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Shifting personal agency during transition from military to civilian workforce

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SHIFTING PERSONAL AGENCY DURING TRANSITION FROM MILITARY

TO CIVILIAN WORKFORCE

A Research Project

Presented to the Faculty of

The George L. Graziadio

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

in

Organization Development

_____

by

Sara B. McNamara

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This research project, completed by

SARA B. MCNAMARA

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been

submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The George L. Graziadio School of Business

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MASTER OF SCIENCE

IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study examined US enlisted veterans' personal agency during their transition from the military to civilian workforce. Veterans currently working in a civilian corporate environment were involved: 41 were surveyed, 10 were interviewed, and 80 supplied comments to the researcher's LinkedIn request for responses. Participants were asked to describe their sense of personal agency and how it evolved over the time period before, during, and after military service. Participants offered slightly varying descriptions of their transition experience. In general, participants experienced low agency before military service, minimal agency at the start of military service that grew over time, and an unprecedented and sometimes paralyzing degree of freedom and agency after military service. Transitioning veterans are thus advised to understand that the psychological transition process is complex, increase their competencies through cultural immersion experiences and field research, maintain a learning mindset, and build a relevant and committed support team.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

There are three phases to military transition, beginning with the starting point as a civilian. The first phase is civilian life. Prior to enlisting in the military, individuals enjoy all the freedoms and human rights that are inherent in the American culture. As employees, they have the freedom to leave at any time, and in most states employers can terminate employment at will. All citizens have the right to adapt to the culture or create communities that align with different cultural values. Personal development happens naturally over time with incremental shifts based on age and a relatable peer group. Generally, survival as a civilian is dependent on self-awareness, learning and the ability to make choices.

The second phase is military service. The U.S. military is a 100% volunteer force. Members identify as members of their selected branch of the US Military Service. For many, these roles serve are the first real job experience. This is important because most 18-year-olds have not yet developed into fully functioning adults, who are comfortable making decisions that influence their lives (Arnett, 2000). They are essentially untrained adults.

Serving in the U.S. military is voluntary. Military employment requires a temporary legally bound contract that, according to anecdotal accounts from service men and women gathered in preparation for this study, requires whole body and mind transformation and integration. Careers can last decades but can also end abruptly. Desertion is punishable by law.

Boot camp is an immersion experience into an all-inclusive destination that offers minimal choices, beginning with transportation to the Recruit Depot for bootcamp.

Recruits don't have to decide when to get off the bus or which pair of yellow footprints to stand on. There was no uniform selection to choose from, haircut styles to select, or even what to say, and when to say it. There has never been a recruit who was unclear about who was in charge, and what his or her responsibilities were. He knew whom his peer group was and never worried about where to go for lunch. For recruits, all basic needs including compensation, medical care, entertainment, and support are met. For some, this may create a sense of organizational commitment, given the recruit's dependence on the military employer (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Success in the military requires a disintegration with most facets of self. One of the few choices the recruit has to make is to survive boot camp training and initiation into the military. They don't need to make choices, they are required not to make choices, and survival is based on not making choices. As Disposable Warriors (2017) states:

> They are now in a strict and regimented environment where they are afraid, where every trainee looks the same, where they are constantly yelled at and ordered to do things they don't want to do by strangers who don't care who they are or where they came from, and where they are broken down as individuals in order to be rebuilt from the ground up, physically and emotionally, as a team or unit.

The choice is limited to how to react in order to survive. Despite the stories of hardships and abuse, nearly 90% of recruits graduate boot camp and earn the title of a U.S. serviceman or woman. Disposable Warriors (2017) further states: "They are broken down as individuals, their past civilian lives stripped away, and they are transformed from directionless teenagers into Soldiers, Marines, Airmen, and Sailors."

The physical location for cultural immersion can be found on a map. All recruits travel by plane or bus to a designated location. The lifestyle and the cultural container include room and board, education, fitness regimen, healthcare, community, peer group, and purpose. Boot camp fulfills all of a recruit's basic needs as outlined by Maslow

(1943). Training concludes with a celebratory graduation parade, and a status change from Recruit to service man or woman. At that time, membership is granted in the tribe-like community.

After boot camp, all recruits go to their specified work station. MSgt Don Huston, USMC RET (2017) pointed out:

> During active duty careers, Marines have a choice to excel and strive for self-improvement, achieve qualifications and certifications, build credibility and be competitive or get passed by their peers. Most want to achieve at a higher rate, get promoted, increased responsibility, and respect.

Military communities are self-contained, and family systems often grow to include a spouse and one or more dependents. Whole families serve when one parent wears the uniform. Military spouses oftentimes identify themselves as the rank and status of their husbands and uphold that rank in the community and in social events. A dependent and indebted relationship forms between the service man or woman and the overarching organization (Redmond et al., 2015).

During their career, military personnel adapt to the collectivist and hierarchical society of the military culture after having little to no experience as a civilian adult or employee. Many veterans had never completed a job application prior to their first job post service. During active duty, for many, there is little to no exposure outside the military base. Geographic locations of the base relative to hometowns and the frequent relocations make familial and other social relationships difficult to maintain. The result is isolation from civilian society, resulting for some in lack of direction when it is time to leave the military. Several veterans have voiced this sentiment. D. Jones (January, 2017) shared, "The only life I've ever known is Navy. For me, [civilian life] is entering into an alien world I've only heard about in stories." J. McNeal (personal communication,

February 17, 2017) shared, "The biggest issue I see is that vets don't know what they want to do because they don't have experience in the private sector."

The third phase is transition back to civilian life. There is no boot camp for the transition into the civilian culture. There is not an equally dramatic experience within a defined environment for the reintegration of self and a transfer of membership back into society. The Department of Defense SkillBridge Program provides a variety of Transition Assistance Programs (TAP) for pre-transition assistance through skills-based training, classroom-based education and career planning workshops. However, this kind of specific assistance is the equivalent of an introductory course during boot camp on how to use a weapon during a conflict where the impact of the battlefield is omitted. Based on anecdotal accounts from veterans in preparation for this study, most attended mandatory transition workshops held on base, which generally were led by personnel with limited work experience in the private sector. According to the accounts, these workshops generally did not adequately prepare veterans for the civilian workforce due to the content and the timing of the assistance. Very few of the transition courses include cultural immersive experiences, strategies for, or practice in meeting the expectations they would face in the private sector. Most veterans the principal researcher spoke with reported surprise about the dynamic environment and unpredictable nature of human interaction they encountered. While learning the anatomy of a (rifle) and how to write a resume are important steps to prepare for the new environment, there is a great deal more to experience before knowing how and when to best utilize those resources.

The integration into the military includes exposure to the whole culture where rules and norms are clear and understood. Getting out is entirely different. Military to civilian transition is disconnecting from dependency and a familiar way of life. Similar to

adolescents who leave home for the first time, leaving the military requires the individual to physically detach from the controlling organization or system and for the first time, depend on oneself to make personal choices that influence their life. Transition means releasing the comprehensive support available to them in the military (e.g., housing, healthcare, meals, employment) and forging an independent life where they must meet these needs on their own. CWO3 Eric Wojahn, USMC RET, said that 3 months prior to leaving service after over 25 years, "I am more afraid of transition than I was when I drove away on the bus headed for boot camp" (December 3, 2016, personal communication).

Military to civilian transition is a multi-faceted process that involves leaving one community or family system before membership in a new community is confirmed. Feelings of loss are typical, and some may experience the stages of grief, as defined by (Kubler Ross stages). During this period of physical and emotional detachment, individuals are required to re-define themselves and connect with their own desires and personal capabilities.

Further, they are required to learn and adapt to the current society, one that is different from the one they left behind on the way to boot camp training years earlier. Society has evolved, people and communities have grown in all directions. Friends and family members have matured in different ways based on their own experiences over time. While one person had attended college and earned promotions based on individual merit in a civilian job, the other may have gained education and experience in remote global locations, focused on accomplishing a mission and keeping people alive over self-promotion. This diversion of life experiences makes it difficult for transitioning veterans and civilians to relate and reestablish prior relationships.

Most young adults learn self-reliance, social skills and increase their emotional intelligence levels in college or during their early careers while integrating into the professional communities as young civilian employees.

Not only have the environment and the people evolved, but the service member has changed as well. They re-enter civilian society transformed with a point of view based on their personal experience and training in the military causing the beginning of the culture gap. After service, the experience of losing community and identity, being isolated from a familial peer group and having to adapt to a new environment with little or no experience in exercising personal choice makes survival a complicated task for many veterans.

The central problem in the military to civilian work transition is in de-programming and shifting personal power and agency back to the individual. This shift must occur to be successful. Reclaiming personal power and self-agency when conditioned to suppress it is a central issue in military-civilian transformation (Neumann, 2000). For individuals, survival in the civilian world means having the ability to fulfill one's own basic human needs. Additionally, being employed and leading a satisfying, engaged, purpose-driven life seems to be dependent on self-awareness, cultural competencies, skills, and other traits, all of which might be underdeveloped, under-recognized and underutilized by people reintegrating after years of military service, based upon the researcher's conversations with veterans in preparation for this study.

Civilian culture does not exist in a container or between borders as military culture does. It does not have physical boundaries, an aligned vision, a clearly defined purpose and set of predictable behavioral norms. It is not a destination, and there is not a

stable all-inclusive environment in which employees can develop their careers according to a pre-determined path.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the evolution of US military veterans' personal agency during their transition from the military to civilian workforce. Two research questions were examined:

1. What are veterans' descriptions of their transition experience?

2. In what ways did veterans' personal agency evolve from the period before their military service to the period after their service?

Significance of the Study

Gathering in-depth and personal accounts of the lived experience of transition provides new knowledge in the following four areas:

1. Discover the point or triggering event in which personal agency was rediscovered for transitioning service members.

2. Identify or uncover causes of resistance to demonstrating agency during or after the administrative transition

3. Measure the impact of the personal agency on securing civilian employment and culture fit

4. Provide data points for employers to consider relative to retaining their veteran workforce

Additionally, this study is anticipated to fill gaps in the current body of research related to how employers can emulate the outcomes of boot camp and retain veteran employees and how employers can attract veterans and become transition partners. The findings from this study hope to lead to successful inclusion and retention initiatives and targeted recruiting, onboarding, and retention campaigns for veterans and all diverse employee populations.

Moreover, leaders in DOD TAP programs may gain insights on the benefits of establishing closer ties to the business community and employers may explore ways to support ongoing veteran transformation.

Organization of the Study

The chapter discussed the study background and purpose. Its significance and potential contribution also were presented. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on personal agency, military work culture, civilian work culture, and the transition from military to civilian work life. Chapter 3 describes the research methods used in the study. Specifically, the research design and procedures for participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis are outlined. Chapter 4 presents the study results. Chapter 5 offer a discussion of the results, including conclusions, recommendations, limitations, and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to examine the evolution of US military veterans' personal agency during their transition from the military to civilian workforce. For this study, "personal agency" refers also to "self-agency." The following sections discuss personal agency, military work culture, civilian work culture, and the transition from military to civilian work life.

