Leaders:*

Strategies for taking charge, published in 1987 and again in the second edition, 2003, alluded to

the VUCA concept in their discussion on the leader and leadership (inward) and strategies

(organizational). In reviewing the United States Army Heritage and Education Center at Carlisle

Barracks website, the United States Army War College has conducted extensive research in the

first use of the VUCA term. The website determines that VUCA was first referenced by General

Maxwell Thurman at the 11 February 1991 United States Army War College Strategic

Leadership Conference. He described the 1991 strategic leadership environment as VUCA

(Mackey, 1992, p.10). Today, VUCA is used throughout mainstream publications to describe the

unknown environment, bull and bear markets, and competition (Doheny, Nagali, & Weig, 2012). VUCA is also used to describe the ever-changing and evolving technical evolutions.

Ackoff defines the system and is parts, Bennis and Nanus show the way to operate and succeed inside a system by aligning intention, power, and empowerment as key elements for successful leadership.

Rebranding VUCA – CAST Environment

VUCA can be aligned to the veteran transitional process. We need to take what we know about a malevolent VUCA and flip it to a benevolent Calmness, Assurance, Stability, and Tangibility (CAST) state; we go from the unknown hostile VUCA environment to a hospitable CAST environment where the veteran is open to change. This is the most important first step to recognizing that the environment is no longer known or stable. As the individual moves into the awareness phase, this is all about getting to know your new environment, letting go of the old environment and referencing back to Bridges where he describes the Neutral Zone phase where there is a self-reflection period. The framework continues moving to the re-branding and identity customization phases. In comparing to Bridges, this is the New Beginnings phase, Lewin would place these two phases into his Refreeze phase. Each of these are not new with the exception of CAST. Together these phases address missing components not found in existing models.

The below proposed theoretical framework was derived from the VUCA concept, an interview with Dr. Dawn Graham, and conversations with my dissertation advisor – Dr. Dominick Volini. The Calmness, Assurance, Stability, and Tangibility (CAST) framework starts with awareness building and being present in the environment. This framework takes the

individual on the identity journey and should be used in parallel with other transitional models

that focus on the transactional aspects of transition such as resume writing, interview techniques

and so on.

Figure 9. CAST - Calmness, Assurance, Stability, and Tangibility
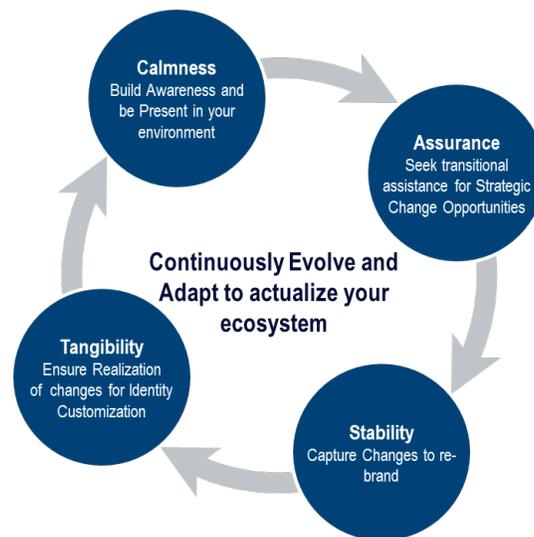
Early Pilot Research

Due to the limited research on HIPO-Vets, I conducted a pilot interview study with career

coaches and mentors who regularly coach veterans and non-veteran clients to explore and find

common characteristics that set HIPO-Vets apart from other veterans.

Three interviews were conducted, two were one-on-one, and the third was with two

individuals who have been leading and conducting a veteran transitional program that expand

beyond the transitional resume writing, career field information etc. I have no prior

relationship with Dr. Dawn Graham or Mr. Eddie Dunn. I do have an existing relationship

with Dr. Karen Lawson and Mr. Peter Gutekunst. For this reason, the interview structure was more formal.

For the first interview, I invited Dr. Dawn Graham, from the University of Pennsylvania, Wharton School of Business Career Director, and Sirius/XM radio host of "Career Talk" and author of a new book titled *"Switchers."* Dr. Graham regularly counsels and advises individuals including veterans on how to transition. During our interview, she focused on the importance of branding, knowing your audience, doing the research necessary to know that audience, and how you come across. Additionally, she commented on how veterans tend to be *"natural switchers"* due to the movement of planned job positions and the limited time allotted for service members to remain in one position.

The Second interview was with Mr. Eddie Dunn. Mr. Dunn is a retired Army Noncommissioned Officer and President and CEO of Eddie Dunn Consulting. Mr. Dunn focuses on veterans successfully transitioning through a reboot boot camp – Civilian Ready.org. Mr. Dunn prefers to think of the veteran transition process as the veteran *"transformational process."* In his opinion this is a step above the traditionally taught TAP process.

The Third interview was with Dr. Karen Lawson and Mr. Peter Gutekunst, creators of the Union League of Philadelphia Veterans Fellowship Program. Dr. Lawson and Mr. Gutekunst, solicit veteran nominations to the program and are actively involved in the monthly activities and advising the mentors. Dr. Lawson designed the program to bridge the gap with veteran employment. Her goal is to provide a venue that offers highly successful veterans a better way to build their network and brand within their chosen field.

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to outline the literature associated with Veteran's identity and leadership. This literature review examined and explored the surveys, articles, and books written on veterans, veteran transition, and identity. I attempted to weave in current theories on transitions, leadership theories, and a new transitional approach. I hope I have identified the gaps in the literature that show a need for a new unified veteran transitional framework. The application is unproven. However, since the current research does not lend itself to identifying a unified transitional veteran framework that could work in multiple situations, Figure eight is a way to address the peripherals of transition.

The goal of chapter three will be to outline my research design and approach through ontology, epistemology, and methodology to define identity and how HIPO-Veterans successfully transition out of military service.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research design and approach for this qualitative grounded study regarding veteran identity and how veterans transition out of their respective services and into the civilian sector. The approach I am taking is to understand and bring to the surface the identity challenges and harsh realities that veterans face during their transition process. The research study, including the methodology, study participants, procedures, analysis method, and ethical concerns are the primary components.

Research questions, hypothesis, and variables

This qualitative study will attempt to reveal how HIPO-Veterans successfully transition out of military service and into civilian careers using leadership skills learned from military service. My research questions are:

RQ1. What role does identity play when High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) transition out of the military and into mainstream society?

RQ2. How do leadership characteristics of High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) fit into identity?

RQ3. How do current Veteran transitional programs assist High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) in their transition out of the military and into mainstream society?

Research design

A qualitative approach is appropriate for this dissertation. Table 2 outlines my research design and how I will attempt to appropriately explain my research questions and how this design is best to understand veteran identity.

Table 2. Chapter Three Belief Table

Research Design	Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology	Method
Definition	How you define your reality	Gaining knowledge of your reality	Methods of Study	Instruments used
Approach	Constructivism - seeking to understand their world	Interpretivisim - Integrates the human side of research	Grounded Theory	Interviews and Surveys
The researcher	Defining a transitioning veterans pre and post reality	Gaining and seeking to understand through the UL of Philadelphia veteran population	Data collected produces the theory	Gained insight

Prior to deciding the research design. It is important to note that in the early 20th century, quantitative research (positivism) was the dominant method over qualitative research. The Positivist model focuses on *"standardized testing and systematic observation, experiment, survey data, and statistical analysis"* (Rahman, 2016, p.102). It wasn't until Kuhn's work and his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* on paradigm shifts that systems science began to influence how research was conducted. He depicted a paradigm as *"the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of*

a given community" (Kuhn, p.175) as cited in Maxwell, 2011. p.42). Kuhn's research and the paradigm wars gave creditability to qualitative research methods

I chose a Constructivist - Interpretivist Grounded Theory methodology. This design greatly assisted in developing a case model and study for HIPO-Veterans. Creswell (2007) states that *"individuals* (constructivist viewpoint) *seek understanding in the world they live and work"* (p. 20). It makes sense that most individuals want to belong and thrive in a social system where they know the rules of engagement. The gap in Creswell is that identity, role exit, and new role entrance is not addressed. For most transitioning veterans, these individuals are going from a known system and returning to a previous system that they were once a part of but no longer feel the same connection with or its perceived value. This is the unknown system with its own rules of engagement that are not clearly outlined. At this stage, veterans begin to experience *"social disengagement"* (Ebaugh, 1988, p.10) where a person is exiting their familiar environment and role for a new environment and role that they are either not totally familiar with or, incorrectly, think it is familiar and that proves wrong. Ebaugh (1988) argues that disengagement from a role or group is complex and involves multiple factors, such as the person's inner-circle of friends and work colleagues, and contributes to shifts in the person's *"own sense of self-identity"* (p.181). This complexity is the veteran's labyrinth of transition. Meaning there are many paths to take when exiting the military and TAP and other veteran transition programs may or may not address those paths. How is role exiting addressed for most veterans? The answer is – it's not. The majority of veteran transitional services take a very linear approach and focus on resume writing and translating your military skills into a language that civilians can understand, job search engines, interview techniques, etc. In my opinion, veteran transitional programs embody the socialization approach of *"emphasizing the role" and environment and "deemphasizing the exiting role" and environment* (Ebaugh, 1988, p. 181). This simply means that the transitional program is focusing the service member on

his/her/their new job and not addressing how the transition affects the service member's identity and how to handle the shifts in being treated as a soon to be ex-member of an exclusive club.

