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The Reacculturation of Veterans Post Transition Assistance Program

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Walden University

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Kyle Hanlan

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

The Reacculturation of Veterans Post Transition Assistance Program

by

Kyle Hanlan

MPhil, Walden University, 2020

MPA, Strayer University, 2012

BS, Strayer University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Public Policy and Administration

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Abstract

As many as 61% of veterans have sought reintegration services after the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to help them cope with culture shock. TAP is not designed to address cultural transition. However, culture shock has resulted in disassociating behavior, unemployment, and homelessness in the veteran community. The purpose of this study was to identify the unmet reacculturation needs of post-active duty veterans in Chester County, Pennsylvania, who have utilized the United States' Department of Defense's TAP. Using an ethnographic approach, this study identified the extent that the TAP helps 13 post-active duty veterans obtain the autonomy stage of culture shock theory to the extent of career transition preparation only. In areas of reacculturation, veterans reported feeling on their own to manage mounds of paperwork during a perceived pointless "check the box" out process course set to calibrate an individual to civilian life through "*toxic positivity*." This study found that veterans do not perceive separation from the military as solely a career change but as a cultural and lifestyle change. TAP does not address the needs of cultural and/or lifestyle changes, which impedes veterans' reacculturation through autonomy obtainment. It is recommended that TAP expand the application of 10 U.S.C. §1142(b)(10) to include cultural transition as a part of the transition plan. Addressing veterans' culture shock will help reduce the 20 veteran suicides per day due to readjustment issues leading to positive social change.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my brothers and sisters of the Armed Forces. To those that raised their right hand in service of something greater than themselves. To those that continue to struggle with the return home. Never give in to the war within! Always remember your veteran family is a call or text away. Until Valhalla.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The military has the unique challenge of incorporating members from all cultures into a single entity that can fight as one. To accomplish this task, the military trains recruits through a formalized indoctrination program that replaces the civilian culture with the societal norms, values, and behaviors of the military. The military indoctrination process replaces individualized identities involving race, gender, and socioeconomic status with organizational cohesiveness. However, at the end of the service member's term, the service branches do little to help the service member reacclimate to the civilian culture they had left behind.

Once a member's term of service is completed, the veteran returns to the civilian culture that he/she left at the time of enlistment or commission. Often, military members tend to forget or romanticize the previous culture that they are returning due to the length of service. However, simple societal norms and customs may have become foreign. This phenomenon has been referred to as "the normal alien" (Ahern et al., 2015, p. 1). The transition process is abrupt from the perspective of the newly labeled veteran. Although a service member is aware of the date of separation, they may have unrealistic expectations that society will be relatively similar to that of the military. When their experiences counter expectations, culture shock sets in. In many cases, veterans do not experience the adverse effects of culture until several months after separation (Strom et al., 2012). As many as 61% of veterans have sought assistance with the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) for reintegration services to help them cope with culture shock (H.R. Rep. No. GS-23F-8144H, 2016). Pretransitioned members are identified roughly about 1 year

prior to discharge. Their responsibilities and accounts are slowly transferred to another service member. Six months before discharge, they attend a transition assistance program (TAP) to identify the challenges that changing careers could have on a transitioning member.

Background

Cultural transition to and from the military is an area that is underrepresented in identified literature. The process of indoctrination into many organizations can often lead to a shift in the fundamental behaviors of an individual. A successful transition requires a cultural alignment between the individual or group and the environment that surrounds it (Burke, 2014). To address issues that arise from cultural shifting, it is crucial to understand the transition as a whole.

Cycle Process of Cultural Shifting an Individual

The military does not differ from the norm of a cycle process for the inclusion and departure of new members: Individuals are recruited, trained, produce, and then depart. This cycling process of cultural change is an essential element in a holistic illustration of military cultural transition.

Upon entry into the military, individual culture is stripped away in order to start the indoctrination process. Regardless of the military branch, the initial training is operationally geared to shift the cultural norms of civilian society to that of the military. The Department of Defense (DoD) strives for the goal of cultural indoctrination: to learn the acceptable norms, values, and beliefs shared within the military. A set of these shared sociological characteristics are the established expectations to regulate behaviors.