Personal Agency

Personal agency is a central theme in Albert Bandura's (1986, 1989) social-cognitive theory. Agency includes self-assertion, self-protection, self-expansion, self-control, and self- direction (Bakan, 1966). An appreciative definition by Adams-Wescott, Dafforn, and Sterne (1993) states that "people experience personal agency when they internalize conversations about themselves that reflect the richness of their lived experience" (p. 261). Personal agency reflects the ability to have control over one's destiny and take responsibility for their well-being. The components of self- agency are competence, self-efficacy, freedom of choice, sociocultural and physical environmental restrictions.

Regarding competence and self-efficacy, Bandura (1982) states that any account of human action must include "self-generated influences as a contributing factor" (p. 1175). He goes on to state that "among the mechanisms of personal agency, none is more central or pervasive than people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives" (p. 1175). Self-efficacy is defined as a personal judgement of "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations. Waters and Sroufe (1983) say, "The competent individual is one who is able to

make use of environmental and personal resources to achieve a good developmental outcome" (p. 81).

Individuals who have high self-efficacy will exert sufficient effort that, if well executed, leads to successful outcomes, whereas those with low self-efficacy are likely to cease effort early and fail (Stajkovic, 1998). Bandura (1982) demonstrated that individuals' beliefs in their abilities to make an impact on their world are better predictors of future behaviors than their past behaviors.

Bandura (1990) states that, "Individuals who believe themselves to be inefficacious are likely to effect little change even in environments that provide any opportunities. Conversely, those who have a strong sense of efficacy, through ingenuity and perseverance, figure out ways of exercising some measure of control in environments containing limited opportunities and many constraints" (pp. 337-338).

Regarding the importance of freedom of choice, a capacity to initiate a purposeful action does not imply agency unless it is associated with "will, autonomy, freedom and choice" (Kangas et al., 2014, p. 34). To have a sense of self-agency, one must do something of his/her own volition (Kumpulainen, Lipponen, Hilppö, & Mikkola, 2014).

At the same time, enacting personal agency can be limited by forces of the larger system. The interrelatedness of the sociocultural and physical environments impacts the influence and one's intent to express agency. Dominant societal discourses, oppressive social structures, power imbalances and assumptions relating to gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status can restrict one's personal agency (Blow & Piercy, 1997). People produce their environment, and they are also partly the products of their environmental circumstances (Bandura, 1993, 2000). Embedded social values influence people's ideas, values and intentions as well as avenues for the expression of agency (Bandura, 2001;

Ryan & Deci, 2000). Gibson (1979), one of the founders of the ecological psychology movement, argued "the environment is not a collection of causes that pushes the animal around, but consist of action possibilities, which he coined affordances" (p. 87). Affordances can alter personal intentions and expressions of one's personal agency.

Development of personal agency. A basic sense of self-agency over behavior seems to be already established in early infancy and is further developed during the first years of our lives when people start distinguishing between the outcomes of their own actions and outcomes caused by other agents (Brownell & Carriger, 1990).

Central to the idea of personal agency is the concept of goals. Explicit outcomes and goals refer to stated desires, plans, objectives, and something to achieve or acquire from the physical or sociocultural environment. Implicit outcomes are implied, understood, and suggested based on sensory pre-activation (priming). Self-agency is a pervasive experience that people infer from what they do and what the reactions or outcomes are. Inferences arise from an explicit goal-directed process as well as an implicit outcome-priming process (Aarts, Ruys, & van de Weiden, 2013; Van der Weiden, Ruys, & Aarts, 2013).

Self-agency experiences are essential to self-perception and social interaction (Walker, Kestler, Bollini, & Hochman, 2004). People infer self-agency from their purposes to engage in behavior (i.e., goals), as well as from environmental cues that activate the representation of an outcome before it occurs (e.g., due to priming). Adams-Wescott et al. (1993) state that "people experience personal agency when they internalize conversations about themselves that reflect the richness of their lived experience" (p. 261).

When people have a goal that they aim to achieve, their attention and behavior is directed toward that specific goal (Aarts, 2012). Goals are important because they provide a current reference point that focuses people's attention on the specific intended outcome. They also shield the focal goal from potential interference deriving from other possible associated outcomes and motivate people to monitor progress toward goal achievement.

Goals are strongly attuned to successful as well as unsuccessful outcomes because both success and failure are important aspects of learning, decision making, and performance in the service of goal achievement (Aarts & Elliot, 2012).

People generally expect their actions to be successful in producing intended outcomes, and the causal ambiguity in the situation at hand allows them to ascribe authorship to other external agents (Custers, Aarts, Oikawa, & Elliot, 2009; Shepperd, Malone, & Sweeny, 2008).

Experiences of self-agency are influenced by goals through an inferential process in which attention is focused on one specific outcome (i.e., the intended outcome) and which incorporates both matching and mismatching outcome information. Matching outcome information refers to situations where the outcome of a specific action reflects the goal (the intended outcome). In such cases, self-agency is strengthened. Mismatching outcome information refers to situations where the outcome of a specific action does not satisfy the goal (the intended outcome). Mismatching tends to erode the individual's sense of self-agency.

There are two inferential routes to experience self-agency. First is multilevel action perception (Pacherie, 2008) derived from intentional action. Research suggests that motor predictions only affect experiences of self-agency when relevant actions and

outcomes are learned to be causally related, that is, when people can predict the sensory consequences of an action. Second is optimal cue integration (Synofzik, Vosgerau, & Lindner, 2009). Cognitive inferential cues are derived from outcome priming. Inference effects as a result of previews of outcomes even occur when no relevant causal knowledge is acquired (Van der Weiden, Aarts, & Ruys, 2010). Action execution and, accordingly, motor prediction cues are more important for goal effects on agency than for priming effects.

For example, when one has the explicit goal to cheer someone up by making funny faces, one may not experience self-agency over the other person's cheerfulness if one has done nothing to cheer that person up (i.e., when one has not made a funny face). Yet, when merely being primed with cheerfulness one may experience enhanced self-agency over the other person's cheerfulness without having done anything to cheer that person up. Primes are more capable to cause agency inferences without action or motor movement (Moore, 2011). Motor movement may be required to yield goal effects on agency.

Importance of personal agency. The experience of self-agency has emerged as an exciting and important challenge for the understanding of human self-perception and volition. People infer self-agency from their purposes to engage in behavior (i.e., goals), as well as from environmental cues that activate the representation of an outcome before it occurs (e.g., due to priming).

Crucially, previous research did not take into account that goals and primes are different in terms of operations that specifically pertain to goals, such as attention, monitoring and shielding (e.g., Custers & Aarts, 2010), properties that may influence inferences of self-agency, especially when outcomes are incongruent with goals or

outcome-primes. Self-agency experiences are essential to self-perception and social
interaction (Walker et al., 2004). Table 1 presents how priming, matching, and
mismatching affects agency.

Table 1

Impacts of Priming, Matching, and Mismatching

Mode outcomes	Congruence	Variable	Impact on inferences of agency
Prime: Pre-activated	Match		Increase, same a Goal
Prime: Pre-activated	Mismatch	Degree of mismatch	No change, NA
Goal directed: Observed	Match		Increase, same as Prime, self attribution
Goal directed: Observed	Mismatch	Degree of mismatch	Decrease, highly relevant. Includes a feedback and monitoring process,
Goal directed: Observed	Partial		Increase

Adapted from Van der Weiden, A., Ruys, K. I., and Aarts, H. (2013). A matter of
matching: How goals and primes affect self-agency experiences. Journal of Experimental
Psychology: General, 142(3), 954-966.

These results illustrate how matching and mismatching tend to strengthen or
erode the sense of self-agency. Outcome primes only render the representation of the
outcome accessible and do not necessarily launch a monitor and feedback process that
checks whether the outcome was successfully accomplished. In other words, only when
the pre-activation of the outcome is accompanied by a goal-directed mode of processing,
people generally check whether their actions are congruent or incongruent with the
outcome they had in mind. Matching goals and primes enhanced experienced self-agency
to the same extent.

Consciousness does not seem to explain the differential effects of goals and
outcome primes on experiences of self-agency over matching and mismatching out
comes. Goals are not necessarily more relevant or influential than primes when it comes

to inferences of self-agency. Only when goals mismatched with observed outcomes did they differ from primes in shaping experiences of self-agency.

Self-attribution, showing that people over attribute successful (matching) outcomes to themselves and unsuccessful (mismatching) outcomes to others. Research on self-attributions has provided motivational and cognitive explanations for when people resort to such self-serving attributions (Shepperd et al., 2008). Goals are strongly attuned to successful as well as unsuccessful outcomes because both success and failure are important aspects of learning, decision making, and performance in the service of goal achievement (Aarts & Elliot, 2012).

Importantly, in the light of experiences of self-agency, recent research suggests that successful and unsuccessful outcomes only affect motivation, emotional regulation, and performance when people attribute these outcomes to themselves (Neumann, 2000).

The work discussed above may offer new insights for research on goal achievement and agency by exploring how the mode of preactivation of outcomes (prime vs. goals) impacts on self-agency experiences and downstream consequences for emotion and motivation. Outcomes that mismatch on a semantic level also affect self-agency differently for goals and outcome primes. Accordingly, they have different impacts on agency, depending on the outcomes. Mismatching outcomes additionally have a differential impact on experienced self-agency, depending on whether these outcomes mismatch with a goal or an outcome prime. That is, experienced self-agency depends on the extent to which an activated outcome representation matches the actual outcome (i.e., consistency principle).

Van der Weiden et al. (2010) hypothesized that as the actual outcome mismatches to a greater extent, experienced self-agency decreases in a different manner for goals than

for outcome primes. That goal evoke control processes dealing with attention to and monitoring and feedback processing of the specific desired outcome, we hypothesized that in case people have a specific goal in mind, experienced self-agency decreases immediately, regardless of the degree of mismatch. That is, any mismatch lowers the sense of agency. However, when primed with a specific outcome as part of other possible outcomes, activation may spread to the other outcomes and may thus result in a less specific inference process.

Hence, a match may be detected between the activated representation of an outcome and the actual outcome to the extent that the actual outcome is associated with the outcome prime, thereby enhancing experienced self-agency over outcomes that in actuality mismatch the outcome prime.

Therefore, van der Weiden et al. (2010) hypothesized that when there is no goal but only an accessible representation of the outcome due to priming, experienced self-agency will decrease more gradually and approach baseline levels of agency as the association between the outcome and the outcome-prime decreases.

Varying degrees of mismatching affected experienced self-agency in a different way when participants had a goal to produce a specific outcome than when they were merely primed with the outcome. The experience of self-agency dropped steeply and remained low when the goal mismatched with any of the other possible outcomes. However, priming a specific outcome caused a gradual decrease in self-agency as a function of the distance between the observed outcome and the primed outcome. That is, whereas outcomes that mismatch a person's goal instantly decreased experienced self-agency, outcomes that mismatch a primed outcome could even enhance experienced self agency. Consequently, agency is considered central to goal setting and performance.

Organization Culture

      Characteristics. According to Schein (1996), organizational culture is "the set of shared, taken-for granted implicit assumptions that a group holds and that determines how it perceives, thinks about and reacts to its various environments" (p. 236). It's important to note that culture includes subcultures: organizational cultures and subcultures which are theoretically isomorphic because both of them influence behavior through shared, social normative cues (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996). Due to the theoretical homogeneity and definition as a group-level construct (Schein, 1996, 2004), we uniformly refer to both levels of culture as organizational culture. Organizational culture is a key ingredient of organizational effectiveness (Denison & Mishra, 1995; Kotter & Heskett, 1992) and can be a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1986). Culture is a collective's values and beliefs the social normative expectations that inform members how they ought to behave. (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). Behaviors (e.g., participating, taking risks, being aggressive, adhering to rules) subsequently affect employees' attitudes and tangible work output.