Advantages to Qualitative Research

One of the main advantages of qualitative research is it allows for synchronous and asynchronous communication capture of current and changing data. The data is mainly open-ended with participants describing *their "feelings, opinions, and experiences; and interprets the meanings of their actions"* (Denzin, 1989 as cited in Rahman, 2016, p.104).

Second, this approach allows for the greater understanding of the human experience (Rahman, 2016, p.104) and it allows the researcher greater flexibility in interpreting a wider range of viewpoints, techniques, and methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002 as cited in Rahman, 2016, p.104).

Third, this approach allows the researcher to reach the participants inner most experiences and most importantly to see the impact of culture on the participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008 as cited in Rahman, 2016, p.104). This advantage is significant because all veteran participants' transition experience was unique to them. Also, it allows for themes to emerge that might identify new approaches.

Fourth, this approach gives the researcher maximum flexibility in designing an approach best suited for the study. Maxwell (2012) refers to this as an *"interactive approach."*

Disadvantages to Qualitative Research

With advantages come disadvantages as there is no one best singular approach to any study. First, there is an argument that qualitative methods leave out *"contextual sensitivities,*

and focus more on meanings and experiences" (Silverman, 2010 as cited by Rahman, 2016, p.104).

Second, qualitative approaches cannot depict trends and patterns (Amos, 2016, p.131 as cited by Savela, 2017, p.41) as well as the quantitative approach.

Third, the qualitative approach cannot protect the researcher in generalizing the data as the quantitative approach does (Blommaert, 2013, p.2 as cited by Savela, 2017, p.41).

While there are many more advantages and disadvantages to the qualitative approach, I felt finding the optimal approach would give more flexibility to collect, interpret, and present the data which is most important. If I had chosen veteran homelessness or suicide, I could have easily used the Veteran's Administration statistical database as well as other data bases. Since identity is individually unique yet veterans' transitions out of the Service may be similar in the processes they must follow, each interpretation of a veteran transition is individualistic and similar at the same time. It is through the qualitative approach that the researcher can draw commonalities and themes between and among the sampled population.

Study participants

The participants were randomly drawn from the Union League of Philadelphia Veterans Cohort Program. The participants included Cohort members who are Post 9/11 veterans and considered by the Union League to be high-performing, and mentors of Veterans. These are Union League members who volunteered their time for the program. Each member was paired with one veteran for the program duration. Prior to engaging in the program, Union League veteran volunteers completed a training program to help them understand veterans and their needs.

Data Collection

Early Pilot Research

  I conducted pilot research interviews to gain insight into how transitional experts view transition. Three semi-structured interviews were conducted using Zoom and, with the permission of the interviewee, the interview was recorded in order to allow for the free flow of conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee. All interviews were conducted in a single session. The interviewees gave their permission to record the session. During all interviews, the researcher's dissertation supervisor was in attendance to help moderate and to assist in limiting bias conversations and questions.

Surveys

  Survey questions are qualitative and open-ended (see Appendices A and B for the survey questions) to allow participants the greatest flexibility in responding to the questions. Surveys were administered online through *Survey Monkey* with the researcher only having access to the raw data. Additionally, the researcher is unable to identity participants. All respondents are assigned a unique eleven digit respondent ID identifier through Survey Monkey.

Data Analysis

  My data analysis process adhered to Maxwell's (2012) framework. The surveys were professionally transcribed and compared and contrasted to draw common themes. The surveys from the veteran cohort members and the mentors were coded and the data aggregated to depict themes. Aggregation also assures participant anonymity and data confidentiality. Once

completed, the aggregated data of both surveys were compared for themes and gaps. Graphs, tables, and flowcharts were used to depict all finished data.

Researcher and Bias

The researcher is a retired Army Officer with 30 years of service in the Active and Reserve forces. During my tenure in the military, I transitioned from active to reserve to civilian status several times. My TAP interaction was limited and at the time consisted of in-class meetings that focused on resume writing, career fields, interview techniques, and knowing your veteran's benefits. I remained a civilian with no interaction from the military for three years. In October 2003, I joined the US Army Reserves and during this time, I deployed three times Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait. Upon my return from Iraq in July 2005 at Fort Bragg, NC. TAP was not offered to returning Reserve Soldiers. In March 2011, returning from Afghanistan, to Fort Dix, NJ. TAP was also not offered to returning Reserve Soldiers. On my last deployment, from Kuwait in July 2014, returning to Fort Dix, NJ. Reserve Soldiers sat through a day of TAP which was similar to my 1999 program I attended at Fort Hood Texas. My preconceptions in this area are substantial because I have experienced the veteran transition process multiple times and I have had to examine how my identity had shifted and changed.

For this study and performing the role of researcher, I collected and analyzed data to draw out common themes to accurately present a holistic picture on how successful HIPO-Veterans transition out of military service while tackling role identity. I limited my interaction with the participants to survey analytics. I know several cohort members and I attended the first cohort from January – June 2015. Since June 2015, The Union League has invited me back every January to speak with new cohort members on the opening night of the program.

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to outline my research design and approach. I discussed my ontology, epistemology, and methodology to define identity and how HIPO-Veterans successfully transition out of military service. The goal of Chapter four will be to provide the analyzed results and demonstrate how a Constructivist – Interpretivist Grounded Theory methodology was followed.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter is organized into two sections, veterans and mentors, to reflect best how data were collected and the information and themes yielded.

The purpose of this research study is to explore veteran identity and how it plays a vital role in HIPO-Veterans successfully transitioning to mainstream society. My research questions are:

RQ1. What role does identity play when High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) transition out of the military?

RQ2. How do leadership characteristics of High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) fit into identity?

RQ3. How do current Veteran transitional programs assist High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) in their transition?

Survey Responses

Union League sponsors of this research emailed the survey on 24 June 2021 to 51 Veteran Cohort Members and 31 Union League Mentors. When the survey closed, 24 out of 51 veterans had responded (a 47 percent response rate), and 10 out of 31 Mentors had responded (a 32 percent response rate).

Analysis of Data

The Survey Monkey platform was used to collect and analyze all data. All responses are confidential, and the respondents remained anonymous. Additionally, the MonkeyLearn word cloud generator was used to visualize the data from the open-ended questions.

Union League Veteran Cohort Survey

The Veteran Cohort Survey consisted of 25 questions divided into three sections, 8 demographic questions to gather insight into the length of time of military service, rank, departure explanation, and cohort identification. The second section contained a mixture of 7 open-ended and 8 drop-down questions for the respondents to answer and relay thoughts on the program, leadership, and transitional issues. The last question asked each respondent "if there was a question I did not ask." I wanted to give each person the opportunity to personalize this experience and propose a question, with their answer, I had not thought of for either inclusion into this chapter or future research opportunities in chapter five. Table 3 presents the frequencies and percentages of results. The Union League Veteran Cohort Survey is listed in Appendix A. The succeeding tables represent the demographic data.

Veteran Cohort Survey Results

Table 3. Participant Demographics

In the below questions, 23 respondents answered, 1 skipped

Variable	*n*	%
Q1. Choosing to participate?		
Choose to participate	23	95.83
Choose not to participate	1	4.17

Q3. Branch of Service?		
Army	8	34.78
Navy	7	30.43
Air Force	1	4.35
Marine	6	26.09
Army Reserve	1	4.35
Army National Guard	1	4.35
Q4. Military Component?		
Active Duty	21	91.3
Combination of Active and Reserve	2	8.7
Q6. Rank upon departure?		
O1-O2	1	4.35
O3	2	8.7
O4	2	8.7
O5	4	18.39
O6	7	30.43
General Officer	1	4.35
E1-E4	1	4.35
E5-E6	5	21.74
Q7. Retirement from Service?		
Yes	12	52.17
No	11	47.83
Q9. Employment lined up prior to military departure?		
Yes	13	56.52
No	10	43.48
Q10. School acceptance prior to military departure?		
Yes	5	21.74
No	18	78.26
Q11. UL Fellowship program attendance?		
Cohort 1	7	36.84
Cohort 2	3	15.79
Cohort 3	4	21.05
Cohort 4	3	15.79
Other	2	10.53
Q12. How did you here about the program?		
Former Cohort Member	4	21.05
Friend	1	5.26
Union League Member	11	57.89

Advertisement	1	5.26
Other	2	10.52

Questions two, four, five, and six - What year did you enter the service and when did you leave service, respectively? And what was your departure rank? I allowed each respondent to name the year entered into the military. It was interesting because there was an even spread of respondents. From 1986 – 1991, the Ronald Regan and George H.W. Bush years of the Cold War and its end, and the first Gulf War. From 1992 – 2000, President Clinton's years included significant military and defense cuts, the first World Trade Center bombing and activities, and terrorist acts that led to September 11, 2001. The George W. Bush years are the post-911 service members. From the time they joined the military, this group was in a state of war, commonly referred to as the Global War on Terror (GWOT). The last group entered the military under President Barak Obama and exited under President Donald Trump.

Table 4. Questions Two and Five

In the below questions, 23 respondents answered, 1 skipped

Year Entered	*n* (entrance)	*n* (exit)
1986-1991	6	
1992-2001	7	
2002 – 2008	6	3
2009-2019	4	15
2020-2021		3
Still serving National Guard/Reserves		2
Total	23	23

Table five presents the measures of central tendency with the Means, Median, and Mode. The Minimum time served in the military was four years with the maximum served of 30 years.