Everything from how a person communicates to how they eat or sleep is aligned with a standard set forth by the military hierarchy.

There are several means for which a military service member can leave military service: end of contract, retirement, or a forced discharge. Yet, all individuals leaving active service are required to complete TAP about 6 months prior to discharge. The focus of this is to identify the challenges of changing careers.

Transition Assistance Program

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is a single-point program geared to address the needs of transitioning military and established by 10 U.S.C. §1142; this program provides service members with information on education benefits, opportunities in the reserves, and strategies for civilian employment (Pre-separation counseling; transmittal of medical records to Department of Veterans' Affairs, 1991). After the massive influx of returning veterans in the late 2000s, the program was updated with a focus primarily centered on career transition (Veterans Opportunity to Work Act, 2011). To implement the new focus, the DoD partnered with the Department of Labor to establish a mandatory 5-day workshop for all active-duty service members. The workshop schedule allocates 3 days on resume building and interviewing skills, 1.5 days on education and medical benefits, and 0.5 days on individualized needs of the service members (Veterans Opportunity to Work Act, 2011).

The Expectations of Veterans During the Transition

There are different expectations of veterans that appear to impact the transition process. The Department of Defense (DOD) expects, through policy, that individuals who

have completed TAP will have gainful employment within 6 months of discharge. Many civilians expect veterans to return to society without any issue (Demers, 2011). Even veterans have reported unrealistic expectations about themselves (Castro, Kintzle, & Hassan, 2014). There appears to be an underlying assumption that the local culture and societal norms share a commonality with the military. These expectations, in some instances, have included implicit social interactions, conflicts in etiquette, and misplaced anger. Transitioning service members often perceive the world to be as they had left it, which has led to a romanticized expectation of civilian cultural society.

Chester County

Chester County, Pennsylvania, is a vibrant Northeastern region that has a diverse socioeconomic population estimated at 506,422 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Chester County has an estimated 7.1% veteran population that is below the national average of 8.7%. Race, age, gender, household income, and local economic demographics are all within 5% percent of the region's average. This demographic profile makes Chester County representative of the expanded territory, as well as a population sample worthy of study regarding veteran reacculturation.

Conflicts in the Civil-Military Divide

The civil-military divide is a concept from the late 1950s that illustrated the division between the military and the civilian population (Huntington, 1957). The lack of shared everyday experiences and shared norms creates a divide between those who have served on active duty and those who have not. Many veterans have expressed their culture shock once the honeymoon phase of reintegration has subsided (Furnham &

Bochner, 1986). The subtle nuances of everyday life start to become prevalent and unavoidable. Simple civilian concepts become challenging to navigate for many veterans and many veterans have reported a continuous struggle even after a job is obtained (Brown, 2014). Some veterans have suggested that the divide between civilians and military members impacts their ability to sustain the position.

Alignment of expectations and culture is not a one-sided conflict. Many civilian individuals have the expectation of veterans to behave in a manner that is socially acceptable to the local area. In Chester County, Pennsylvania, this may include expectations of educational participation, involvement in community outreach, and professional history that is relatable to the general public. Many veterans have reported that they feel lost and frustrated when they are unable to utilize the skillset that they learned in the civilian sector (Schulker, 2017). For example, military medical professionals are required to complete a new and costly program to become certified in areas of medicine which they have been doing for years. When informed that their previous work experience is nontransferable, feelings of helplessness and despair can arise in the veteran (Schulker, 2017). Conflicts between civilian indoctrinated community members and recently military separated veterans can sometimes be at odds in terms of social norms. The key to bridge this gap is to identify the commonality in terms that both can understand—a further detailed review of this topic is covered in Chapter 2.

Common Assumptions About Veterans

TV, movies, and news reports often lead members of the public to have incorrect assertions and expectations of veterans. Military movies are purposefully designed to

elicit extreme emotion from the viewer without regard to the reality of a situation. In the absence of fact, the human mind will fill in the categorical placement of individuals (Shanahan, Shanahan, & Morgan, 1999). Thus, issues of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), violent behavior, and undereducated individuals are just a few of the negative associations that veterans endure throughout their transitional period. The lack of shared everyday experiences precipitates an environment in which misunderstanding and false assumptions can thrive.