      The Competing Values Framework (CVF) is used as the model for studying four distinct work cultures and the opportunities to experience personal agency. The Competing Values Framework model was chosen because it is an organizational culture taxonomy widely used in the literature (Ostroff, Kinicki, & Tamkins, 2003).

      Measures of organizational culture that directly or indirectly assess the CVF have been administered in over 10,000 organizations globally (Cameron, Quinn, DeGraff, & Thakor, 2006) within the following academic disciplines: management, marketing, supply-chain management, accounting, social services, hospitality, and health care. The

four organizational culture types in the CVF are: clan, adhocracy, market and hierarchy. Dimensions of focus and structure overlay to define the four cultural types comprising the CVF: clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy. The focus dimension differentiates effectiveness criteria that emphasize internal capabilities, integration, and unity of processes from those that center on an external orientation and differentiation. The structure dimension differentiates effectiveness criteria that focus on flexibility and discretion from criteria that emphasize stability and control.

The clan culture type is internally oriented and is reinforced by a flexible organizational structure. Human affiliation within the organization results in positive affiliation with the organization. This means that clan "organizations succeed because they hire, develop, and retain their human resource base" (Cameron et al., 2006, p. 38). A core belief in clan cultures is that the organization's trust in and commitment to employees facilitates open communication and employee involvement. Consequently, clannish organizations value attachment, affiliation, membership, and support (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). Behaviors associated with these values include teamwork, participation, employee involvement, and open communication. These values are expected to promulgate the outcomes of employee morale, satisfaction, and commitment (Cameron & Ettington, 1988). A clan culture's strategic thrust of collaborating is driven by values of attachment, affiliation, trust, and support (Cameron et al., 2006). Within the clan culture, members work in teams, participate in decision making and communicate openly. The outcome of this inclusive environment is a desirable collective employee attitudes because they create a sense of ownership and responsibility (Denison & Mishra, 1995).

The adhocracy culture type is externally oriented and is supported by a flexible organizational structure. A fundamental assumption in adhocracy cultures is that change

fosters the creation or garnering of new resources. Autonomy, a central value in adhocracy cultures, is a motivating work characteristic that indirectly enhances unit members' attitudes toward the organization (Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). A fundamental belief in this culture is that idealistic and novel visions induce members to be creative and take risks. Adhocratic organizations value growth, stimulation, variety, autonomy, and attention to detail (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). Behaviors that emanate from these values include risk taking, creativity, and adaptability. Consequently, these means are predicted to cultivate innovation and cutting-edge output (Denison & Spreitzer, 1991).

The market culture type is externally oriented and is reinforced by an organizational structure steeped in control mechanisms. According to the CVF, an assumption underlying market cultures is that an achievement focus produces competitiveness and aggressiveness, resulting in productivity and shareholder value in the short and immediate term (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). The primary belief in market cultures is that clear goals and contingent rewards motivate employees to aggressively perform and meet stakeholders' expectations. Therefore, market organizations value communication, competence, and achievement. Behaviors associated with these values include planning, task focus, centralized decision making, and articulation of clear goals. These means are hypothesized to result in a company beating its competitors, achieving its goals, improving product quality, and enhancing its market share and profitability (Cameron et al., 2006). Market cultures foster positive collective employee attitudes when units achieve goals. Group members derive satisfaction from attaining goals because the culture provides valuable extrinsic and/or intrinsic rewards (Maier & Brunstein, 2001).

The hierarchy culture type is internally oriented and is supported by an organizational structure driven by control mechanisms. As shown in Figure 2, a core assumption in hierarchical cultures is that control, stability, and predictability foster efficiency. A predominant belief in hierarchy cultures is that employees meet expectations when their roles are clearly defined. As a result, hierarchical cultures are hypothesized to value precise communication, routinization, formalization, and consistency (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). Behaviors that result from these values include conformity and predictability. These means in turn are expected to promote efficiency, timeliness, and smooth functioning (Denison & Spreitzer, 1991).

The CVF suggests that culture types consist of a combination of the organization's focus and structure. They possess unique sets of behaviors, values, beliefs, and assumptions that influence the organization's attention and effort to attain distinct organizational ends. Finally, Agency, or competence in Frank et al.'s terminology (Frank et al., 1988), refers to the more social–cognitive theorizing that defines autonomy as competence and self-governance. In this sense, Agency reflect the possibility of self-directed behavior. This involves attitudinal, emotional, as well as functional aspects, and is associated with high self-reliance in the adolescent (Beyers, Goossens, Vansant, & Moors, 2003).

Impacts on personal agency. Problems occur when people, for various reasons, have restricted access to their personal resources. Circumstances may restrict their freedom, or they may believe their freedom is restricted (Blow Piercy, 1997). One factor that impacts personal agency in civilian culture is level of efficacy, meaning whether people believe they have the capabilities needed. Positive reinforcement of exercising

personal agency include outcomes may result in competitive advantage, career progression; job satisfaction. These build confidence, resilience.

Level of access to agency include control over outcomes (Performance based compensation), control over or restriction, freedom to choose, protection by employment laws, social discourse, freedom to leave (at-will employment), social awareness, diversity and inclusion, and recognized financial benefits of diverse workforce encourage companies to encourage personal agency more. Awareness of opportunities of advancement, and self-determination.

The modern workplace culture offers flex work schedules, technology advances and mobility tools that allow for more choices, and therefore more opportunities to influence outcomes. These cultures also allow freedom of expression, protection by workplace laws- for diverse populations; wide range of opportunities to demonstrate skills, continuous learning, ongoing agency by interacting with the complex environment; and expectation to express of agency when working in groups, work towards potential. Possibilities also exist to interact with external environment, advances in technology, autonomy, social media as platform, and collaborative nature of workforce

In Clan cultures, employees voice opinions, employee surveys, performance reviews, mentors, teambuilding activities, commitment. These cultures are positive due to flexibility, focus on the people and their alignment with the organization. Open communication, involvement. Consequently, clannish organizations value attachment, affiliation, membership, and support (Cameron & Quinn, 1999).

In Adhocracy cultures, employees express creativity, innovation, advance skills, career exploration, dynamic environment, personal growth, safety in failure, open, fast paced, empowerment, decision making opportunities.

In Market cultures, employees get to of skills, achieve agency through winning and accomplishments, shared agency through team goal achievement, performance based incentives, recognition for personal contribution. Low decision making, working towards assigned goals.

In Hierarchical cultures, employees generally are not involved in making business decisions, hiring and supervising subordinates, budget management and spending decisions, or defining of mission. However, managers do generally participate in these activities.

Military Work Culture

Characteristics. The military work culture is unique and distinct from non-military cultures. Common artifacts in military work cultures include uniforms and insignia, gated community, equipment, vehicles, signage, personal grooming standards, awards, certificates, ceremonies, flags, language, symbol, mottos ("The Screaming Eagles") and mascots, songs and music, photography and literature, celebrations (Marine Corps Birthday cake), Eagle Globe and Anchor symbolism, historical figures (Chesty Puller) and places of origin (Tun Tavern), defined leadership traits, and distinctive code of justice. Other common artifacts are presented in Table 2 (B. McNamara, personal communication, December 12, 2017).

The military services, which are part of the DoD, consist of five armed forces: Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Coast Guard (housed within the Department of Homeland Security, but assigned to the DoD during war/deployment). The military creates uniformity by emphasizing core values that become an integral part of military culture and experience, and service members possess shared experiences, languages, and symbols (Moore, 2011; Soeters, Winslow, & Weibull, 2006).

Table 2

Military Work Culture Artifacts

Cultural Concept	Examples
Exclusive Membership	• Operates within a secured, bordered, self-contained community • Uniforms, rank insignia are worn by all members • Unit pride is symbolized through group naming "The Screaming Eagles" • Recruitment messaging based on a sense of belonging and challenge • Membership status extends to spouses and dependents. Sword ceremony at weddings signifies membership for the bride.
Communication protocol	• Language, thousands of acronyms and phraseology- MOS, MARSOC, "What's your 20?" • Terms of endearment – "Devil dog" coined by the Germans during the Battle of Belleau Wood, "Leatherneck" a piece of an original uniform.
Organization structure and culture type	• Hierarchical • Collectivist • Authoritative
Brand allegiance	• Aura of exclusivity, prestigious and mystery to non-members. • National recruitment campaigns- "The Few, the Proud, The Marines." • Reinforced and glorified in the media through photography, recruitment campaigns, media, film and literature. • Recognized as an elite community by highest ranking civilian government leaders- "Most of us wonder if we will make a difference in this world. The Marines don't have that problem." President Ronald Reagan • US President presents the Medal of Honor award to recipients • Annual message delivered worldwide from the Commandant
Rules and cultural norms	• Values driven- honor courage commitment, trust, integrity • Defined leadership traits, guiding principles are taught and upheld by every member • Order and justice is upheld by a unique legal system (Uniform Code of Military Justice UCMJ). • Common protocol exists for customs and courtesies-saluting, addressing officers. • Standards and social etiquette guidelines are enforced for physical appearance, personal hygiene and fitness levels
Sustainability over time through ownership	• Every Marine has two birthdays, the day they were born, and the day the Marine Corps was born. • Marines are not considered employees, former or ex-Marines- they are Marines. Status of membership doesn't go away when the contract ends. • Awards are presented posthumously, when necessary to honor the fallen and the Marine family.
Pride through traditions	• Founding date is recognized and celebrated as a birthday and honors the history of the Corps. • Traditional cake is presented with a ceremonial sword-cutting involving the oldest and youngest Marines present. • Music and performance- Silent Drill Team and Drum and Bugle Corps performance tours • Medal of Honor recipients, Chesty Puller and other fallen Marines are idolized by their gallantry, intrepidity, devotion above and beyond the call of duty. • Tun Tavern, Philadelphia, PA recognized as the birthplace

Source: B. McNamara, personal communication, December 12, 2017

Military culture is known for its hierarchical organizational structure, framework, and rules. As a workplace, it achieves its goal of creating a mission ready force through socialization, structure, discipline, and constant training. The culture is determined by both the individual and the military environment. It is a product of the social environment and includes a shared sense of values, norms, ideas, symbols, and meanings (Soeters et al., 2006).

Culture distinguishes groups of people from another and people within cultures often share common ways of seeing the world (Soeters et al., 2006). However, every person's culture is comprised of a fusion between his or her different boundaries, such as professional, organizational, and national, and this cultural mixing appears in the social identity. One feature of the culture is integration perspective, which is how the military uses organization and training to minimize individual differences.

Despite efforts to integrate, personal differences remain between enlistees, in gender, sexual orientation; social class, race and ethnicity, and age (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). Differentiation perspective examines specific military cultural subgroups, including guardsmen, reservists, military spouses, and wounded warriors.

A unique aspect of military culture is that military personnel are bound by military laws, regulations, traditions, norms, and values that differ from civilians. The Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) outlines military specific laws intended to maintain the requisite level of good order and discipline, conceptualized as the chain of command, which categorizes military service.