Table 5. Measures of Central tendency

Mean in Years	Median in Years	Mode
16.695	19	28

Table 6. Total number of years served per respondent

In the below questions, 23 respondents answered, 1 skipped

Respondents	Year Entered	Year Exited	Total number of Years
4	1986	2014	28
17	1986	2014	28
21	1988	2018	30
22	1990	2017	27
8	1991	2013	22
18	1991	2012	21
19	1992	2017	25
10	1992	2017	25
6	1994	2014	20
11	1995	2019	24
7	1996	2009	13
15	1998	2005	7
23	2000	2020	20
16	2002	2006	4
2	2002	2010	8
13	2002	still serving in NG	19
20	2003	2007	4
14	2006	Still serving as a Reservist	15
9	2008	2017	9
1	2009	2021	12
3	2010	2016	6
5	2011	2020	9
12	2011	2019	8

Question 8 – If you did not retire, what was the reason for your departure?
23 respondents, 1 skipped

Ten respondents marked retirement as a reason for their service departure. Thirteen respondents gave the below reasons for their departure. The two highest wanted a new career and other.

Figure 10. Military Departure Reasons
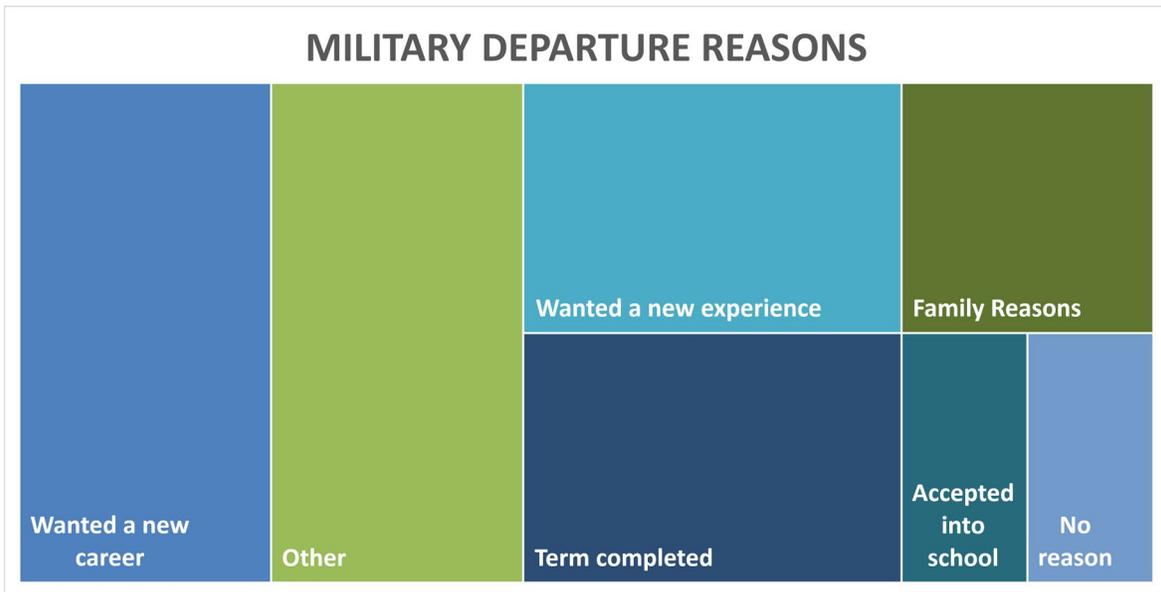
Summary of Demographic Data

The summary of demographic data yielded no surprises. The Union League of Philadelphia has a comprehensive and established network in Philadelphia and the surrounding areas. Of the majority of new cohort members, current Union League members referred 57.89 percent and former cohort members recommended 21.05 percent. In reviewing the cohort rank

structure, 17 out of 24 were officers; five were enlisted, one – E1-E4, and five junior non-commissioned officers, one respondent skipped and did not answer.

Therefore, this is a group of highly experienced, mature, and ranking military personnel, presumably capable of advanced placement in civilian jobs rather than entry positions. Rather than competing with recent college graduates, they could be compared in the job market to mid-career, executive and skilled individuals posting for enhanced opportunities.

Program Delivery and Mentorship Data

Any program needs to excel in delivering what is promised, especially if it is a service delivery program that depends on word of mouth. There are numerous military transitional programs, and it is impossible to get an accurate number. Because of the sheer number of options available to veterans, these programs, like it or not, compete for veterans to join. How does a veteran choose between the Union League of Philadelphia and another program? It always comes back to how the program features the participant experience and how the veterans feel when the program is finished.

Table 7. Program Delivery and Mentorship Data

In the below questions, 19 respondents answered, 5 skipped

Variable	*n*	%
Q13. Delivery Model experience?		
Did not like	0	0
Somewhat liked	4	21.05
Neutral	0	0
Enjoyed	9	47.37
Very Much Enjoyed	6	31.58
Q14. Mentee/Mentor match?		
Very good	6	31.58
Good	4	21.05
Fair	7	36.84
Poor	2	10.53

Q15. Mentee/Mentor still connected?		
Yes	6	31.58
Sometimes	8	42.11
No	5	26.32
Q20. Recommend the Program?		
Yes	16	84.21
No	3	15.79

Comparing questions 20, 13, 14, and 15, over 84 percent of cohort members would recommend the program to fellow veterans, and 78.95 percent of cohort members enjoyed the program and how it is delivered. However, regarding the veteran–mentor match, 52.63 percent thought they were matched well with their mentor, while only 10.53 percent believed that their match was in the poor range. 73.69 percent have kept up the mentors' relationship to some degree while 26.23 percent, who otherwise enjoyed the program, have not maintained a relationship with their mentors.

Another interesting note are those respondents who marked their mentor match "very good" at 31.58 percent, also marked that they are still connected with their mentor except for two individuals. One felt that his match was "good" and the other felt they had a "fair" match. Both marked that they remain in contact with their mentors.

Questions 21 and 23 below offer some insight into other transitional programs sought after and the ability to assist in the transition process. The next set of questions asks the respondents how they felt about DOD TAP and Veteran transitional programs.

Table 8. Questions 21 and 23 - Other Veteran Transitional Programs

In the below questions, 19 respondents answered, 5 skipped

Variable	*n*	%
Attendance/Advice sought from other Veteran transitional programs?		
Yes	9	47.37
No	7	36.84
Thought about it	1	5.26
Other	2	10.53
Do Veteran transitional programs assist high-performing Veterans?		
Yes	5	26.32
Somewhat	6	31.58
Partially	3	15.79
Other	2	10.53
No	3	15.79

To sum up questions 21 and 23, less than half, 47.37 percent of the veteran cohort members attended an additional program previously or after the Union League program. When asked about whether transitional programs assist veterans, a total of 73.69 responded with a favorable level.

Emerged Themes and sub-themes

There were seven open-ended questions in the Veterans survey. Instead of addressing each question on its own, I looked across all open-ended questions for common themes. A list of themes that emerged from the veterans' survey is described in the ensuing analysis—Program Design, Mentorship and Networking. Each theme will be addressed in detail. Figure nine is a graphic that depicts the importance of the themes and how these themes could be used to redesign and reshape the Union League Veterans Fellowship Program.

Figure nine is set on an X and Y axis. The X axis (independent variable) is delivery, the Y axis (dependent variable) is program value. Structure is the X and Y intercept leading to Identity. At each point along the axis, starting with Program Design, the model refines the program delivery and builds program value for veteran participants. Rebranding is process through delivery and the result leads to Identity. As outlined in Chapter 2, Ackoff defines a system through its interconnected parts and Bennis and Nanus show the way to operate and succeed in a system that aligns intention, power, and empowerment as key elements for successful leadership.

Figure 11. List of Themes and Sub-Themes among the 23 veteran respondents
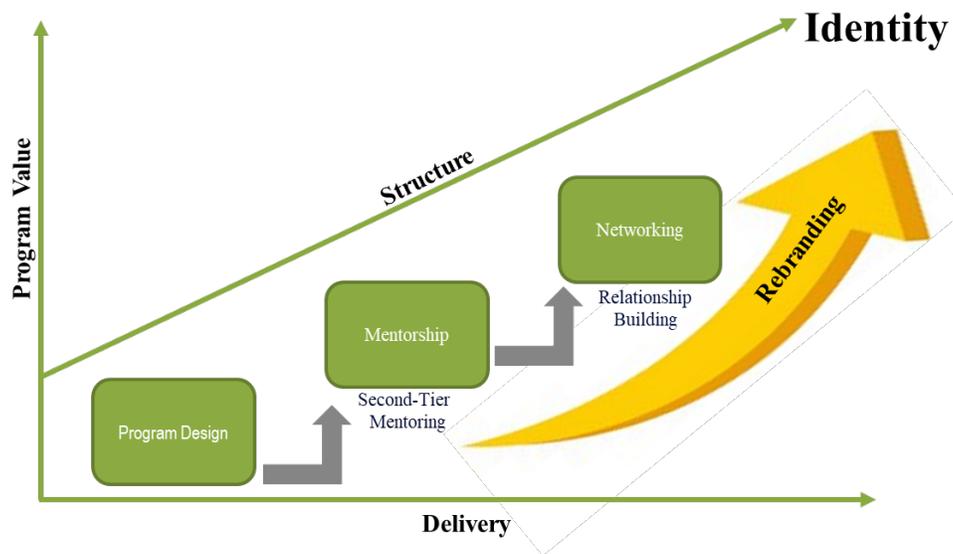
Program Design

The first key element drawn from the survey is Program Design. An example is homeownership and what matters most is location, location, location. The same concept is

relevant to program design – structure, structure, structure. Most all adults appreciate clarity when entering new situation and military personnel are especially used to a full description of what they are about to encounter. Without a specific design and clear instructions, desired outcomes will not be achieved. The most prominent theme extracted and analyzed from the respondent data is the importance of organizational structure including foundational features such as skill assessment, career aspirations, resume building and interviewing. Comments stretched across all the open-ended questions. Program design is intertwined when respondents explicitly referenced networking, and mentoring. Program design anchors Figure nine.