Services Available to Veterans After Separation

The civil-military divide has created a significant impact on the sustainable cultural reintegration of veterans. Several organizations have emerged as a result of the need to provide social services to veterans that have experienced difficulty readjusting post-separation. At the federal, state, and local levels, there are outreach programs, financial support, legal services, job placement, and home placement for veterans. In conjunction with governmental service, several nonprofit organizations also offer support services. Whether it is a public or private organization, the lack of cultural transition preparedness of veterans has led to a need for a support organization in Chester County.

Problem Statement

Since 2002, more than 2 million servicemen and women have departed active service after placing their life in dangerous situations in defense of the United States (Adler et al., 2015). The DoD has mandated that all active duty service members complete the TAP to assist with the transition from the military to civilian society (Veterans Opportunity to Work Act, 2011; pre-separation counseling; transmittal of

medical records to Department of Veterans' Affairs, 1991). The primary focus of TAP is to transition veterans into civilian employment. TAP, however, does not adequately address other, equally important, veteran transitional requirements. In many cases, veterans experience difficulty reintegrating into civilian culture (Ahern et al., 2015; Brown et al., 2013; Wallace, Sheehan, & Young-Xu, 2009). As a result, many veterans have experienced a conflict with civilian cultural norms when returning to civilian society. This conflict has resulted in disassociating behavior, unemployment, and homelessness (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Blais, Thompson, & McCreary, 2009; Demers, 2013; Elbogen et al., 2012). To deal with this problem, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has had to allocate 300 million dollars in annual federal-funded programs to address veteran adjustment issues (Bertoni et al., 2014; Sherrill, 2014).

The issues highlighted above mainly stem from a poor understanding of veterans' needs when they reintegrate with civilian society. This study sought to gain a better understanding of veteran needs concerning the transition to civilian society by examining the impact of TAP on cultural integration. This study also evaluated the effectiveness of TAP as it applied to the veteran social transition. The findings in this study: (a) increase our scholarly knowledge of veterans-civil reintegration to (b) make substantive policy recommendations that can improve TAP effectiveness by providing cultural change strategies for TAP incorporation. Incorporating these recommendations have the additional advantage of reducing federal spending on veteran programs while increasing TAP's positive impact on veteran readjustment. Moreover, the research addresses a gap

in the literature concerning issues on cultural change, social adaptation, and mutual acceptance of returning veterans.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify the unmet reacculturation needs of post-active duty veterans in Chester County, Pennsylvania, who have utilized the United States' DOD's TAP. Identification of veteran unmet reacculturation needs was conducted through a set of interviews. The findings from the interviews were used to make substantive policy recommendations. In addition, this study tested and extended Pedersen's culture shock theory by assessing cultural adaptation with respect to the military to civilian transitions.

Research Question

According to Pedersen (1994), the resolution of an individual's conflict with a new culture occurs when an individual has obtained Stage 4 of the theory, called *autonomy*. To many veterans, the reacculturation to civilian society is a new culture. Thus, the research question for this study was to what extent does the TAP help post active duty veterans obtain Stage 4 of culture shock theory (autonomy) in Chester County, Pennsylvania? From this research question, I identified four subquestions:

SQ1: What are the shared perceived barriers to obtain autonomy in civilian society by post-active duty veterans in Chester County, Pennsylvania?

SQ2: How do military rank influence share perceptions to obtain autonomy in civilian society?

SQ3: How does gender influence shared perceptions to obtain autonomy in civilian society?

SQ4: How does an individual's length of service influence the shared perceptions to obtain autonomy in civilian society?

Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study is Pedersen's culture shock theory with the U-curve hypothesis. Culture shock theory asserts that a person experiences five distinct stages of shock when immersed in a new culture. Each stage contains unique indicators. Culture shock has been successfully used in scholarly research to both understand and suggest ways to address culture shock. Pedersen combined culture shock theory from three different theorists in order to explain the experiences of students in foreign cultures. These include Oberg's culture shock (1954), Lysgaard's U-curve hypothesis (1955), and Furnham's stages (1986) into a theoretical framework. This study adapted Pedersen culture shock theory from international students and applied it to the current research of veteran transition. Through culture shock theory's five-stage U-curve model, veterans can expect to encounter specific physiological and psychological indicators when transitioning back to civilian society.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was an ethnographic approach to qualitative research design. The effectiveness of the TAP attended by active-duty military personnel prior to discharge was evaluated, as defined by culture shock theory's five stages. Post-active duty veterans were interviewed to obtain their in-depth perceptions and individual

accounts of TAP. As an established theory, culture shock theory was used successfully to study cultural transitions in other fields, which allows further adaptation and application for this research. In addition, organizations involved with the implementation of TAP were evaluated by congressional committees to gauge the operational effectiveness of the program. I then compared information from these various data sources and assessed for policy recommendations.

Definitions

Culture: The acceptable norms, values, and beliefs shared within a society. These shared sociological characteristics are the established expectations in which the social regulates behaviors (Schein, 2017).

Military: Organizational membership in the active-duty elements of the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

Transition Assistance Program: The 5-day program mandated by the VOW Act that all military personnel is required to attend within 60-days prior to separation from active duty. The curriculum includes civilian job skills, financial planning, and individualized counseling (Bascetta, 2002).

Civil-Military Relations: The divide in shared common experience between civilian society as a whole and military society when communicating (Huntington, 1957).

Normal Alien: The change in cultural environment has led many veterans to perceive civilian society as a foreign world. Ahern et al. (2015), coined the term *normal alien* as a method to illustrate the foreign effect the reintegration process has on veterans (p. 1).

Attitude Climate: The perceived outlook towards the military and its service members by a society (Newcomb, 1946).

Assumptions and Limitations

A broad underlying premise of this study was the notion that the civil-military divide exists. This study also assumed that the reintegration process does not end upon gainful employment because many service members do not actively seek employment immediately after discharge. Social conflict is not always apparent in the early stages of transition.

The study was limited by the inability to identify veteran participants from a centralized listing. The identities of participants are not for public knowledge, making the ability to contact random individuals complicated. Veteran status is a self-reported status, which is not always accurate. Some veterans choose to conceal their status for personal reasons, and some non-veterans claim the status for personal gain.

Scope and Delimitations

This study focused on the unmet needs of post-active duty veterans in Chester County, Pennsylvania, who have utilized TAP. Individuals from all branches of the military were included in this study to gauge the impact of culture shock that may or may not span across the different services. Those identified for the study had been discharged for active-duty military service after 2001. Individuals in this study held a disability rating of 30% or less. The study looked at the preparedness of post TAP service members in terms of cultural transition.

This study did not distinguish between combat veterans and noncombat veterans, nor included National Guard or Reserves members. Factors of race and income level were not examined. While race and/or socioeconomic status may influence the cultural norms of civilian members, a primary element to this study is the cultural indoctrination in the military. Individualized cultural norms outside the military are removed as part of the indoctrination process.

Significance

This study highlighted the ongoing issue of cultural conflict in which many veterans endure. This research provides evidence-based policy recommendations to the DoD regarding the TAP. In addition to the social advocacy significance, federal resources devote over 300 million per year in federal funding to veteran social services (Sherrill, 2014). Recommendations from this study could help reduce federal expenditures on veteran cultural adjustment related issues. This research could create positive social change policy adjustments to TAP, which veterans deserve.

Summary

In this chapter, the problem of unmet cultural preparedness of veterans in the TAP was identified. TAP does not adequately address other, equally important, transitional requirements for veterans. In many cases, veterans experience culture shock when returning to civilian life. The civil-military divide has led some veterans to encounter conflict with the local population. Some conflict may be a result of false assumptions, others stem from nontransferable skillsets, while the rest is due to a lack of shared everyday experiences. Through the theoretical lens of culture shock theory, this

study will seek to answer to what extent does the TAP helps post active duty veterans obtain Stage 4 of culture shock theory, autonomy, in Chester County, Pennsylvania. In the next chapter, a written discussion on the literature that influences this phenomenon occurs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