Good order applies to the rules and laws needed to maintain a society and discipline allow one service member authority over another. The UCMJ is a distinguishing feature of the military culture as compared to the civilian culture, in that

authorities are granted by law (vs. voluntary). Military personnel must follow lawful orders and directives or violate the law and in doing so commit a criminal act. Both ceremonial acts of discipline, such as shoe shinning, salutes, uniforms, as well as functional discipline where service members follow rules and orders of commanders are deeply embedded within the military culture (Soeters et al., 2006). Both acts require obedience and subordinance.

The military is an intimidating hierarchy with elaborate rules, power classification, regulations, and a vertically steep grade (Soeters et al., 2006). In the hierarchical system, ranks and grades determine who is in charge. This rank/grade system indicates position, pay, and authority in the military.

Those whose military and personal lives are greatly entwined become highly institutionalized. Those who see the military as a means to an end will remain connected to the outside world. However, those seeing the military as a means to an end likely remain oriented to their occupation and focus attention outside the military (Redmond et al., 2015).

Some service members join the military already identifying with the culture, whereas others develop such an identity following military socialization (Moore, 2011; Soeters et al., 2006). The Marine Corps socializes new recruits through exhaustive military training known as basic training or boot camp, where leaders deconstruct the recruits' civilian status and give them a new identity. The recruits go through a harsh physically and emotionally exhausting process (Moore, 2011; Jones, James, & Bruni, 1975; Soeters et al., 2006). Recruits are exposed to new norms, language, codes, and identity. Group identity formation is accomplished by cutting hair, common dress, suffering, eating, exercising and bunking together, as well as isolation from friends and

family. Leaders emphasize that only the elite make it and encourage recruits to learn to control their emotions. After this training, recruits show greater commitment to the military (Soeters et al., 2006).

Having a Warrior Ethos mindset is a group of values that all U.S. armed forces aim to instill in their members. This mindset emphasizes placing the mission above all else, not accepting defeat, not ever quitting, and not ever leaving behind another American (Wong, 2005). Each military branch has a unique creed and set of values (e.g., loyalty, commitment, and honor), that help set expectations of what it means to be a warrior (Riccio, Sullivan, Klein, Salter, & Kinnison, 2004).

Instilling this mindset in all service members is crucial for maintaining a highly effective and committed force by encouraging individuals to think and behave in ways that show perseverance; responsibility for others; motivation by a higher calling; and ability to set priorities, make tradeoffs, adapt, and accept dependence on others (Riccio et al., 2004). Self-agency experiences also occur in everyday social interactions that are limited by the environment and that occur without much conscious intent and thought (Van der Weiden et al., 2013). Nonstop training and self-improvement, engagement civically and in the community, health, and personal responsibility are all stressed by the military (Kelty et al., 2010). Obedience, discipline, self-sacrifice, trust, and courage are also identified as key military values (Collins, 1998;) which demonstrate the importance of looking out for the team's wellbeing above that of the individual (Howard, 2006).

The team includes the spouse as an extension of the individual. Spouses adapt as influential observers to their spouse's military career are included in the military community. Their role is recognized as critical in the health and wellbeing of the active duty personnel. Spousal ranking- protocol and respect transfers to the spouse- senior

ranking spouses will receive the same level of respects as her husband would (Redmond et al., 2015).

Cultural dynamics can alter during times of war and peace. During peacetime the military focuses on training and maintenance and boredom can be rife, but during wartime the focus is on courage, fear, control, and us vs. them mentality with collective, strong, and cohesive culture being important (Moore, 2011; Soeters et al., 2006).

The military's principal occupation is war fighting. DOD Youth Polls' data revealed seven themes related to enlisting: fidelity, risk, family, benefits, dignity, challenge, and adventure (Eighmey, 2006). Fidelity and dignity emerged as two leading themes and not surprisingly the number of individuals enlisting increased after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks (Department of Defense, 2012). Another study by Woodruff, Kelty, and Segal (2006) identified the following four themes for enlisting: institutional (desire to serve your country, patriotism, and desire for adventure/challenge); future-oriented (desire for a military career and money for college); occupational (desire to support one's family, best available option); and pecuniary (ability to repay college loans and receive an enlistment bonus). Those serving for institutional values are more likely to choose the military as a career and believe in service to their country, whereas material incentives are a stronger motivator for others (Eighmey, 2006; Griffith, 2008; Woodruff et al., 2006).

Impacts on personal agency. As indicated, the military culture is collective, so outcomes cannot be outwardly attributed to individuals. Successful and unsuccessful outcomes only affect motivation, emotional regulation, and performance when people attribute these outcomes to themselves (Neumann, 2000).

Individual capabilities and creative talents can be underutilized because of the narrow job scope (Military Operational Specialties) assigned. Competence in these other areas cannot be tested, or demonstrated, leaving a narrow opportunity to experience agency through an assigned role.

There is limited opportunity for personal agency in military work cultures, the focus is on shared agency experiences. Most military personnel work in groups of two to three individuals and are assigned leadership roles early in their careers which further limits opportunities to experience personal agency (Neumann, 2000). In the Marines, one's assigned career field is depicted by a four-digit number referred to as an MOS, or military operational specialty. The number depersonalizes and defines the individual according to the specialty, such as in the phrase, "I'm an 0311" (translates to Infantry Rifleman). Additionally, military culture instills "esprit de corps," the intangible spirit that lifts men above themselves for the good of the group (Marine Corps Association & Foundation, 2018).

Control over self (as dictated by the environment) and control of self (self-regulation) and emotional regulation are exercised as survival mechanisms to ensure lower level needs are met (Maslow, 1943). Having little opportunity to make a selection negatively impacts personal agency experiences and there is seldom more than one way of doing anything without tremendous sacrifice to career and personal survival.

Hierarchical leadership structure and the protocol that supports the chain of command make empowerment behavior a detriment to the discipline and good order of the military workforce. A career in the military provides a career map that can be easily planned for and navigated.

Surprisingly, goals are seldom authored by the individuals, therefore goal achievement has little impact on experiences of agency. Inferences of self-agency follow from a monitoring and feedback process that is instigated by a goal-directed state of mind. People become more motivated after success when people choose their own goal than when people are assigned a certain goal (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2000). Table 3 presents Maslow's hierarchy of needs as they are fulfilled in both civilian and military work cultures, based on the researcher's informal conversations with veterans in preparation for this study.

Table 3

Needs Fulfillment in the Military

Needs				Civilian	Military
Basic	Physiological	Food, water		For the most part	Yes
	Safety	Family, health, resources, property, health		For the most part: at-will employment, stability	Yes
Psychological	Love, Belonging	Friendship, family, intimacy		For the most part depending on work, colleagues & varying levels of commitment to organization	Yes
	Esteem	Confidence, respect, being respected, self-esteem, achievement, prestige		Possible for the most part depending on specific work environment	Individual esteem broken down and rebuilt through group level competencies.
Self-fulfillment	Self-Actualization	Reaching potential, Creativity, problem solving, acceptance of facts, purpose		If aligned with the organization	Yes- because there is no self.

Note. Based on the researcher's informal conversations with veterans in preparation for this study

Identity is redefined as a military service member, from a civilian to a Marine.

Orientation is redefined from self to team based. The outcomes of these factors that may

impact personal agency on military personnel include having a sense of learned

helplessness, maladaptive passivity, defeatist attitude, emotional numbing, disassociation,

and detachment. Choice impacts many aspects of social behavior, such as cognitive

dissonance and persuasion, reactance or indifference to specific treatments, and interest

in a specific task (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Transitioning from Military to Civilian Work Culture

Based on anecdotal conversations and working as a program manager for

transitioning veterans in the years leading up to this study, the researcher assembled a

general process of transitioning from military to civilian work environments (see Table

4). The process includes several steps. Step 1 is the administrative transition.

Table 4

Administrative Transition

Transition Tasks	Outcomes
Decide to retire, separate or release from activity duty	Confirm End of active service (EAS) date. Begin pre-transition period. 3-24 months in advance of contract end date.
Determine city of residence and housing	Establish civilian home
Complete all admin tasks	Documentation complete for DOD
Complete all required appointments	Cleared medical release- required prior to separation.
Complete Transition counseling, individual transition plan (ITP)	Basic level transition support, counseling and workshops
TAP DOD Skill Bridge- skills, training and internships	Gain skills, training, certifications, civilian work experience prior to separation
Career search-job fairs, resume and interview workshops	Gain some exposure to civilian culture and career opportunities
Manage the transfer of medical, dental, educational, financial benefits, VA ratings	Removal of military identity and security
Turn in all military gear and equipment	DOD recovers assets
Pick up form DD214	Defense Discharge approval form marking the official date of separation

Note. Based on the researcher's anecdotal conversations and working as a program manager supporting
transitioning veterans in the years leading up to this study

Step 2 is taking the road into civilian employment. This involves emotional, environmental, social, and personal activities. These steps are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Road to Civilian Employment

Area	Tasks
Emotional	• Detach from the military- de-idolization process • Experience alienation from loss of status, stability, identity, community • Increase learning agility, cross-cultural competencies
Environmental	• Establish primary residence, home purchase and/or relocation • Adapt to civilian lifestyle and technological advances
Social	• Adapt to civilian work culture- language, dress, norms, overcome biases, levels of ambiguity, structure • Attach to a community • Learn and navigate the job search process, utilize resources
Personal	• Identify individual strengths, stories and transferable and non-transferable skills • Build professional network, learn and use social media platforms • Identify career opportunities, apply for jobs • Interview preparation & coaching • Offer letter and salary negotiation

Note. Based on the researcher's anecdotal conversations and working as a program manager supporting transitioning veterans in the years leading up to this study

The transition continues after the job offer. The process of individual transformation is an evolution and ongoing. During this time, the employee gathers new skills, abilities and interests will emerge over time through exposure and awareness. The focus is on needs fulfillment find purpose and continue service as a civilian. Within the framework of "endings," Bridges (2004) identifies five fundamental tasks one must master in order to successfully move to the next chapter. They are disengagement (separation from the familiar), dismantling (letting of what is no longer needed), disenchantment (discovering that certain things no longer make sense), disidentification (reevaluating one's identity) and disorientation (a vague sense of losing touch with one's reality).

Several shifts in personal agency need to occur for military personnel to successfully transition from the military to civilian workforce (Beyers et al., 2003).

Deciding to leave military service is frequently by choice and is the first self-serving act since signing their military service contract. Transition to civilian employment requires a shift in personal agency in detaching from the military, learning about the civilian culture and integrating into the workplace.

In the detachment phase, the steps are:

1. Deciding to end military career-make decision, begin the ending process

2. Closing military career involves administrative tasks to manage situational and lifestyle changes. Emotional closure is important and feelings of sadness and loss should be expected. Detachment (vs. disconnection) involves losing the identity, community, and prestige they have cultivated in the military. They also need the courage to step into the unknown, trust their instinct and capability to succeed, and experience personal agency.