Mentorship

The United States Army, Army Regulation 600-100, Army Profession and Leadership Policy defines mentorship as the *"voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person of more significant experience and a person of lesser experience that is characterized by mutual trust and respect."* The assumption here is the mentor is of a higher rank and position. This theme describes the veteran cohort's experiences with the program. It is divided into three sub-themes--second-tier mentoring, structure, and coaching.

Sub-Theme: Second-Tier Mentoring

A sub-theme, second-tier mentoring emerged when respondents mentioned mentoring. The best way to describe this approach is to quote two respondents. "*Many of the UL mentors were very high up in their orgs, and that's really awesome, but for someone like me trying to break into management, a second tier of support would have been nice. So I guess, if the focus on the program is for transitioning vets, mission accomplished. Still, there is an opportunity there for vets to assist each other with mid-career advice or even career changes"* and "*Fellowshipping with other Veterans in the same situation I was working through was*

cathartic." Creating a two-tiered mentoring approach would assist both the veterans and UL

mentors in connecting, staying connected, and increasing time spent between the mentors and the

veterans. Furthermore, Question 17 responses specifically highlight mentoring as a Union

League program strength.

Figure 12.Program Strengths

Q17 What are the strengths of the program?

Networking one one mentor think

Establishing mentoring as a key feature in the structure of the program is critical. The

respondents, when asked about the strengths and challenges of the program, thirty percent of

respondents provided comments on mentoring and structure. For strengths - comments from

respondents were *"greatly enjoyed in-person meetings and one-on-one interactions and*

discussion" were the top comments, as well as the mentors introducing their mentees to other

club members. Question 16 reinforces mentoring with suggestions on how to make the program

better.

Figure 13. Program Improvement

Q16 Do you have suggestions on how to make the program better?

time project think business meet mentee cohorts keeping mentors
veterans members program relationship still

For challenges, respondents noted that they would like *"more one-on-one mentoring sessions and one-on-one interactions and arranging offline meetings with several mentors."* As well as more access to *"outside experts on issues covered in the program,"* and more structured hours the mentor.*"* Additionally, the comment was made that *"previous cohort members should be allowed to join current cohorts for broadening opportunities."* This comment can also be rolled into the second tier mentoring sub-theme.

Networking

Networking was the second most mentioned comment in questions 16 and 17. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines networking as *"the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business."* If only it were that easy to cultivate a productive relationship? Using a word cloud generator by MonkeyLearn, questions 16 and 17 comments were uploaded to generate a common picture of respondent comments.

Figure 14. Questions 16 and 17 word cloud generator

Common comments were *"more networking opportunities with other Union League members in the field and more integration with UL members and active time spent together."* Common networking strengths were *"building relationships, access to quality networking and mentorship, the networking itself, career development seminars and networking exposure to Union League members."* Thirty-three percent of respondents' comments in questions 16 and 17 referred to networking opportunities.

Question 18 building brand and professional presence.

Figure 15. Brand and Professional presence

Q18 In what way did the program help build your brand and professional presence?

need gave mentor much **helped** career Always program

Relationship Building

Relationship building emerged as a sub-theme under networking and was most prevalent when asked about brand and professional presence. In the Survey Monkey word cloud generator, "helped" was prominent but doesn't represent all comments in Question 18. Expressed another way through the MonkeyLearn word cloud generator when all Question 18 comments were uploaded - program, need, brand, and mentor are featured and formed an interactive cluster.

When referencing the program, respondents also tied in brand and commented *"It helped reinforce much of what I learned when I paired up with Cameron Brooks, a military transition*

placement firm. It also gave me insight into my own personal strengths and weaknesses," *"Broaden my vision of what my "Brand" could be, and some techniques to enhance it."* One respondent commented on the vagaries of branding in stating *"Not sure it really did "build my brand," per se 30+ years of active-duty service shaped/formed me - teaching an old dog new tricks is tough. I was probably resistant to "re-inventing" myself and not embracing what the program intended."* This is an interesting comment given that the majority of Union League Veteran cohort participants obtained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel with over 20 years of service. The comment above and the acknowledgement of highlighting strengths and weaknesses could be an indicator that second-tier mentoring is needed to assist in transition process. This is an opportunity that will be addressed in Chapter five.

When referencing need, respondents commented on how *"the need to position myself in any conversation to be an asset to those I met"* and *"allowed more networking with like-minded businesspeople, I saw some common needs and concerns that I could possibly address."* Additionally, one respondent commented that he was *"already established and "didn't need as much help."*

When referencing mentors, respondents commented *"I completely changed my career choice based on input from my UL mentors. I think I am MUCH more satisfied than I would have been in my intended career path"* and *"My mentor pointed me in the right direction professionally with contacts and advice."*

Figure 16. Question 18-word cloud

Question 19-In what way did the program help you transition from Service Member to Civilian? Brought some surprising responses. The theme that emerged from this question was people. In analyzing the comments, people referred to mentors and networking. Common comments were *"Building my network, meeting more people to network with, helped me see different people through the league and how they approach their fields and connections,* and *fellowshipping with other veterans in the same situation I was working through cathartic."* A notable comment from one respondent on the program was *"The program is now part of my "why did you become a financial advisor" discussion with every one of my prospective clients, actual clients, and co-workers. Absolutely pivotal."*

Conversely, not all respondents felt that the program helped in their transition specifically. Three respondents commented they had already transitioned and were employed. None the less, two of the three commented that the networking and mentorship were valuable.

Figure 17. Transition from Service Member to Civilian

Q19 In what way did the program help you transition from Service Member to Civilian?

civilian _{good} people _{program network}

Questions 22, 24, and 25 were additional questions used to elicit more insight into the transitioning veterans.

Question 22: In your opinion, what is missing from the DOD TAP?

As discussed in Chapter two, DOD TAP is a matured program, first enacted to assist veterans after the Desert Shield/Desert Storm (First Gulf War) in 1991. The response to this question yielded interesting comments. Six respondents declined to comment. Six respondents commented on program delivery. Specific comments include "*DOD TAP focuses on resume writing, interviewing, and VA Benefits. It is very linear and does not address how I am changing and how my environment is changing*" and *TAP would be improved greatly if some of the DOD Contractors and Hiring Managers from external firms came in to actually look for prospective employees.)… Most military personnel have limited knowledge of the "options" available for them. So, a discussion something like "based on what I know about you and based on your resume, here are 5-10 different things you might want to think about" i.e. a brainstorming session*. Four respondents commented how the program is just *"check-the-box"* program, coupled with three respondents each commenting on the program's inadequacy and one each respondent indicating that there is a lack of caring for the veterans and no opportunities in the program.

Table 9. DOD TAP Themes

Themes	n	%
N/A	6	27.27
Delivery	**6**	**27.27**
Check the Box	**4**	**18.18**
Inadequate	**3**	**13.64**
Lack of Caring	1	4.55
No Opportunities	1	4.55
Not familiar	1	4.55

Question 24: In your opinion, what are the leadership characteristics of high-performing veterans?

Figure 18. Veteran Leadership Characteristics

Nineteen respondents provided comments and four skipped. The above word cloud emphasizes integrity, discipline, and empathy as characteristics of leadership. Discipline was mentioned in five comments and integrity was mentioned with discipline in four comments. Specific comments *"were discipline, seeking to maintain a humble posture, ownership and accountability."* Other respondents directly tied discipline and integrity with *selflessness,*

adaptability, integrity, work-ethic, genuine interest in? The team…. Humble, open-minded,

integrity… In reviewing the above themes, the data revealed discipline adjacent synonyms such

as *work ethic, strong work ethic, emotional intelligence, and mission and task-oriented.* Problem-

solving also emerged as a theme when analyzing the comments. While respondents did not

specifically mention problem solving, words that were used, such as *listening, reading your*

environment and VUCA comfort can be attributed to problem-solving techniques. Other common

adjectives used by respondents were adaptable, humble, and empathy when describing leadership

characteristics.

Table 10. Leadership Characteristics of high-performing veterans

Variable	*n*	%
Leadership Characteristics of high-performing veterans		
Integrity	5	21.74%
Adaptable	5	21.74%
Humble	4	17.39%
Problem-solving	4	17.39%
Discipline	3	13.04%
Empathy	2	8.70%

Question 25 asked respondents if there was a question not asked in the survey. This

question yielded few answers as it was not required and will be addressed in Chapter 5.

In reviewing this program and trying to answer key research questions, there was a need

for a second survey specifically to focus on the mentors and how the mentors viewed the

program and interacted with their veteran mentees.