To understand the culture shock veterans face after undergoing TAP, the background and context of the topic must be examined. This chapter summarizes the scholarly literature related to TAP and culture shock. It also summarizes governmental reports written about the program including reports from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Congressional Research Service (CRS). This chapter also includes a discussion about cultural differences that led to the civil-military divide, including statements recorded by veterans themselves. Parallel topics on the military career transition, international students, veterans with PTSD were all reviewed for comparable findings. The chapter concludes that while TAP and culture shock have been a topic of study, the literature search did not locate research exploring the nexus between TAP, culture shock, and the civil-military culture divide. As will be argued, the lack of research exploring the relationship between these phenomena demonstrates a gap in the knowledge base that warrants exploration.

Literature Search Strategy

The computer-based literature search strategy was used as a three-tier approach for the literature search: (a) TAP, (b) culture, and (c) culture shock theory. The TAP literature search focused on studies directly related to the reacculturation of veterans after the completion of TAP. The culture literature search targeted studies that paralleled the topic of veterans and culture. Examples of culture literature include educational transition, military culture, and the civil-military divide. The culture shock theory

literature search concentrated on studies in which culture shock theory had been directly applied. The databases and search engines were used to identify specific elements of the research.

Topical searches on veteran transition and culture were used to initiate the first-tier search. The Walden Library, which includes over 177 databases, was used for locating literature on the key terms. Additional resources were searched in government websites and databases (GAO, CRS, Federal Register, etc.), as well as Google Scholar and LexisNexis. The key terms that were the primary focus included the following:

- *Culture*
- *Cultural transition*
- *Veteran reintegration`*
- *Culture shock*
- *Transition Assistance Program*
- *Military culture*
- *Normal alien*
- *Civil-Military relations*

Upon an exhaustive search of the key terms, the second-tier search focuses on parallel terms and supportive terms. Parallel terms are words or phrases that are similar to the topic but are not directly linked. For example, student transition is not the same as a veteran transition, yet there are similarities between the phenomena. Thus, LexisNexis (Legal), LexisNexis (Academic), and Westlaw search engines helped locate additional information. Supportive terms are words or phrases that appear in the literature with high

frequency but are not vital to understand the core concepts. Previous academic dissertations, military research databases, websites, and bookstores helped identify the supportive terms. The second-tier search included the following:

- *Veteran*
- *Transition*
- *Cultural conflict*
- *Transitional theory*
- *Reintegration*
- *Prisoner reintegration*
- *Sojourner adjustment*
- *Five stages of culture shock*
- *Military indoctrination*
- *Transferable military skills*
- *Civil-Military divide*

As a result of the first and second tiers thematic analysis, the literature indicated that veterans experience a level of cultural conflict upon reintegration. Some inferred a level of culture shock. The third-tier search examined studies on culture shock theory.

Last, military blogs and interactive conversations with veterans and other professional academics were used to identify additional information related to the subject matter that may have been previously overlooked. A review of these resources, however, did not identify additional information beyond what was located in the academic literature.

Search Terms

- *Veteran reintegration*
- *Cultural Conflict*
- *Culture Shock*
- *Reacculturation*
- *Transition Assistance Program*
- *Civil-Military Divide*

Transition Assistance Program

TAP is a 5-day program that is designed to provide military service members with the legally prescribed information for a career transition from military society to civilian society. Mandated by two United States' Codes, the intent of the program is geared towards the transition of career for servicemembers planning on separating from the military within a 12- to 24-month period. TAP is the result of a five interagency partnership between the DoD, the VA, the Department of Labor, the Small Business Administration, and the Office of Personnel Management (Kamarck, 2017). TAP outlines several key topics involving healthcare, financial planning, career & employment, and spouse and caregivers (Kamarck, 2017).

A review of the literature identified several studies that examined TAP. Many of the studies examined the impact of TAP on veteran post-transition employment into civilian society. Other studies addressed the readjustment of veterans after the military. Still, other studies about TAP identified common concerns and fears about leaving the military. It is notable, however, that the literature search failed to identify studies that

focus on culture shock as a determinant to successful transitions from the military culture to the civilian culture.