Based on the researcher's anecdotal conversations and working as a program manager supporting transitioning veterans in the years leading up to this study, in the learning phase to beginning civilian life, the veteran builds cross-cultural competencies, self-discovery, self-awareness and needs fulfillment. Psychological transition begins after the military life ends and results in fears, insecurity when personnel have to have the courage to "not know." It is a time for preparation work and education to gain competencies in the civilian culture. During this phase, they need to expect ambiguity and begin to adapt to performance-based cultures where at-will employment is the nature of the employment contract. During this phase, they need to have courage in humility. They are starting over, learning, and going through a potential period of temporary incompetence. They need to seek mentors, role models, and leaders. To succeed in this phase, they need to be open to all opportunities and ask for help.

In the integration phase, personnel are immersed into the new culture and begin assimilation and connection to new community. Self-reidentification and for some, the

process of grief and loss begins. Learning agility, humility and having a learning mindset are important success factors during this phase. Integration and assimilation occurs, while personnel shift from serving others to serving themselves.

Based on the researcher's anecdotal conversations and working as a program manager supporting transitioning veterans in the years leading up to this study, this involves taking the risk of self-promotion, serving their own interests and needs, and taking credit for results. To do this successfully, they need to be themselves, be relatable, likeable, and voice opinions. They also need to be open to opportunities and have a learning mindset. They also will need to accept control and decision-making authority and take credit for individual contributions. These perspectives were confirmed through comments posted to the researcher's LinkedIn page soliciting veterans' experiences in preparation for this study.

The organization culture impacts transition success during the integration phase, as previously discussed, the environment impacts the expression of agency.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature on personal agency, military and civilian work cultures, and the transition from military to civilian work life. This study strives to fill gaps in understanding the definition and factors that impact self-agency for non-military civilians. An overview of the military culture, and descriptions of four culture types refereeing the Competing Values Framework (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). The military into civilian employment highlighted the complexities of the situational, cultural and psychological stages of the transition into the civilian workforce.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine the evolution of US enlisted Marine Corps veterans' personal agency during their transition from the military to civilian workforce. Two research questions were examined:

1. What are veterans' descriptions of their transition experience?

2. In what ways did veterans' personal agency evolve from the period before their military service to the period after their service?

This chapter describes the methods used in the study. Specifically, the research design and procedures for participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis are outlined.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative design. This was necessary because the concept of transitioning personal agency during the process of leaving the military and joining the civilian workforce is not well researched. Moreover, it is a highly internal and personal topic that requires in-depth examination to uncover.

Participants

Kvale (1996) advised that qualitative studies recruit samples ranging from 5 to 25 participants based on the nature and complexity of the topic. This study relied upon a sample size of 131 individuals: 41 were surveyed, 10 were interviewed, and 80 supplied comments to the researcher's LinkedIn request for responses.. The open-ended questions allowed for the generation of rich, high quality data. The resulting findings serve as exploratory data to inform continued research beyond this thesis.

The selection criteria aimed to assure that the participants have the breadth, depth, and quality of experience to inform the results elicited by inquiry into the subject of open innovation. Participants satisfied five criteria:

1. Have completed 10 or more years active duty service

2. Left active duty 12-18 months earlier.

3. Served as enlisted personnel.

4. Transitioned into professional, corporate environment.

5. Currently work full-time.

Participants were recruited through the researcher's personal and professional networks. Using prior knowledge of who fit the selection criteria, the researcher sent individuals the study invitation in Appendix A. Additionally, the study invitation was posted to social media to attract additional potential participants.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted under the supervision of the Pepperdine University Institutional Review Board. All human participant protections were observed. Confidentiality and consent procedures were used to protect the participants from risks to their personal mental, emotional, or physical health. In particular, each participant was provided with a consent form (see Appendix B). The researcher reviewed this form with the participant, answered any questions they have, and required a signed copy from the participant before proceeding. All data collected were de-identified to protect participant confidentiality.

Data Collection

Ten interviews were conducted by phone and followed the interview script presented in Appendix C. An additional 41 interviews were conducted on-line, with respondents providing written responses to the questions.

Basic participant demographic information was collected, including date and ages they joined and left the military, branch, work role in the military and afterwards, and current employer. A definition of personal agency was provided and then questions were posed to determine the degree of personal agency they experienced before, during, and after their military service. The remainder of the interview focused on eliciting their in-depth story of transitioning from the military to the corporate world and in what ways and to what degree their personal agency evolved. Following an initial prompt, participants were encouraged to tell their story with as little interruption as possible. Prompts and probing questions were used only as needed to elicit a rich story. These included (but were not limited to):

- When did you realize you have more control?

- What was it like to first experience more control?

- Were you aware of your own desires and goals?

- What did you like or enjoy about having more direction and control?

- What didn't you like or enjoy about having more direction and control?

- What influence, if any, did this have on your transition?

- What influence, if any, did this have on the work you do today?

Verbal interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for later data analysis. Written interviews were downloaded for later data analysis.

Data Analysis

The data regarding demographics were used to design a unique profile for each

participant represented by sample. The remaining data were examined using content

analysis as described by Elo and Kygnäs (2008). The following steps were taken:

1. Participants' responses were read to gain an understanding regarding the breadth and depth of the information gathered.

2. Each response was examined question by question to determine the themes that best reflected the data.

3. Data were reorganized based on codes that emerge.

4. When the analysis was complete, the number of participants reporting each code was calculated and analyzed.

5. Results were audited by a second coder who determined the validity of the analysis. Any discrepancies were revised to yield a higher quality of results.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the evolution of US military veterans'

personal agency during their transition from the military to civilian workforce. Using a

mixture of convenience sampling and snowball sampling, 131 individuals were recruited.

These individuals had completed 10 or more years active duty service; left active duty

12-18 months earlier; served as enlisted personnel; transitioned into professional,

corporate environment; and currently work full-time were recruited to participate. Each

participant was asked about their sense of personal agency and how it evolved over the

time period before, during, and after their service. The data were content analyzed to gain

a better understanding of how veterans' sense of agency shifts and develops. The next

chapter reports the results.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the evolution of US military veterans' personal agency during their transition from the military to civilian workforce. Two research questions were examined:

1. What are veterans' descriptions of their transition experience?

2. In what ways did veterans' personal agency evolve from the period before their military service to the period after their service?

This chapter reports the study results. Participant demographics are presented first. Findings are then reported.

Participant Demographics

A total of 41 participants completed a survey (see Table 6). These respondents were roughly equally distributed across the military branches. Participants ranged in years of service from 5-30 years (M = 18.7, SD = 6.9). Respondents ranged widely in their time since active duty, ranging from not yet having left active duty to having left 33 years before the study (M = 3.1, SD = 5.8). Ninety percent of the respondents were working full time when they took the survey. Demographics were not available for the 80 individuals who posted public comments in response to questions posted on the researcher's LinkedIn page.

Ten individuals completed an interview (see Table 7). More than half had served in the Marine Corps. Tenure of service was 20-30 years (M = 22.3, SD = 3.47), and time since end of active duty was 9-14 years (M = 11.1, SD = 3.48). All were working full-time when they were interviewed.

Table 6

Participant Demographics

Demographic		
Military Branch	n	%
Army	11	27%
Marine Corps	12	29%
Navy	9	22%
Air Force	10	24%
Coast Guard	0	0%
	Range	Mean (SD)
Years of Service	5-30 years	18.7 years (6.9)
Time since end of active duty	0-33 years	3.1 years (5.8)
Working Full-Time	n	%
Yes	37	90%
No	4	10%

N = 41

Table 7

Interview Participant Demographics

Demographic		
Military Branch	n	%
Army	2	22%
Marine Corps	5	56%
Navy	3	33%
Air Force	0	0%
Coast Guard	0	0%
	Range	Mean (SD)
Years of Service	20-30 years	22.3 (3.47)
Time since end of active duty	9-14 years	11.1 (3.48)

N = 9

Transition Experiences

Participants were asked to discuss their experiences transitioning from the military to the civilian workforce. Three key themes emerged in the interview and survey data concerning the impact of participants' military service on their civilian career (see Table 8). A total of 14 participants expressed that through their military service, they built transferable skills that benefited civilian career. One participant explained, "I felt better prepared to decide what I wanted to do and how I wanted to proceed in my next phase of life because of what I learned in the military." Another participant shared that because of his military experience, "Nothing phases me now."

Table 8

Impact of Military Service on Civilian Career

Impact	Survey N = 41	Interviews N = 10
Built transferable skills that benefited civilian career	5	9
Helped define civilian career	5	9
Hindered civilian career progression	2	8

N = 52

Another 14 participants stated that their service helped define their civilian careers. One participant commented, "It is AMAZING, I am back to where I was before the military but armed with so much more focus and direction. I know what I want to do and where I want to be." Another participant explained, "Yes, the focus I learned in the service provided opportunity I didn't know about."

A final impact, cited by 10 participants, was that their military service hindered their civilian career progression. One participant shared, "I realize that the military is far behind in the ways of the current civilian workforce." Another noted, "In my experience, there is a disconnect between military experience and real world logical progression."

Analysis of the data also resulted in the identification of several themes related to their transition experience (see Table 9). Participants offered their perceptions related to their transition experience, the civilian workforce, and success factors for making a successful transition. Twelve survey and interview participants emphasized that transition is ongoing and difficult, and that it will take time. One participant expressed: "The task of working in a corporate world and taking all the 'no's' takes dedication, research, preparation, and moral conviction." Another reflected, "Stereotypes can be a barrier to personal agency and require time and energy to overcome." A third participant shared the ongoing struggle he experienced: "Transition continues and may take 2-3 years before stabilizing."

The programs that are offered to active duty personnel regarding finding employment post-service do not offer civilian experience or exposure to the culture. They address issues such as knowledge and gaining certifications but do little to help veterans bridge the gap to successfully enter and integrate into the civilian culture. Moreover, the stress and fear veterans feel about the need to find a job and earn an income can override any attempts at agency or finding a job they like. Instead, several participants described feeling pressure to take the first position because they need an income to fulfill their basic needs.

One participant described the sense of transition as having lived inside a cocoon for years or decades and then abruptly having that cocoon ripped away. The veteran may still be a very young adult in terms of their ability to enact their agency and make choices in their personal and professional lives; yet, they may be middle aged with one or more dependents and significant financial responsibilities.

Table 9

Perceptions of the Transition Experience

	Survey N = 41	Interviews N = 10
Transition is ongoing, difficult, and will take time	6	6
Optimistic about their civilian careers	2	9
Positive transition experience and outcome	1	7

Eleven participants additionally expressed optimism about their civilian careers. One shared, "I experienced civilian culture before my transition and it allowed me to feel more in control of my next career. I can put all my heart and soul into something I want to do."

Regarding their perceptions of the civilian workforce, 9 survey respondents, 6 interviewees, and 80 LinkedIn posters emphasized that assimilation to the civilian workplace culture is difficult (see Table 10). One participant noted, "I feel there is a language and expectation barrier between the military and civilian work force. Non-veterans do not understand our barriers. We have to learn, adapt and overcome if we want to be successful in the civilian sector." Another participant shared, "I was not aware that an acceptable civilian response to a question was NO ANSWER at all." A third participant reflected, "In the military is very process oriented. And when I came into my civilian role I found there was not a lot of process."

The transition experience was affected by whether participants' turnover was voluntary, involuntary, or semi-involuntary. Cases where turnover was involuntary or semi-involuntary were situations where the individuals were discharged for disciplinary reasons, did not receive promotion, or did not want to move to the next assigned duty station or take the next assigned job. Those who experienced involuntary or semi-

involuntary turnover reported a lengthier psychological transition—often involving anger

as well as grief stages—compared to those who voluntarily left the military.