Union League of Philadelphia Mentor Survey

The second survey was administered to the mentors (see Appendix). The mentors in the Union League Veterans Cohort program serve two purposes – mentorship to veterans and the expansion of veteran networking opportunities. Surveying the mentors provided key insight into the program and added validity and creditably to the veteran survey data. The survey was sent to 31 mentors. Ten (32.25) respondents engaged with none actively declining.

In analyzing the data, there were respondents who served as mentors in multiple cohorts. Adding the number of cohorts that respondents marked serving as a mentor equals to 25 with two indicating they served as a mentor advisor. Questions three and four asked respondents about military service. Respondents are at a 60 percent (not served) and 40 percent (served). The forty percent all indicated they served in the United States Army.

Table 11. Mentor Demographics

*One or more mentors served in multiple cohorts
10 respondents, 0 skipped

Variable	*n*	%
Q1. Choosing to participate?		
Choose to participate	10	100
Choose not to participate	0	0
Q2. In what Cohort (s) did you participate?		
Cohort 1	*2	20
Cohort 2	*4	40
Cohort 3	*6	60
Cohort 4	*7	70
Cohort 5	*6	60
Served as an advisor to the cohort	2	20
Q3.- Did you serve in the Military		
Yes	4	40
No	6	60
Q4. What branch of Service?		
Army	4	40

Q5. How long have you been a member of the UL?		
0-2 year	0	0
2-5 years	3	30
5-10 years	3	30
10-15 years	0	0
15-20 years	1	10
20 years plus	3	3

The below table represents how the 10 respondents interacted with veteran cohorts. Seven out of the 10 served as mentors in two or more cohorts. Additionally, those who served as mentors multiple times, four indicated they had not served in the military and three indicated they had served in the military. Respondents three – eight make up the mentor majority with respondents three and seven serving in four cohorts. Military service and UL membership length of time were not major factors in mentors participating in the program. Respondents three and seven each participated in four cohorts with respondent three having military service and eight having no military.

Table 12. Mentor interactions with veteran cohorts

10 respondents, 0 skipped

Respondents							Military Service	UL Membership
1				Cohort 4			No	2 - 5 years
2					Cohort 5		Yes	2 - 5 years
3		Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Served as an advisor	Yes	5-10 years
4		Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4			No	20 years plus
5			Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5		Yes	2 - 5 years
6		Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5		No	15-20 years
7			Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Served as an advisor	No	5-10 years

8	Cohort 1	Cohort 2		Cohort 4			Yes	20 years plus
9			Cohort 3		Cohort 5			No	20 years plus
10	Cohort 1							No	5-10 years

Mentorship

Mentorship is a key theme in the veteran survey. Below is how the mentor respondents answered the Likert scale questions. Overall, the respondents were positive about their mentor experiences.

Table 13. Mentor survey questions

8 respondents, 2 skipped

Q9. How would you rate the mentor program?	*n*	%
Excellent	1	12.5
Very Good	7	87.5
Neutral	0	0
Good	0	0
Poor	0	0
Q10. How would you describe the quality of your experience?		
Excellent	3	37.5
Very Good	4	50
Neutral	1	12.5
Good	0	0
Poor	0	0
Q11. Would you volunteer to serve as a mentor again?		
Yes	7	87.5
Maybe	0	
No	1	12.5
Q12. Did the mentor training session help you prepare?		
Yes	7	87.5
Maybe	0	0
No	1	12.5
Q13. Do you think mentors need additional training?		
Yes	3	37.5

No	3	37.5
Some	1	12.5
What type of training	1	12.5
Q14. Were your mentor responsibilities clearly defined?		
Very clear	3	37.5
Moderately clear	5	62.5
Somewhat clear	0	0
Q15. How would you describe your relationship with your mentee?		
Very good	6	75
Good	2	25
Fair	0	0
Poor	0	0
Q16. Do you think the time spent with your mentee was sufficient?		
Yes	5	62.5
Somewhat	3	37.5
Not really	0	
Needed more time	0	
No	0	
Q17. How many sessions did you spend with your mentee?		
1-2 sessions	0	0
3-4 sessions	3	37.5
5-6 sessions	3	37.5
7-8 sessions	0	0
More than 8 sessions	2	25
Q18. Do you think the time spent with your mentee was helpful?		
Very helpful	5	62.5
Somewhat helpful	3	37.5
Neutral	0	
No really	0	
No	0	
Q19. Did you gain personally from the relationship?		
Yes	5	62.5
Somewhat	2	25
Neutral	1	12.5
Not much	0	0
No	0	0
Q20. Do you still remain in contact with your mentor?		
Yes	4	50

Sometimes	3	37.5
No	1	12.5

Question 21 – What was the biggest challenge (s) your Mentee struggled with?

Building a personal brand was the biggest challenge for the mentees followed by networking skills.

Figure 19. Mentee challenges from mentor perspective
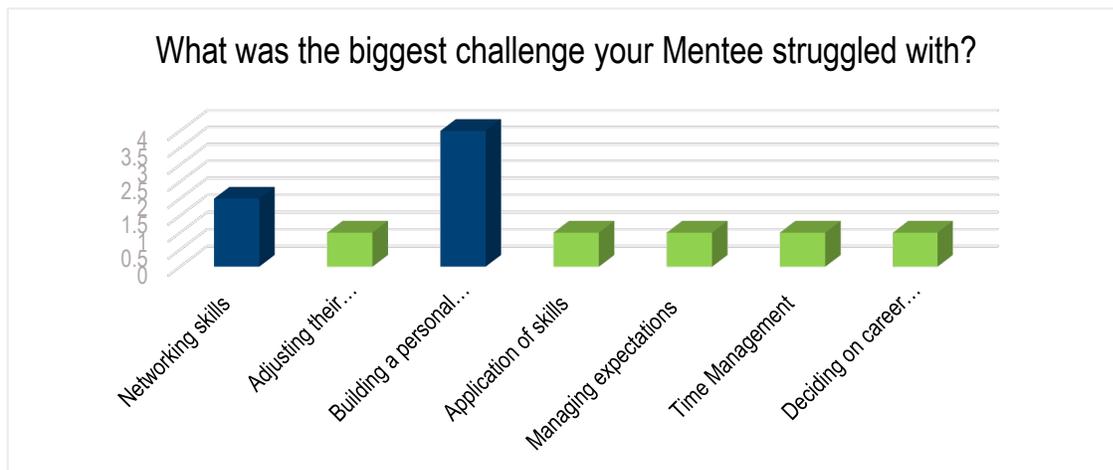
Questions six, seven, and eight asked respondents about the strengths, challenges, and what needed to be changed. The Survey Monkey word cloud highlights "helps" as a strength in Figure 18 but it doesn't tell the whole story.

Figure 20. What are the strengths of the program?

Q6 What are the strengths of the Veterans Cohort Program?

networking military Helps veterans country

Table 14 outlines all comments made by the respondent mentors. The mentors were clear on exposing their mentees to more networking opportunities which supports the data from the veterans survey and networking as a key theme for the program.

Table 14. What are the strengths of the Veterans Cohort Program?

10 respondents, 0 skipped

Respondents	What are the strengths of the Veterans Cohort Program?
1	Help those who served our country understand how their skills are transferrable to the civilian workforce. Helps our Vets be successful. Helps our country benefit from these people entering the workforce.
2	did not provide an answer
3	Networking opportunity A wealth of knowledge and advice provided by mentors practical information on interviewing and networking
4	networking for Veterans
5	did not provide an answer
6	Exposure of Respondents to networks of potential employers or clients. Much deeper and practical experience than what the military offers for transition. Targeted program for mid career professional track veterans.
7	Great leadership to advise and teach. Dedicated volunteers
8	Interactive experience
9	Helping veterans network with important contacts in Philly related to their business goals Giving us a chance to thank the military for what they have done for us and the country and to use that standing as they look to advance their careers. To help point out strengths of decision making, critical thinking, etc that they learned in the military that will help them in civilian business life
10	one on one coaching

Question seven addressed the areas needing improvement. Respondents, one, three, and nine comments are in line with the program taking a more structured approach. Respondents three, six, and seven indicated giving the cohort members access to more Union League members.

Table 15. Areas of Program Improvement

10 respondents, 0 skipped

Respondents	What areas of the program need improvement?
1	Putting the skills learned into practice, so they can see dynamics at work, and get feedback to reinforce and refine.
2	did not provide an answer
3	Better access to mentor pool other than assigned mentor
4	did not provide an answer
5	did not provide an answer
6	Post cohort member communications and engagement.
7	More league Respondents
8	All ok
9	Impetus for the mentee to reach out more to the mentor. I have not heard from my mentee since COVID closed all this down.
10	None

Question eight addressed areas needing change. This was an optional question. Eight of the ten respondents answered with respondent two stating the program should be "*scheduled on a Tuesday or Wednesday early evening.*" Respondent six commented "*Mentor training mandatory for all mentors in this transition context*" and Respondent seven commented the program need more *"speakers."*

Question 22 asked *"Is there a question I did not ask?"* For this question, there were only two comments. Respondent one asked *"should there be a post-graduation event or program?"* and respondent six commented on *"how does the program measure success?"*

Mentor Survey Summary

The mentor survey results supported the veteran survey in the three themes of program design, mentorship, and networking. In program design, respondents indicated scheduling changes, mentor training, and the need for more speakers suggesting the program needs more structure. Mentorship and networking were mentioned in ways of exposing the mentee to potential employers and broadening exposure to current Union league members. Networking and building a personal brand was wrapped into the areas of strengths and weaknesses but was most noted in question 21, mentee challenges from a mentor perspective.