Career Transitional Studies of Veterans Connected to TAP

Several studies specifically investigated the impact of TAP on veteran transition. Among them, Silva (2011), studied the effect that the TAP had on employment opportunities for 1,477 servicemembers. Silva (2011), separated the participants into two groups: (a) those who had attended TAP, and (b) those who had not attended TAP. A Chi-Squared test was conducted to measure correlation. To which, no correlation was identified between attendance in TAP and gainful employment (Silva, 2011).

In another study, Faurer et al. (2014), examined the influence of TAP on career transition through quantitative surveys of 350 servicemembers upon completion of TAP. The studied had found that 82% of those surveyed perceived the program was a useful resource for employment (Faurer et al., 2014). The study noted that only 15% of those surveyed were discharged from the military at the time of the survey (Faurer et al., 2014). Thus, 85% of those surveyed about career transition had yet to transition.

Hogan (2016), studied the effects of TAP on the career transition using a grounded theory approach, Hogan (2016) interviewed twenty veterans about their TAP experiences and what their perceptions were about preparedness. The interview questions asked to the participants centered around the TAP workshop manual (Hogan, 2016). Hogan (2016), reported that only 26% of those interviewed were “satisfied” with the level preparedness of TAP for a career transition. Hogan (2016), recommended that further research on TAP be conducted to understand the qualitative perspective. To

which, some in congressional subcommittees may agree, as a report on the career transition complied.

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) provided an overview of the military TAP in 2017. The report to the US Congress outlined the establishment of a transition program in 1991 and how the program has evolved into a quint-departmental program tailored to a career transition program. The report detailed the five-day program curricula. The report presented a few issues for Congress to review,, including: (a) adequate “handoff” to the Department of Veteran Affairs post TAP, (b) transparency in metric reporting, and (c) appropriate timing of the program for transition veterans (Kamarack, 2017). The report is interesting as it poses questions about the scope of TAP’s policy. Should TAP be focused on career transition? Does the program spend enough time in the right areas for the transition phase? Some may argue that there are too many resources to spend in the wrong areas.

While these studies are relevant to this research, the approach to culture is different in that research on culture focuses on the perspective of acceptable norms, values, and beliefs. The themed body of literature on career transition uses circular logic to reinforce the notion that gainful employment after military discharge is synonymous is with successful reintegration into a community. The studies on TAP career transition that utilize surveys as a method of data collection ask employment-related questions only. If the same methodology were used in political campaigns, it would be referred to as a “push” questionnaire.

Educational Transitional Studies of Veterans Connected to TAP

The literature review identified studies that expressly examined the influence of TAP on educational transition. These include a recent Walden dissertation. Santello (2020) examined the correlation between the Individual Transition Plan (ITP) of TAP and an individual's successful transition into an academic institution. Santello (2020) applied Mohr's program theory to study 26 student veterans across three educational institutions. He was unable to demonstrate a significant relationship between the program and its success. His study, however, was focused primarily on the transition between the military and academia. While this study is focused on the cultural transition, Santello (2020), developed an excellent dissertation that analyzed TAP as a career transition preparation program. However, veterans are preparing to transition to a new culture. More information is needed from a cultural aspect.

Jones (2013) discussed how TAP provides transitioning veterans with information about the educational benefits that setup veterans up for success once they are separated from the military and are attending a university. Jones (2013) conducted a phenomenological study of three individuals at the same university to explore the veterans' sense of "self." The study concluded that veterans are often in self-conflict with themselves of their lost sense of identity.

Odom (2018), examined whether veterans thought TAP helped them transition to post-secondary education. The study consisted of a convergent parallel mixed-method study in which he surveyed seventy-nine veterans and interviewed fifteen others. Odom (2018) applied Anderson's Adult Transition theory to the study, which is the notion that

an adult will react to changes in relationships and routines when faced with a transitional event. In this three-stage model, the event is considered complete when the individual plans the next stage of life. The study reviewed the of veterans' 'next steps' to evaluate the level of influence TAP had on academic. The study found that TAP "played no role" in the perceived successful transition to post-secondary education (Odom, 2018).