Table 10

Perceptions of the Civilian Workplace

	Survey N = 41	Interviews N = 10	LinkedIn N = 80
Cultural assimilation difficult	9	6	80
Difficult to deal with ambiguity in the workplace	5	6	45
Under-valued as Veteran employees	3	8	10

Additionally, 5 survey respondents, 6 interviewees, and 45 LinkedIn posters noted

their difficulty in dealing with ambiguity in the workplace. One participant reported

experiencing "more flexibility, but less defined options in a business environment."

Another participant simply summarized, "As a veteran employee in the civilian

workplace, it is a culture shock." A third participant noted that "lack of communication

and clear objectives contributes to the stress" in the civilian work environment.

Twenty-one participants believed they were under-valued as veteran employees.

One participant shared, "The civilian/business community doesn't truly understand or

trust the experience as "real world," even from proven military leaders who have

flexibility to adapt and execute—even when this is properly translated." Another

participant expressed:

> The biggest weakness I see in our organization is the inability for civilian
> leadership to harness and take advantage of the years of leadership training and
> people experience that senior NCO's and Officers can bring into the organization.
> Some of these people's talents go to waste in positions that are way beneath their
> abilities.

Participants additionally offered several success factors for transition veterans

(see Table 11). In particular, they noted during their survey (n = 3), interview (n = 10), or

LinkedIn post (n = 47) that a learning mindset is needed for success in civilian

employment. One participant shared, "I think the transition is a challenge because our

brains have literally been wired to not be a civilian and it takes time to be rewired for

success in the civilian sector." Another expressed, "You're not the master chief anymore.

You're not going to get saluted. Nobody stands up in a room for you and tells you good

morning anymore. Those days are over. Get over it."

Table 11

Perceived Success Factors

	Survey N = 41	Interviews N = 10	LinkedIn N = 80
Learning mindset needed for success in civilian employment	3	10	47
Personal agency supported goal achievement and transition into civilian career	9	10	
Transition planning should start early in military career; success is affected by many factors			10

Nineteen participants believed their personal agency supported their goal

achievement and transition into civilian career. One participant explained, "I started

transition planning early, and I leveraged professional organizations to help me translate

my military experience to equivalent civilian roles." Another participant described his

experience:

> I set my transition goals and executed them resulting in relocating to my #1
> geographical area, accepted a position with one of my top 3 companies in one of
> my top 3 role choices with a compensation package that met or exceeded my
> requirements. And did so within my established timeline.

Finally, 10 LinkedIn posters emphasized the need to begin transition planning and

cross-cultural awareness early in their military career and that transition success is

affected by many factors. One participant observed:

for the vast majority of veterans leaving the service, they are doing so after one or two enlistments. It's a completely different ballgame for them, and many don't know for sure they're getting out until a year or so prior to the end of their enlistment.

Another participant advised:

Start your transition the day you exit and give yourself a year. It's only difficult because people don't give themselves the due diligence of time, we don't give ourselves that amount of time to totally transition and that's now we get stressed

Shifts in Personal Agency

The survey data included indications of the level of agency participants experienced before their military service (see Table 12). The most common theme was having limited agency due to their youthful life stage limiting their exposure to choices and opportunity for agency (n = 12). One participant stated, "I felt I had no option at the time but to join civil service since the Air Force is what I knew best." Another explained, "I really did not utilize personal agency because I went into the military straight out of high school."

Table 12

Personal Agency Before Service

Level of Agency	Survey N = 41
High Agency	
Set education-related goals	8
Made life-changing decisions	5
Made work-related decisions	4
Family and friends influenced decisions but did not pressure participant	4
Limited Agency	
Youthful life stage limited exposure to choices and opportunity for agency	12
Financial constraints limited choices and opportunities for agency	4

The second most common theme was that eight participants reported having high agency, evidenced by having set education-related goals. One participant expressed, "I was able to attend the college of my choice instead of following my family legacy

through hard work and study." Another shared, "I chose which school to attend, which courses to take, where to work, what type of car I wanted to drive- and ultimately to volunteer for military service (and which branch to serve in)."

When asked about their personal agency during their military service, most participants (12 survey, 8 interview, 56 LinkedIn) reported that it was low and that the military environment restricted their options (see Table 13). One participant explained, "I didn't feel I had much control while in the military and every 3 years meant tearing my kids away to another town and starting over." Another reflected:

> Although I got the job field I wanted, everything else was up to the needs of the service. What job I did for my unit, where I was stationed, where I could live, what I could have in my house, where I could travel, almost every aspect of my life was out of my control.

Table 13

Personal Agency During Service

	Survey N = 41	Interviews N = 10	LinkedIn N = 80
Limited Agency During Service			
Low level; military environment restricted options	12	8	56
Personal sacrifices were required and expected	5	6	
Used limited personal agency experiences as opportunities for growth & personal development	5	10	
Agency Shifted During Service			
Agency increased later in military career	7	8	
Took proactive steps to increase agency and mastery while serving	4	10	
Levels of agency fluctuated throughout career	2	6	
Agency decreased later in military career	2		

When asked about their personal agency after their military service, most participants on the survey and during the interviews reported having higher agency (See Table 14). One of the most common responses (17 survey respondents, 10 interviewees) was that they are now free to manage their time and live according to their values. One

participant stated, "I appreciate that I am free to wear what I want and talk to others as if we are all equal." Another emphatically expressed: "Now I have freedom!!! Free to spend time with family, free to do side hustles without having to ask permission, free to express myself outside of uniform, etc."

Table 14

Personal Agency After Service

	Survey N = 41	Interviews N = 10
High Agency		
Free to manage my time and live according to my values	17	10
Opportunity to contribute as an individual	14	10
Focus on career and personal development; free to quit job	10	10
Experience high personal agency as civilian	10	9
Free to be more independent and authentic	4	10
Unchanged	6	
Limited agency as a civilian	2	1

N = 132

Another common response was that participants now enjoyed the opportunity to contribute as an individual (14 survey respondents, 10 interviewees). One participant shared that even if not fully confident about a particular task, "I just inject myself into it because even if I don't know it 100% I know that I can bring some value to the table and I've gained a lot of self-confidence." Another offered:

> It allows me to demonstrate by implementation that my ideas and process improvements are useful and have a great benefit to the company, instead of trying to educate peers and superiors on topics and subjects they have no interest in.

Organizational Support Needed

The final area of inquiry concerned what organizational support participants needed to make a successful transition from military to civilian service. The most common response was that corporate recruiters and managers need deeper understanding

about veterans' experiences and abilities, which was voiced by seven survey respondents, seven interviewees, and 10 LinkedIn posters (see Table 15). One participants stated that he is "unable to make a connection with those in HR who did not serve." Another shared he felt "Lost and unsure of how to convey my story." Yet another admitted, "I avoid recruiters at all cost so my own personal agency is to not be lost or second guessed. This is what I do to succeed in the face of corporate recruiting ignorance."

Table 15

Organizational Support Needed

Support	Survey N = 41	Interviews N = 10	LinkedIn N = 80
Corporate recruiters and managers need deeper understanding about veterans' experiences and abilities	7	7	10
Need defined career paths that allow for internal mobility and promotions based on potential	9	10	
Need to institute mentorship and retention programs	6	9	
More empowerment and participative leadership needed	8	6	
Need improved compensation, status, and work-life balance	5	7	
Need improved communication and change management procedures	3	8	

Another common response (9 survey respondents, 10 interviewees) was that veterans need defined career paths that allow for internal mobility and promotions based on potential. One participant shared, "I look for other work opportunities within my organization that might facilitate increased self-agency." Another admitted, "I have absolutely no loyalty to my company. It's a dog eat dog world. If a recruiter came along and offered me a better job it would take me 2 seconds to accept." A third participant noted:

I am not in the exact job role that I see myself in for a long period of time but I know that this is just a stepping stone. I know that with hard work I will be able to exercise more freedom in choosing a path that suits my skills more strongly.

Summary

This chapter reported the results of the study related to participants' transitions experiences, shifts in personal agency, and organizational support needed. The next chapter provides a discussion of these results.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the evolution of US military veterans'

personal agency during their transition from the military to civilian workforce. Two

research questions were examined:

1. What are veterans' descriptions of their transition experience?

2. In what ways did veterans' personal agency evolve from the period before

   their military service to the period after their service?

This chapter provides a discussion of the results. Conclusions are presented first,

followed by recommendations for veterans, organizations, and organizational

development practitioners. Limitations are outlined and suggestions for continued

research are offered.

Conclusions

Transition experience. Participants described a process of transition that begins

before military service ends and extends well beyond the point of securing employment.

These findings are similar to Bridges (2004), who discussed the five fundamental tasks

one must master in order to successfully move to the next chapter of life. Additionally,

Beyers et al. (2003) described several shifts in personal agency need to occur for military

personnel to successfully transition from the military to civilian workforce.

The early stages, which occur during active duty, involve administrative tasks led

by the military that are very regimented (e.g., checking in equipment). How many

transition activities are completed before the last day of active duty is influenced by their

assignment and assignment leaders. While some personnel are required to work full-time

until the last day of service, other personnel are allowed to complete administrative tasks

and begin the activities to prepare for civilian life before finishing active duty. Once the last day of active duty is completed, the Department of Defense no longer deals with them, and they must arrange any support they need through the Veterans Administration. Throughout this process, veterans and their families often experience a difficult psychological transition as they move into civilian life. This underscores the need for veterans and their families to receive adequate psychological, emotional, and tactical support for the transition.

The programs that are offered to active duty personnel regarding finding employment post-service do not offer civilian experience or exposure to the culture, heightening the difficulties they experience during transition. For many, the experience is like being ripped from a cocoon in a still young and vulnerable state, yet responsible for one or more dependents and significant financial commitments.

Evolution of personal agency. Most participants reported having low agency before their military service. They were in the bubble of home life with their parents, and their decisions and life paths were strongly guided by family expectations and their parents. For many, enlisting in military service was an obvious choice—either due to familial expectations, financial limitations, lack of other ideas of how to move forward in life, or their first option (e.g., getting a football scholarship) falling through.

Participants generally reported having very little agency upon entry during boot camp and the early years of their service. For those who stayed beyond the initial four years, the level of agency varied across the length of their term. For some, agency increased with their rank. For others, agency decreased as they reached very high ranks due to the levels of bureaucracy and politics they encountered, which affected how they could carry out their work. For still others, the job they held affected their level of

agency. For example, those who held recruiter positions or interacted a great deal with the public reported significant agency. For still others, favoritism left them displaced from their preferred positions, struggling with limited career options. These findings about agency are similar to Moore (2011) and Soeters et al. (2006) who stated that military personnel generally have very limited agency while in the service and have substantially more once they leave.

One participant noted that agency can always be found—and often is found—in choosing her attitude about her station or position. This participant explained that even in cases where she deeply disliked her assignment, she looked for the good aspects and learned to like it—or at least got used it. This participant's observations are consistent with Frankl's (1959) observation that even in the direst of circumstances, people always have the freedom to choose their attitude. Thus, agency can always be present.