Chapter Summary

This chapter summarizes the analysis of the veteran and mentor surveys. The data provides the connective tissue that identifies and supports three key themes extracted from the data - Program Design, Mentorship, and Networking. These themes are not new and often stand alone as major themes and subjects of training classes in schools and corporate programs. In looking at Veteran transition and specifically identity transformation, these key themes are the building blocks for a veteran transitional ecosystem with interconnecting parts. Addressed earlier in this chapter and in chapter 2, Ackoff states that a system must have interconnecting parts and cannot stand alone. This allows the system to move and generate growth and prevent stagnation. Program Design, Mentorship, and Networking provide the depth and breadth to scale and tailor a program that will lead to veteran identity transformation.

The extracted data highlighted the need for a better program structure and stressed that mentorship and networking were key themes in the discovery of self- rebranding and identity. Additionally, the key themes addressed and validated research question one in regards to identity and transition and research question three in regards to transitional programs assisting veterans. Research question two, identifying the leadership characteristics of High-Performing Veterans was answered in question 24 and will be addressed in Chapter 5.

Chapter five will present the summary of this study and its conclusions collected and analyzed from the data in Chapter 4. It will also open up a discussion and provide a point of view that is not often reflected in mainstream media. A person can smoothly exit the military and navigate through the many activities to successfully transition from an institutional-based model to an uncontrolled ambiguous system where the rules of engagement, behaviors, and beliefs are constantly shifting.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of this qualitative study and its conclusions collected and analyzed from the data in Chapter 4. It also opens up the discussion and provides a point of view that is not often reflected in mainstream media which is that a person can successfully exit the military and navigate through the many ambiguous transitional activities when supported with a thorough evidence based educational and experiential program. As a reminder, this dissertation does not focus on veteran homelessness, suicide, and other veteran challenges. This dissertation is focused on High-Performing Veterans and how identity is a factor in the transition process.

Review of the Problem

Our society generally doesn't recognize or separate HIPO-Veterans from the whole veteran population. All veterans are lumped in a group and normally only those with challenges and issues garner attention. The gap I found in the research is the unfamiliarity of and lack of interest in successful veterans. My intent is to show that even though veterans' identity is fractured at the time-of-service departure, there is a group of high-performers that, regardless of how they depart the military, they successfully face complex tasks to navigate themselves through transitional activities while adjusting their identity and still owning who they are.

The population sample for this study was the Union League of Philadelphia Veterans Cohort Program. Program participants were in the process of transitioning and/or transitioned

veterans and veteran mentors who were current Union League members. Twenty-four out of 51 veterans responded to the survey and 10 out of 31 mentors responded.

Answering the Research Questions and Hypotheses

The purpose of this qualitative study and program evaluation was to explore veteran identity and how veteran transitional programs play an important role in HIPO-Veterans successfully transitioning out of military service.

This study was anchored by three main research questions focused on HIPO-Vets and their transition journey, their self-identity, and their leadership competencies. My research questions are listed below:

RQ1. What role does identity play when High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) transition out of the military and into mainstream society?

RQ2. How do leadership characteristics of High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) fit into identity?

RQ3. How do current Veteran transitional programs assist High-Performing Veterans (HIPO-Vets) in their transition out of the military and into mainstream society?

My two Hypothesis are:

Hypothesis 1(H1): Veteran transitional programs will positively affect HIPO-Vets in their transition.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Veterans develop a new Self-Identity through the Union League of Philadelphia Fellowship Program.

RQ1 and RQ3. Identity is center-stage because it is who the service member is prior to transition – Soldier, Sailor, Marine, or Airman. It is our belief system and how we see ourselves to be and what we project in the world. Our belief system is molded through our military and leadership experiences. As discussed in Chapter 2, Avolio et al., (2004) argues that our self-identity is shaped through our experiences *"positive and negative events that can trigger deep changes in self-identity"* Avolio et al., goes on to argue that these changes also create *"alternate or possible selves"* (p.812). A simpler way to state the alternate self is the individual has learned and adapted themselves in their environment creating a projected image that is accepted and expected in the known environment.

In the Veterans Cohort Survey and through multiple open-ended questions, veteran cohort members indicated in Questions 18 and 19 that mentorship and networking in the transitional cohort program were vital in shaping and supporting the formation of a solid new identity in the civilian world (see figures 13, 14, and 15). When veterans leave military service and attend a transitional program, their military belief system is called into question. According to the survey respondents, the rebranding of identity is the core mission of successful transition programs and is accomplished by adherence to the combined structure of program design, mentoring and networking. Identity shifts are vital for veterans exiting the military. What was once an accepted reality is not always in line with the new environment and a transitional program that acknowledges a change in identity to compete and win in the civilian environment will assist veteran participants in forming a new identity while still respecting the former. As is

stated in the program name, veterans are not only physically transitioning from one environment, military, to another, civilian, they must psychologically transition from one identity to another in order to successfully compete.

So, we can state affirmatively that Identity does play a critical role in the transition (RQ1) and the programs positively and simultaneously address both the physical requirements for transition as well as the psychological requirements (RQ3).

RQ2 is specific to career transition. Veteran respondents commented that integrity, adaptable, humble, problem-solving, discipline, and empathy (Table 10) are HIPO-Veteran leadership characteristics. These characteristics can be viewed as examples of the veteran's leader/follow event experiences where the veteran learned the above attributes and molded their leadership style to achieve success. This molding shapes their identity and how they are perceived. Participants confirmed that understanding the skills, attitudes and behaviors of leadership honed in the military and adapting them to a civilian workplace affords the veteran the access to the practical competences attractive on a resume and gives the veteran the confidence of a set of assets with which to show up at interviews and ultimately land the job.

My hypotheses are statements of belief and have been confirmed by this study. The data collected and analyzed shows that a structured program can develop into an ecosystem and can substantially enhance outcomes, expectations, and program success that support H1 and H2.

Program Design

Program design is the base for the Union League Fellowship Program and is the most important component. Structure is in everything we do and without it, we cannot measure our progress or define our measures of success. Veteran Cohort and Mentor respondents commented on structure in all three emergent themes.

Program design provides the guardrails with a malleable structure for the beginning of an ecosystem. In Chapter 2, I defined Systems thinking and provided Ackoff's definition of a system in that its parts cannot stand alone and there must be growth and change that flows through the system. In this context, the Union League provides a venue and platform for the foundation, the guardrails serve as boundaries that allow an ecosystem to flourish and change with growth. The system then becomes enduring instead of episodic.

Mentorship

Mentorship is the second key component of the Union League program. Veterans and mentee respondents hold mentorship and its value in high esteem. Without mentorship, the veteran's cohort members would not have the tools or confidence to network.

In Chapter 4, I stated that question 25 on the Veterans survey will be addressed – "Is there a question I did not ask?" First, this question yielded no valuable data except for one comment. A respondent noted that creating a second-tier mentor could comfort the veteran, especially if the mentor holds a C-Suite position. Additionally, a few respondents noted that there was an intimidation and an availability factor with mentors. In contrast, one respondent stated that since mentors were at a higher level, having mid-level mentors or former cohort

members serving as mentors will help address more tactical questions, enhance the learning process, and ease transitional stress. If a second-tier or mid-level mentor is added to this program, it will create a feedback loop from the high-level mentor to the mid-level mentor to the veteran. Additionally, if the mentor and mentee are not a match, the mid-level mentor could assist in easing the tension and finding a way to connect the mentor and the veteran.

Networking

The final component. Networking ties everything together and it's a blending of program design and mentorship. Thirty percent of veteran respondents enjoyed the one-on-one meetings and interactions with their mentors as well as introductions to their mentor's connections at the Union League.

Model Applications

Bringing it all together with the CAST model (Figure 8) and the recommended Union League Veterans Fellowship Program (ULVFP) delivery model (Figure 10) creates a new model where both are combined to achieve optimal results for veteran cohort members. The below model expands structure out to include the CAST components. During a change, "Calmness" is needed to filter out the noise of change and the unknown. It allows a person to look at an issue clearly. When we combine calmness with structure, an environment with guard rails begins to form for the veteran. Calmness is above the line and sits with structure. Below the line is "Assurance," giving confidence. This is tied to mentorship and second-tier mentoring. Veterans are often uneasy about transition and providing multiple levels of mentorship can provide confidence and knowledge of the unknown. "Stability" is above line after structure and heading towards identity. Structure provides stability and, coupled with calmness, assurance, and

mentorship, allows for better relationship opportunities and the expansion of one's network. "Tangibility" is below the line with assurance. When an individual reaches this phase, one can almost touch and feel their rebranded identity.

While the models can be used separately, together, the models provide a better awareness for a service delivery program that is measurable and scalable.