Jordan (2019), studied the perceived transition experience from the military to community college by interviewing fifteen student veterans, all-male, in a qualitative case study. The study applied Schlossberg's Transition theory to understand the singular event transition of the model (Jordan, 2019). Jordan (2019), denoted that the perception of the TAP was perfectly positioned for the transition as it provided information on the GI Bill. The funding source, the Jordan (2019) went on to report, was the primary factory in a successful transition to higher education. Schlossberg's Transition theory as the model is structured around a singular event. However, for many veterans, the transition is multiple events (Rumann and Hamrick, 2010).

While these studies are relevant to this research, the approach used in this study towards culture is different in that research on culture focuses on the perspective of acceptable norms, values, and beliefs. Similar to the literature on career transition, the educational transition themed body of literature uses circular logic to reinforce the notion that enrollment in college after military discharge is synonymous is with successful reintegration into a community.

Readjustment Studies of Veterans Connected to TAP

Some scholarly studies examined the readjustment of veterans post-TAP, including Katz et al. (2010), who studied the readjustment of veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) by surveying two hundred and fifteen veterans with a Likert scale close-ended questionnaire based on a post deployment reintegration inventory (PDRI) to identify symptoms of PTSD. The study found, with a 95% confidence, the PDRI ability to predict PTSD in returning service members (Katz et al., 2010). Katz et al. (2010), recommended that TAP apply the PDRI to all individuals to identify PTSD prior to discharge as a means to smooth the readjustment period for veterans.

Similarly, Danish and Antonides (2013) studied the distress that occurs after the deployment. Reviewing over seventy-seven thousand service members, Danish and Antonides (2013) found that the culture of the military creates barriers for service members to transition to a civilian population. According to Danish and Antonides (2013), the behavior needed to survive in a warzone is inappropriate at home, and many nonmilitary members cannot translate the response into anything else but PTSD. Soldiers and Marines, as the study denotes, build a culture that punishes those that seek mental health treatment (Danish and Antonides, 2013). While the study does not discuss TAP, it does outline a serious transitional that occurs as service members depart the military. The culture is different from that of the civilian society they are entering.

Other studies focused on the literature to learn about the readjustment. Romaniuk and Kidd (2018) conducted a literature review of eighteen qualitative and mixed-method studies and synthesized their common themes. They summarized the challenges that

veterans faced as one essential phase: “The loss of Identity” (Romaniuk and Kidd, 2018, pg. 63). The Identity that they referred to was the concept of social acceptance within the military social institution. Now that the veteran was not a part of the institution, the individual lost their sense of who they are as a person and how to form new relationships. Just as with any loss, the veterans will typically experience the five stages of grief (Romaniuk and Kidd, 2018). The stages of grief in which a veterans would endure creates barriers to social integration, similarly other when they experience a loss, it become difficult to function within normal social norms.

Although these studies are relevant to this research, they primarily only focus on veterans who have been diagnosed with behavioral health disorder. Thus, their conclusions often contain recommendations centered on behavioral health. In contrast, this study investigates veterans from the general population with undiagnosed disorders. veterans face many cultural changes and challenges that do not involve behavior health. Less than eleven percent of veterans have PTSD (Mann, 2016; Sayer et al., 2010).

Governmental Reports

Academic studies are not the only form of literature that is applicable to TAP. There are legislative materials such as laws, GAO reports, and CRS reports that have established the program and continue to examine TAP. These legislative materials are included because each resource offers a unique perspective on TAP. The legal requirements reflect what the current program mandates and the government reports are evaluations of TAP.

As a direct reaction to the need for military downsizing, the TAP was created to address unemployment for servicemembers. This program, however, did not become mandatory for program participation until the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) Act of 2011 which mandates that military service members from all branches who are within one year from their date of separation (two years if retiring) are to participate in TAP. The design of the workshop is geared toward the transition to civilian life. Each of the five days is carefully outlined to meet the legal requirements set forth by 10 U.S.C. §1142. The program allows for additional training a two-day class for trade skill transition and/or small business startups, as well as individualized counseling for any other concerns that a servicemember may have. Yet, the additional classes are not mandated and, thus, subject to managerial approval. Office of Personnel Management, Department of Labor, and Small Business Administration, on the other hand, contributes a combined estimate of twenty-four million.