Participants reported enjoying the substantial freedom they had in their jobs post-service. Yet, they reported feeling intimidated by all the options and decisions facing them in these environments. Several participants shared that they were highly qualified for the jobs and equipped to succeed in many positions at their employers. However, most had not contemplated what they wanted to do and, thus, felt paralyzed by the freedom.

It is important to note an unanticipated finding regarding participants' level of agency in their home lives. That is, regardless of the agency they experienced in their work, they experienced little agency in their personal choices during their time of military service. Once in civilian life, participants experienced substantial agency both at work and at home. The resulting range of decisions and responsibility for those decisions was experienced as truly staggering by at least some participants.

Recommendations

 Transitioning veterans. Seven recommendations are offered to transitioning

veterans based on this study's findings:

1. Be aware and realistic. Study findings indicated that veterans often took the first job they found post-service due to their stress about needing to meet their basic needs. Therefore, veterans are advised to understand the relationship between survival anxiety and one's ability to make sound high-impact decisions and increase self-awareness. Transitioning veterans should focus on reducing fears through an open mind, learning, humility and discovery.

2. Commemorate the end of military service through a closure process. Several participants described the abruptness of the transition experience, like the participant who described it as being ripped from a cocoon. Bridges (2004) noted that before an individual can begin something new, the old has to come to an end. In the case of transitioning veterans, Bridges explains that they similarly need a psychological way to emotionally close the phase of their military service to recognize their new title and status as a veteran. This underscores the importance of holding a ceremony to commemorate the end of one's military service, and the beginning of life as a veteran, similar to a Change of Command ceremony.

3. Prepare to process the grief of leaving the military. Similar to the previous recommendation, participants spoke of the grief and abruptness of transition. Therefore, to successfully transition into civilian life, veterans must process this grief, including all its stages (Kubler-Ross & Kessler, 2005; Bridges, 2004). To do so, veterans may acknowledge the inevitable grief and sense of loss that follows endings and that feelings of loss may follow basic needs are met (i.e., civilian employment, self-identity).

4. Demonstrate competence and find meaning, every day. Study findings indicated that the veterans' transferable skills proved invaluable for their civilian careers, while some actually felt behind the curve for succeeding in civilian work. This emphasizes the need that during the period of detachment from the military, before they feel connected and successful to a civilian workforce, it is additionally important to spend ample time doing what one enjoys and is good at for the purpose of sustaining positive mood and maintaining their confidence. These activities do not have to be work-related. Activities where competence can be demonstrated and personal fulfillment achieved can be through relationships, volunteerism, parenting, creative outlets, hobbies or other suitable activity.

5. Build a transition support team. Participants talked about lacking mentors and structure during their transition and that, without this, their transition was difficult and complex. Successful transition requires the concerted effort and insights of a wide range of individuals who understand how to search and

secure jobs, build a civilian career, and navigate the ins and outs of civilian life. Transitioning veterans are encouraged to actively recruit both veterans and civilians as their personal board of advisors who will provide straightforward guidance.

6. Build cross-cultural competencies for identity and membership through field research and immersive experiences to gain career awareness and reduce anxieties over the unknown. Participants expressed significant surprise about what they discovered was successful and not successful in civilian work cultures. Therefore, transitioning veterans are advised to spend substantial time immersed into the civilian culture exploring possible careers— importantly, this time should be spent in the field talking with people rather than on the computer scanning for information. Talking to current and former employees can help veterans understand the benefits and drawbacks of working for each organization. A critical side benefit of building personal connections with civilians is in establishing a new self-identity and membership into a new community. Additionally, it is important for veterans to mentally prepare through imagination and simulated hypothetical situations exploring how the individual will react and self-regulate in a way that is culturally appropriate, particularly in situations where cultural values differ.

7. Start a transition fund. Participants discussed the difficulties and complexities they experienced during their transition. A substantial amount of anxiety arose from concerns about money. Therefore, all veterans should start a transition fund if they do not already have one. This will function as the equivalent of a civilian 401K retirement fund. This money will be invaluable for ensuring their basic needs can be met after service, buying them time after their active duty to complete the psychological and emotional transition process that occurs after leaving the military. This will reduce survival anxiety and improve decision making abilities.

Organizations. Four recommendations are offered to organizations based on this

study:

1. Open the door. Participants expressed significant surprise about what they discovered was successful and not successful in civilian work cultures. Therefore, it would be helpful for organizations to invite active duty service members into your organization and provide an opportunity to experience the culture. Participants in this study had the perception that organizations often do not recognize the knowledge, skills, and abilities they gained through their military experience. These findings indicate several ways that organizations could best support veterans and gain the full benefits of having these workers on staff and retaining them over time.

2. Communicate with your veteran employees. Additionally, given the lack of awareness veterans reportedly have about civilian corporate culture, based on the data, employers should provide straight talk and expectations including

feedback on soft skills - talking too loud, language, tone, and mannerisms. Veterans want to fit in; they need honesty and compassionate guidance. Lack of feedback or less than truthful feedback causes insecurity and negative assumptions during the early months of civilian employment.

3. Appreciate the veteran qualifications as they emerge over time. Study findings indicated that the veterans believed they were under-valued in the civilian workplace. Most veterans bring substantial knowledge, skills, and abilities to organizations. However, they often do not know how to express and present their full range of capabilities during the initial months of employment. To fully benefit from their veterans, organizations should devise processes for engaging, inventorying and determining how to best apply the knowledge, skills, and abilities veterans bring. Additionally, distinguishing between capabilities and desires takes time for veterans because they have a variety of skills and experiences and have rarely been given choice about doing what they want.

4. Understand the veteran mentality and culture through cross cultural competency training at all levels of the existing workforce. Study findings indicated that veterans generally did not feel understood in civilian workplaces. Organizations that hire veterans would do well to demonstrate an appreciation for the ongoing psychological transition process and the challenge to fit into the corporate culture

Additionally, several other organizational supports that would be helpful are

presented in Appendix D.

Organizational development practitioners. Organizational development (OD)

practitioners can serve support roles for transitioning veterans and the organizations that

hire them. Five specific recommendations are offered based on the study findings:

1. Coach transitioning veterans for career success. In this study, veterans expressed several ways they believed they needed support. OD practitioners can act as coaches and guides to transitioning veterans as they build their support teams and research possible career tracks to ensure job fit. To do so, the practitioners can guide veterans through the recommendation steps offered to veterans earlier in this section.

2. Support employers and the surrounding communities by creating and facilitating onboarding programs for veterans. Given the support needs voiced by veterans in this study and the general lack of support for veterans in civilian workplaces, OD practitioners also can work with organizations to create onboarding programs customized for transitioning veterans to help them acclimatize to the civilian workforce and grapple with the seeming multitude of decisions that suddenly face them. In doing so, a series of

trainings and networking activities could be designed to orient veterans to the various opportunities and situations they will find themselves in, similar to the cultural sensitivity courses designed and offered for expatriates and other new and diverse employee populations. Veterans also need to have voice, get feedback and guidance, and be able to have the freedom to explore within a safe environment.

3. Facilitate strategic planning to align with veteran hiring and retention initiatives. Although veterans believe they are undervalued in civilian workplaces, based on the study data, veterans represent a unique labor pool with particular strengths and needs that may be discovered gradually over time. As such, it is important for organizations to understand the value of a veteran as part of their diverse workforce and allocate resources accordingly. Organizations then need to design appropriate recruiting, selecting, onboarding and development programs that enable veterans to enter and become successful within their workforce. Increasing cross-cultural competencies within the existing workforce would also prove beneficial for direct supervisors and team members. Veteran turnover may occur if this effort is not intentional and supported and if the organizational mindset is not sufficiently aligned with veterans abilities, capabilities and development needs as employees. For example, because many veterans do not know what they want in a career when they first enter the civilian workforce, it is important for companies to support internal mobility such that talent is recognized early, and people are able to move where they best fit. Veterans also need to have voice, get feedback and guidance, and be able to have the freedom to explore within a safe environment. Veterans will be attracted to organizations oriented around growth, learning, empowerment, acceptance, community and purpose.

4. Bridge the culture gap through awareness training. Study findings indicated that veterans embrace a different work culture than what tends to be in effect in civilian workplaces. Cultural and cross-cultural competencies should include the awareness about the psychological transition, distinct cultural differences and common stereotypes of both military and civilian cultures to increase levels of compassion and empathy for this minority group from the existing workforce.

Limitations

Three limitations affected this study. First, several stakeholders beyond the veterans themselves are involved in veterans' transition from military to civilian employment, such as the Department of Defense, Veterans Affairs, civilian organizations, veterans' spouses and family members, career coaches, workforce development agencies,

universities, and more. Each of these constituents have a unique vantage point on the challenges and path that veterans take in making the transition. However, only veterans were included in this study. As such, the data are limited to the veterans' viewpoint. Future studies could expand the sample to more stakeholders to gain a more systemic view of the situation.

Second, the sample of veterans was rather homogenous, consisting mostly of men who had served 20-30 years in the Marine Corps. Therefore, the viewpoints and experiences of other demographic groups were not represented. Future studies should strive to draw a diverse population in terms of gender, race, sexual orientation, and age to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the transition process.

Third, the study relied on self-reported data, which is vulnerable to distortion and data loss due to not wanting to make the situation or themselves seem better (or worse) than they were in reality, forgetting details, or other issues. Future studies may employ other approaches to data collection, such as gathering reports from others to validate the veterans' accounts.

Suggestions for Further Research

The present study and its findings lead to three suggestions for continued research. The first suggestion is to examine literature and research on the transition from high school to university, as this transition involves a similar shift from limited to extensive freedom and personal agency. By examining the best practices for supporting university students in becoming successful, insights and best practices may be discovered for supporting veterans in becoming successful in civilian workforces.

Given the limitations of self-report data that affected the present study, it would be helpful to conduct action research or case studies of several veterans as they progress

through the transition process. This type of research would allow for the collection of other forms of data that would help validate or enrich the veterans' accounts.

The data in this study additionally suggested that both the veterans' mindsets and organizations' mindsets affect veterans' transition experiences. Therefore, it would be helpful to more deeply examine individual and organizational mindsets and investigate the impacts these have on the transition experience. In particular, it would be beneficial to examine veterans' having a learning mindset and investigating what the impact of this mindset would be on their transition experience.

Summary

This study examined the evolution of US military veterans' personal agency during their transition from the military to civilian workforce. A total of 131 veterans were recruited to participate. Each participant was asked about their sense of personal agency and how it evolved over the time period before, during, and after their service.

Participants offered slightly varying descriptions of their transition experience, although all involved completing typical administrative steps and finding and securing employment. In general, participants experienced low agency before military service, minimal agency at the start of military service that grew over time, and an unprecedented and sometimes paralyzing degree of freedom and agency after military service. Based on the results of this study, transitioning veterans are advised to start a transition fund, process the grief of leaving the military, build a support team, and conduct field research to build career awareness. Organizations are advised to reach out to active duty veterans, understand the veteran mentality, and appreciate veterans' qualifications. Employer partners should modify recruiting standards and get veterans inside their doors and on their payroll, immersed in their culture and connected to their community. Once they're

inside, the company could be the "container" for their continuing transition and build elements of a container for civilian boot camp within their organization. The purpose is to provide an opportunity to connect with civilians after being geographical, physically, socially, and emotionally removed from society. These critical connections cannot be facilitated through lectures, textbooks, or online learning. These connections require a personal relationship.