Figure 21. CAST and ULVFP Combined
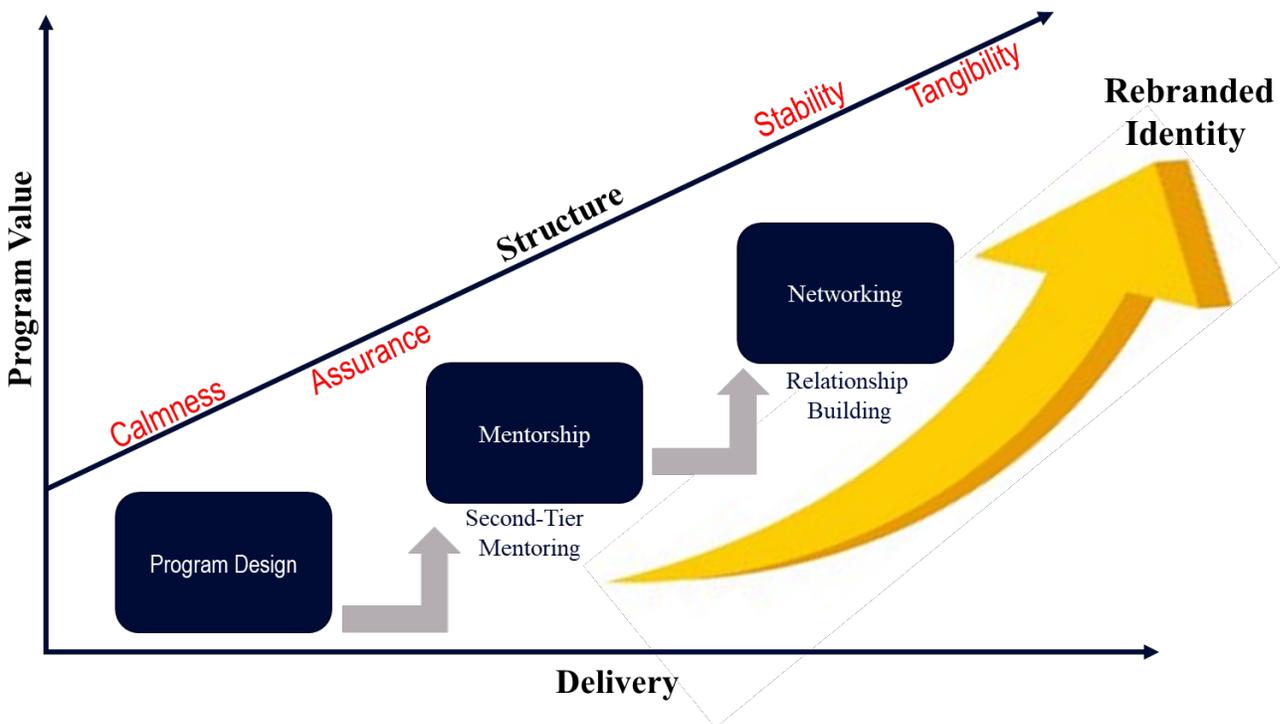
Next Steps

The Union League of Philadelphia Veterans Cohort Program is positioned to implement changes within the program to achieve its desired outcomes. By following the model (Figure 20) and implementing suggestions collected from the data, this program will become sustainable and a model for other organizations to replicate. My suggested next steps are:

- Find a better suitable time for the Mentors and Veterans instead of Monday evenings.

- Establish second-tier mentoring. Reach out to former cohort members to potential mentors and pair with the high-level mentors

- Establish a mentor training program for current and potential members. Bring in veteran experts and former veteran cohort members to assist in understanding where the veteran mentee is and how best to assist.

- Open up the pool of mentors to the veteran cohort. This will provide cohort members the opportunity to reach out to the mentor for additional coaching and mentorship.

- Establish pre-cohort veteran and mentor surveys. The data collected will show where veteran and mentee are prior to starting the program.

- Establish post-cohort veteran and mentor surveys. This data will show and help evaluate the impact of the program and perceptions of the veterans and mentors. When compared with the pre-cohort surveys, the data will show the veterans and mentors satisfaction level, growth from the beginning of the program to the end and will help make decisions about future cohort structure.

Limitations of the Study

1. There were several limitations to this qualitative study. I addressed a key limitation in Chapter two regarding the limited amount of data on high-performing and successful transitions out of the military.

2. The study focused on one program and one geographic location, the Greater Philadelphia Area.

3. This study did not account for the economic environment at the time of transition, the specific industries most advantageous to the experiences of veterans, and the unique cultural characteristics of the delivery organization such as Union League of Philadelphia, and the gender, race, creed, and mobility were not factored into this study and are critical to consider.

Implications for practitioners and researchers

This study provides a window into high-performing veterans and the lack of literature and research. War is a fact of life. Kaisha Langton, a reporter for the UK Express cited as of September 2021, that 174 countries were currently in an armed conflict. According to the Armed Conflict and Event Project, from October 12th, 2021, through January 7th 2022, there were 6,422 total events (war, clashes, and conflicts with rebel, and or state forces) which resulted in 12,819 fatalities. War and conflicts are a fact and regardless of country and uniform, people who join their nation's military service voluntarily or through conscription will experience transitional stress coming out of the uniform. As a researcher, I believe it is important to study other programs for common denominators.

TAP does not focus on how our accepted military identity may no longer be valid or validated in the civilian context. For the most part, the military solely focuses on providing basic transitional services such as resume writing, translating your military skills into language hiring recruiters can understand, as well as, how to dress appropriately for interviews and attempts to discuss the importance of networking. Additionally, there are a plethora of non-profits and veteran organizations that attempt to provide the same services. What is missing is the critical

piece, "our identity" and the emotions surrounding the veteran. Imagine, one day you are leading

a group of Soldiers, responsible for highly sensitive equipment worth millions of dollars, and in a

short amount of time, you are interviewing with a person who has zero knowledge of the military

and looks at you like you are a foreign object, both speaking English and not understanding one

another.

According to Geertz humans create *"webs of significance"* (Geertz, 1973, p.5). These

webs form our cultural basics of accepted behaviors, norms, beliefs, and values. The acceptance

of cultural norms makes up our identity and self-worth. Veterans face negative stereotypes in the

civilian sector. In 2013, a Fortune 500 magazine reporter stated that one in three companies

considered Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a major determent, along with rigidity and

always following orders, when hiring a veteran (Lewis, 2013). Six years later (2019) veterans are

still seen in a negative light, PTSD comes to mind with employers as well as perceptions of

veterans being too rigid and not creative enough (Nagorny and Pick, 2019, Department of

Veterans Affairs).

We need to change the transitional process at the DOD level and change the perception of

a veteran. In the next section, I will offer recommendations for future research in how a small

study can have strategic impacts on the lives of veterans and their families.

Recommendations for Further Research

- **Making TAP Better, Scalable, and Agile**

There are several recommendations for future research. This study provided a window into

one program on how HIPO-Veterans view the transitional process and their sentiment on the

importance of structure, mentorship, and networking.

- Further research could result in the DOD taking TAP to a new level and outsourcing portions of the transitional process to structured programs throughout the United States, incorporating mentoring, networking, and identity reformation as a critical factor in transition. In this researcher's opinion, I would advocate for the DOD to act as a Board of Directors and require veteran transitional programs to gain certification and adhere to a specified curriculum.

- Second, the DOD would have access to data that currently isn't available or not dependable from programs who operate independently. In turn, this data could lead to future research to on boarding of future service members to required training and programs while the service member is serving. The data collected over time could be used to continuously update TAP making it a scalable and agile program.

- Third, the data collected from a population of HIPO-Vets who have successfully transitioned could be used to help out the veteran population with suicide, homelessness, job sustainability, and other challenges. Loss of identity may be a contributing factor to suicide, veteran jobless rates, and homelessness. Strengthening a person's identity may helpful. The lessons learned from successful transitions could be used as interventions and possibly assisting at-risk veterans.

- This study is based on the American military using US-based statistics. It would be interesting to see how other developed nations such as Canada, The United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand transition their service members. A study would provide an additional lens into how our Allies off-board their veterans. It

would be an interesting study to compare and contrast the statistics to strengthen

the US Veteran transition process.

- o Lastly, transitional programs could be widened to include spouses and family
members. When veterans transition, the veteran is not the only one who
experiences a loss of identity. Spouses and family members are tied to the
veteran, their rank, and their status.

- **Organizational Change Management Models**

In Chapter two, I examined transitional theories, Organizational Change

Management (OCM) models, and change leadership theories. Each of the models talked

around identity, but never addressed nor attributed identity as a component to change.

Developing the CAST model forced me to think outside the box. As an Organizational

Change Management Consultant, I am familiar with customers and clients gravitating

towards popular models to implement change. When I started researching this topic, I

took the Prosci certification class for work. In chapter 2, I referred to Prosci's ADKAR

methodology when linking it to Greer's Framework. As I have moved through this paper,

I've discovered that I could have used ADKAR as an outline to show how a person can

move through the stages of transition using an organizational change management model.

I believe it would make for an interesting topic to apply this methodology and design a

transitional program using the ADKAR methodology. The ADKAR methodology is one

example that a future researcher could use to build a veteran transition model to address

change and identity during transition.

- **Replication**

Replicating the Union League of Philadelphia Veterans Cohort model would bring structure to any veterans program. This is a service program that depends on veterans knowing about the program and trusting the program outcomes. Repeating this study in one or multiple veteran service programs would provide invaluable data on how HIPO-Veterans successfully navigate transition. This in turn could assist researchers in adjacent fields to use and/or modify the model in Figure 20.