For their part, OD practitioners are advised to serve support roles for transitioning veterans and the organizations that hire them by coaching transitioning veterans for career success, creating and facilitating organizational onboarding programs for veterans, and facilitate strategic planning for hiring veterans.

Once basic needs of financial security and community are met, competencies can be developed, and self-discovery can occur. Becoming competent in a new role through small achievements will help build confidence, and confidence is directly tied to experiences of personal agency. Personal agency is paramount to the success of an individual in an individualistic culture.

Military boot camp was a crash course in becoming selfless. Civilian boot camp-like experiences can provide the opportunity to become selfish while serving the organization. These efforts will provide an opportunity for the veteran to be connected, rather than lost between the two communities, where their ongoing transformation and integration can be supported. Employers can leverage their existing workforce to engage and provide coaching and social networking that will support retention and reduce the high cost of turnover.

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Appendix A: Study Invitation

Hello,

I am conducting research to understand the lived experience of workers shifting their conceptions of personal power during the transition from the military to civilian workforce. This is part of my master's in Organizational development at Pepperdine University.

I am writing to request your participation in this study. Participation will involve a 1-hour telephone conversation with me to discuss your transition experience. Upon your agreement, the conversation will be scheduled at a time convenient for you.

To participate, you need to meet the following criteria:

1. You completed 10 or more years active duty service.

2. You left active duty 12-18 months earlier.

3. You were enlisted.

4. You transitioned into a professional corporate work environment.

5. You currently work full-time.

Participation is voluntary and confidential. You would not be identified in the study and any answers you provide would be pooled with others' responses and reported in aggregate.

At your earliest convenience, would you please let me know if you are willing to participate in my study?

Thanks in advance for your help!

Appendix B: Consent Form

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY
Graziadio School of Business and Management

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Shifting Personal Agency During Transition from Military to Civilian Workforce

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Sara McNamara, MS candidate, and Rita Jordan, PhD at Pepperdine University, because you transitioned from the military to the civilian workforce. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. You will also be given a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of this study was to examine the evolution of US military veterans' personal agency during their transition from the military to civilian workforce.

STUDY PROCEDURES
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in a series of questions. You will be asked questions about your experiences transitioning from the military to the civilian workforce.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
The potential but highly unlikely risks associated with participation in this study include possible emotional upset as you think about your transition experiences. To decrease the impact of these risks, you can stop participation at any time and/or refuse to answer any interview question.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY
While there are no direct benefits to the study participants, there are several anticipated benefits to society, which may include guiding future research or creating services to help transitioning veterans.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The records collected for this study will be confidential as far as permitted by law. However, if required to do so by law, it may be necessary to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if disclosed any instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine's University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

The data will be stored on a password protected computer in the principal investigator's place of residence. The data will be stored for a minimum of three years. The researcher will record your answers in a password-protected document and a unique identifier (such as "Participant 1") will be assigned to your information. Any information you share that could uniquely identify you (such names, places, or events unique to you) will be given a fake name.

The data will be stored on a password-protected external hard drive in the researcher's residence for three years after the study has been completed and then destroyed.

SUSPECTED NEGLECT OR ABUSE OF CHILDREN
Under California law, the researcher(s) who may also be a mandated reporter will not maintain confidential any information about known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse or neglect of a child, dependent adult or elder, including, but not limited to, physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse, or neglect. If any researcher has or is given such information, he or she is required to report this abuse to the proper authorities.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION
The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or only completing the items for which you feel comfortable.

INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION
You understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries you may have concerning the research herein described. You understand that you may contact Sara McNamara at [contact information], or Rita Jordan at [contact information] if you have any other questions or concerns about this research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University 6100 Center Drive Suite 500 Los Angeles, CA 90045, [contact information].

Appendix C: Interview Script

Thank you for volunteering your time to talk with me today. I will be asking you about your experience transitioning from the military into a civilian job.

Before we begin, I would like to gather a few details about you.
1. Name:
2. Date joined the military:
3. Branch:
4. Age when joined:
5. Date you left military:
6. Age when you left:
7. What was your work role in the military?
8. Where do you work now?
9. What is your position?
10. What do you do in this role?

Today, I want to talk with you about the concept of personal agency. Personal agency is defined as being able to control the details and direction of your own life and to influence its direction consistent with your own heartfelt desires and goals.

11. What are your initial reactions when you hear that definition?

12. To what extent would you say you exercised personal agency BEFORE you entered the military?

13. To what extent would you say you exercised personal agency DURING your career in the military?

14. To what extent would you say you exercised personal agency DURING your career in the military?

15. To what extent would you say you exercised personal agency NOW?

Please tell me, in as much detail as possible, about your experience of transitioning from the point of having little or no personal agency in the military to having more now.

Possible prompts/probing question:
- When did you realize you have more control?

- What was it like to first experience more control?

- Were you aware of your own desires and goals?

- What did you like or enjoy about having more direction and control?

- What didn't you like or enjoy about having more direction and control?

- What influence, if any, did this have on your transition?

- What influence, if any, did this have on the work you do today?

Appendix D: Organizational Support for Transitioning Veterans

Factors of individual transformation	Transition to Military-Bootcamp immersion experience	Required shift in the individual to transform out of military and into civilian cultures	How employers can support the transition
Endings			
Closure	Detachment	Close military service: Forgiveness, Appreciation, Pride & Accomplishment, Integration (skills & values translation), Moving forward (transition team) Retirement ceremony, custom plaques, celebration	Reinforce accomplishments, connect and support
Self-identity	"Me to Team" Individuals become Marines. One size does fit all; the strength of the force depends on extreme loyalty, and commitment to the team. "I" becomes "we"- collective identity. Temporary career requires surrender of self. Serving self is a detriment to the group and the organization. Serving one's own needs will have a negative outcome. Self-agency is limited by the culture, personal needs fulfillment and frame of reference (Adler)	"Team to Me" "We" becomes "me." Success is dependent on self-promotion. One size does not fit all. Emotional detachment, feelings of grief and loss of identity, community, prestige, safety Practice discretion when sharing military stories. Be proud of that part of whole self. Be confident and conservative. (C-rated, Civilian) Be aware of observable behaviors and artifacts of military culture including dress code, language (profanity and acronyms) leadership acumen, social etiquette, salutations. Apply personal agency in decision making, actions and behaviors, mannerisms. Against the military protocol.	Welcome the individual. Recognizes individual strengths and capabilities Offers personalized development & coaching Recognize and appreciate military service Be inquisitive, show genuine curiosity, acknowledge and honor the service. Not serving self is a detriment to the individual and the organization. Focused solely on the good of others will have a negative outcome. Encourage empowerment and individual contribution

Factors of individual transformation	Transition to Military-Bootcamp immersion experience	Required shift in the individual to transform out of military and into civilian cultures	How employers can support the transition
Abrupt immersion into new culture	Detached physically and emotionally from the past with limited connections. Psychological transition begins. Stripped of individuality. No guarantee of earning the title of Marine. Referred to as "recruit." Culture based on performance and goal achievement. Satisfactory transformation. Bootcamp graduation required to earn the title of US Marine.	Administrative transition completed. Civilian job secured. Expect diversity in leadership styles and commitment levels of the workforce. Expect bias	Modify recruiting language and job summaries. Structure onboarding; assign mentors, sponsors, external coaches. Improve cross-cultural competencies with existing workforce. Leverage existing workforce and Veteran employees for referrals and access to military talent pool.
Beginnings			
Subscribe to defined collective purpose	Intensity of training Mission accomplishment is saving lives. Tear down, build up process Fierce patriotism Forced loyalty	Find your Why Write personal narrative Follow your purpose	Communicate purpose and meaning for the work performed. Support volunteerism and ways to continue serving in meaningful ways. Sponsor events to serve the underprivileged in the community.
Period of incompetence	Learning the rules by breaking them. Intense training in unfamiliar jobs. Early leadership responsibilities. Learning and adaption motivated by negative emotional and physical consequences Closure of civilian status resulting in feelings of grief & loss (SCARF fears)	Demonstrate humility and openness to growth and learning. Embrace temporary incompetence Rely on others for education Be a follower Closure of military status Grief & loss SCARF fears	Offer training and development opportunities Challenging short term assignments with early achievements. Offer leadership roles with small groups.

Factors of individual transformation	Transition to Military-Bootcamp immersion experience	Required shift in the individual to transform out of military and into civilian cultures	How employers can support the transition
Re-identification and attachment	Attach to an elite force that is larger than self. Pride and values driven. Offers an identity and a definition of self. "I am a U.S. Marine and my MOS is XXXX." No longer considered a unique individual. Identity is temporary, yet ingrained. Developmental age and identity questions during adolescence support the attachment to the military mindset and community.	Identify personal strengths and capabilities. Recognize self as whole, military experience is additive and transferable. Part of whole self, not whole self. I am more than my MOS. Civilian, again. With military experience. Adaption skills required to survive. Leaving home for the first time. Responsible for all needs fulfillment.	Provides an opportunity to explore different work environments, cultures and opportunities within each that allows for individual strengths and desires to emerge. Demonstrate clear vision and purpose for Veteran to align with. Live the corporate values. "I am Bob Smith, Logistics Supervisor, comedian, father, husband and American Veteran."
Integration into community	Community housing, limited privacy. Strong focus on teambuilding, peer support and acceptance. Loyalty is tested and earned. Military rank and status extends to include spouses. Whole families serve. Military installations operate as small private cities including hospitals, schools, shopping and entertainment. Live on Federal land, Military laws (UCMJ) applies.	Physical move, relocation Support spouse in transition Establish relationships and build trust with civilians. Explore civilian lifestyle Recognize and accept that civilians are the majority. Humility, patience, likeability and relatability are required. Voice opinions; ask for needs to be met.	Committed to onboarding practices with increased sensitivity and awareness. Provide clear instruction around expectations for accountability (No need to report in or out). Support personal needs, time off, flex schedule. Encourage personal time, vacations and hobbies. Offer choices and empower to make decisions, high and low impact. Provide leadership and followership opportunities. Include spouse and dependents in conversations, recognition and social events. Find ways to build trust through consistency, reliability, connection, small group team building.

Factors of individual transformation	Transition to Military-Bootcamp immersion experience	Required shift in the individual to transform out of military and into civilian cultures	How employers can support the transition
Visible Role Models	Drill instructors, Active Duty Marines, Veteran family members and friends provide visual aid on what it looks like to be a Marine. Glorified role models: Memphis Belle, Full Metal Jacket, Top Gun	Identify civilian and veteran role models to emulate. Join social circles of civilians and less in military circles.	Provide access to senior leaders Offer networking opportunities inside and outside the organization. Co-workers at host companies and fast growing network of employers and civilians serve as visual role models.
Motivating forces for success	Patriotism, family heritage, education benefits, limited opportunities/survival, career choice and desire, growth and travel opportunities,	No other choice. Military was temporary. Identify motivators (financial responsibilities, personal growth, and opportunity to contribute.)	Support continuing education Learning and development opportunities
Expectations of the work	Known in advance or learned quickly and abruptly. Assigned.	General idea about the job role based on summary. Actual job duties and leadership may change frequently and with little notice. Chain of command will be unclear. Get comfortable in ambiguity.	Provide as much structure and guidance as possible in the first 12 months.