- **Role-Exit Theory and how it may pertains to Veterans**

Role Exit Theory is interesting. This theory *"emphasizes the impact of previous role identification on current concepts of self"* (Ebaugh, p.182). In this paper I referenced Ebaugh (1988) and her book on *Becoming an Ex, The Process of Role Exit.* Ebaugh references numerous occupations with institutionalize settings such as religious orders (ex-nuns) and the prison system (ex-convicts). She doesn't reference the military and how role exits affect service members exiting out the service. When this book was written, it was 1988, we were still in the Cold War era, and two years prior to Desert Shield/Desert Storm, and TAP wasn't created for exiting service members until 1991.

Given our Post 911 environment, it would be interesting for researchers to add to the body of knowledge in Role-Exit Theory and examine military role entrance and exits and how the two affect a person's self-identity.

Concluding Remarks

While the United States is not currently on a war time footing, we still have 200,000 veterans transitioning each year. Additionally, we have a saying in the Armed Forces – we are always fighting our previous war. This comment can be applied to the veteran transition process, which is a highly personable and tailored transition. Getting the foundation set now, conducting more research and outsourcing much of TAP to organizations who demonstrate a structured approach that leads to the veteran and family members understanding VUCA, CAST, and identity formation through a structured program will prove dividends and may shed more light on the more serious veterans' issues we are experiencing today.

Appendix A
Union League Veterans Fellowship Survey

Introduction

Thank you in advance for your answers on this ANONYMOUS survey. This research is being conducted to gather and learn information about the Union League of Philadelphia Veteran's Fellowship Program and how it helps high-performing veterans transition out of the military and into civilian life. The reason we would like your participation in this survey is so we can better understand if the program and its delivery model are currently benefiting the graduated cohort members and how the program could continuously improve on its success and best serve future transitioning veterans.

Your honesty and openness are important. If you agree to participate, this online survey will take about 15-20 minutes to complete. There are NO right or wrong answers. Do not worry about spelling, grammar or typos. Please check the first box to confirm that you agree to participate and understand that this survey is completely anonymous, and data **gathered from the survey cannot be linked back to any individual.**

The results of this survey will be wrapped into a dissertation being written by COL (Retired) Teresa Wolfgang, a graduated member of the first cohort. COL (Retired) Wolfgang is pursuing her Doctorate of Management in Strategic Leadership from Thomas Jefferson University. The dissertation once completed will be made available upon request.

All responses are anonymous and the primary researcher, COL (Retired) Teresa Wolfgang) will only have access to the raw data.

1. I agree to participate and understand that this survey is completely anonymous
    a. I choose to participate
    b. I do not choose to participate

Demographics

2. What year did you enter the Service?
    a.

3. What Branch did you serve in?
    a. Army
    b. Navy
    c. Air Force
    d. Marines
    e. Coast Guard
    f. Army Reserve

g. Army National Guard
h. Navy Reserve
i. Marine Reserve
j. Air Force Reserve
k. Coast Guard Reserve
l. Other (please specify)

4. What was your component?
   a. Active
   b. Reserve
   c. National Guard
   d. Combination of Active Duty and Reserve
   e. Combination of Active Duty and National Guard
   f. Coast Guard

5. What year did you depart/retire from your Service?
   a.

6. What was your rank upon departure?
   a. 01-02
   b. 03
   c. 04
   d. 05
   e. 06
   f. General Officer
   g. E1-E4
   h. E5-E6
   i. E7
   j. E8
   k. E9

7. Did you retire? If not, what was the reason for your departure?
   a. Yes
   b. No

8. If you did not retire, what was the reason for your departure?
   a. NA/Retired
   b. Wanted a new experience

c. Did not get promoted
d. Did not like the Military
e. Family Reasons
f. Wanted a new career
g. Accepted into school
h. Moved too much
i. Too many deployments
j. Term Completed
k. No Reason
l. Other (please specify)

9. Prior to leaving the Military, did you have employment lined up?
    a. Yes
    b. No

10. Prior to leaving the Military, were you accepted into a school?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. N/A

Union League Experience

11. When did you attend the Union League of Philadelphia Veterans Fellowship Program?
    a. Cohort 1
    b. Cohort 2
    c. Cohort 3
    d. Cohort 4
    e. Cohort 5
    f. Other please specify

12. How did you hear about the program?
    a. Former cohort member
    b. Friend
    c. Union League Member
    d. Advertisement
    e. Other
    f. Please specific

13. What was your experience with the delivery model?

a. Do not like
b. Somewhat liked
c. Neutral
d. Enjoyed
e. Very much liked and enjoyed the delivery model

14. Do you feel your mentor and you were a good match?
    a. Very Good
    b. Good
    c. Fair
    d. Poor
    e. Please explain your response

15. Are you and your mentor still connected?
    a. Yes
    b. Sometimes
    c. No

16. Do you have any suggestions to make the program better?
    a.

17. What are the strengths of the program?
    a.

18. In what way did the program help you build a brand presence?
    a.

19. In what way did the program help you transition from service member to civilian?
    a.

20. Would you recommend the Union League Program to veterans?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Other (please specify)

21. Other than the Union League Program and TAP, did you attend/seek advice from other Veterans Transitional Programs?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Thought about seeking advice
    d. Other (please specify)

22. In your opinion, what is missing from TAP?
    a.

23. Do veteran transitional programs assist high-performing veterans in their transition?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Somewhat
    d. Partially
    e. Other (please specify)

24. In your opinion, what are the leadership characteristics of high-performing veterans?
    a.

25. Is there a question I did not ask?
    a.

Appendix B

Union League Veterans Fellowship Mentor Survey

Introduction

Thank you in advance for your answers on this ANONYMOUS survey. This research is being conducted to gather and learn information about the Union League of Philadelphia Veteran's Fellowship Program and how it helps veterans transition out of the military and into civilian life. The reason we would like your participation in this survey is so we can better understand if the program and its delivery model are currently benefiting the graduated cohort members and how the program could continuously improve on its success and best serve future transitioning veterans.

Your honesty and openness are important. If you agree to participate, this online survey will take about 15-20 minutes to complete. There are NO right or wrong answers. Do not worry about spelling, grammar or typos. Please check the first box to confirm that you agree to participate and understand that this survey is completely anonymous, and **data gathered from the survey cannot be linked back to any individual.**

The results of this survey will be wrapped into a dissertation being written by COL (Retired) Teresa Wolfgang, a graduated member of the first cohort. COL (Retired) Wolfgang is pursuing her Doctorate of Management in Strategic Leadership from Thomas Jefferson University. The dissertation once completed will be made available upon request.

All responses are anonymous and the primary researcher, COL (Retired) Teresa Wolfgang) will only have access to the raw data.

Demographics

1. I agree to participate and understand that this survey is completely anonymous
   a. I choose to participate
   b. I do not choose to participate

2. In what Cohort (s) did you serve as a Veteran mentor?
   a. Cohort 1
   b. Cohort 2
   c. Cohort 3
   d. Cohort 4
   e. None
   f. Served as an Advisor
   g. Other (please specify)

3. Did you serve in the military?
   a. Yes
   b. No

4. If you answered yes, what Branch of the Military?
   a. Army
   b. Air Force
   c. Navy
   d. Marines
   e. Coast Guard
   f. Did not serve

5. How long have you been a member of the Union League?
   a. 0-2 years
   b. 2-5 years
   c. 5-10 years
   d. 10-15 years
   e. 15-20 years
   f. 20 years plus

Union League Experience

6. What are the strengths of the Veterans Cohort Program?
   a.

7. What areas of the program need improvement?
   a.

8. What aspects of the mentor program would you like to improve?
   a.

9. How would you rate the mentor program?
   a. Excellent
   b. Very Good
   c. Neutral

    d. Good

    e. Poor

10. How would you describe the quality of your experience as a mentor?
    a. Excellent
    b. Very Good
    c. Neutral
    d. Good
    e. Poor

11. Would you volunteer to serve as a mentor again next year or in the future?
    a. Yes
    b. Maybe
    c. No
    d. Please Explain

12. Did the mentor training session help you prepare for your Veteran mentoring experience?
    a. Yes
    b. Somewhat
    c. No

13. Do you think the mentors need additional training?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Some
    d. What type of training?

14. Were your mentor responsibilities clearly defined?
    a. Very Clear
    b. Moderately Clear
    c. Somewhat Clear
    d. Very Unclear
    e. If not clear what was left unclear

15. How would you describe your relationship with your mentee?
    a. Very Good
    b. Good

c. Fair
d. Poor

16. Do you think that the time you spent with your mentee was sufficient?
    a. Yes
    b. Somewhat
    c. Not Really
    d. Needed More Time
    e. No

17. How many sessions did you spend with your mentee?
    a. 1-2 sessions
    b. 3-4 sessions
    c. 5-6 sessions
    d. 7-8 sessions
    e. More than 8 sessions

18. Do you think that the time you spent together was helpful for your mentee?
    a. Very Helpful
    b. Somewhat Helpful
    c. Neutral
    d. Not Really
    e. No

19. Did you gain personally from this relationship?
    a. Yes
    b. Somewhat
    c. Neutral
    d. Not much
    e. No

20. Do you still remain in contact with your mentee?
    a. Yes
    b. Sometimes
    c. No

21. What was the biggest challenge (s) your mentees struggled with?
    a. Networking Skills
    b. Adjusting their Leadership Skills
    c. Building a Personal Brand
    d. Communicating with Others
    e. Resume Writing
    f. Interviews
    g. Other (please specify)

22. Is there a question that should have been asked?
    a.

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