Pre-separation counseling was first legally mandated in 1991 under 10 U.S.C. §1142 as a means of easing the transition of service members that were impacted by the drawdown of the size of the military (Kamarck, 2017). With the end of the Cold War, the size of the United States military was viewed by some as unsustainable. This led to a reduction in both the quantity of physical capital and personnel throughout the 1990s. After the wild ramp-up of military personnel levels in 2001, Congress requested a study on the TAP. Over five months GAO evaluated the program across the service branches. They were reviewing 221,754 separated servicemembers from the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard. Presented by Bascetta (2002), the study had found that while

each branch offered pre-separation counseling, there was a distinct lack of continuity between the programs. For example, the Army held a 2-day workshop while the Navy conducted one-on-one counseling with individuals (Bascetta, 2002). The observations to the subcommittee were that the program only focused on transitional employment and may want to review other potential goals.

In the years that followed, more than 2.4 million individuals transitioned through some variation of pre-separation counseling (Santella, 2020). The Obama administration sponsored the VOW Act of 2011, and within three years, Congress requested another review. Presenting for the GAO, Sherrill (2014), provided a few key findings of the program requirements that the new law mandated. The GAO reviewed the program at 206 military installations of the five branches. The study examined current and previous legislation, regulations, and policies to evaluate the implementation of the VOW Act of 2011. Sherrill (2014), reported five areas that required improvement to reach the appropriate application of current legal requirements. According to Sherrill (2014), “(a) Track Attendance (b) Ensure Training Quality (c) Assess Career readiness (d) Ensure Participation and Completion (e) Measure Performance and Evaluate Results” (pp 29–33). The report to Congress reinforces the circular reasoning of the TAP. TAP using the end of course evaluations to measure the success of the program (Sherrill, 2014). The course surveys are only asking about career transition, which only reinforces the belief that veterans are only worried about a career transition.

In late 2017, the GAO returned to Congress with another evaluation report of the program. This time, the program review had the benefit of six years of implement to

evaluate. Brown Barnes (2017) presented the report to the subcommittee that summarized the program. She submitted that regardless of the location, the workshop included three days of employment transition activities, six hours of veterans benefits information dissemination, and eight hours of educational & financial planning (Brown Barnes, 2017). Brown Barnes (2017), recommended that the Department of Defense improve the monitorization of TAP implementation, “such as participation and career readiness standards rates. Regulations require DOD to ensure that servicemembers complete TAP more than 90 days before leaving the military, but DOD has not monitored timeliness because it has focused on ensuring participation” (pp. 1-12). It is estimated that more than 200,000 servicemembers leave active duty every year (Brown Barnes, 2017). When servicemen and women train to deploy, it is for six to twelve months. Transitioning to a new culture does not occur in less than five days.

As noted in the previous chapter, little data is sharing between the DoD and the VA as they are separate departments within the federal government. Much of the services offered through the VA are medical-related, which is impacted by the Healthcare Information Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). The DoD focused on two wars throughout the 2000s, did not fall under the mandates of HIPAA.

In 2005, GAO presented a report that reviewed the impact that data sharing between the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) had on the transition for service members. GAO cross-examined the information that the DoD provided separated personnel with the activities of twelve VA regional offices. Presented by Bascetta (2005), the report found that the “VA does not have systematic

data from DoD on servicemembers who may need VA vocational rehabilitation and other benefits” (pp. 1-9). It was believed that the rationale for this was the difference in understanding and application of HIPAA. Among the recommendations of the report, Bascetta (2005) suggest that the VA play a more active role in the pre-separation counseling. This congressional report led to a more integrated part of TAP by representatives from the VA. In 2011, the focus shifted from data sharing to data reporting. The implementation of the VOW Act illuminated the inadequate model that TAP relayed. According to Bascetta (2005), “the VA staff had no official data source from the DoD from which to confirm the completeness and reliability of the data they obtain” (pg. 1).

In the early stages of the VOW Act, each branch of the Armed Services reported the numbers of service members that signed up for the program (Sherrill, 2013). This one among the reason that led to another Congressional Report on the TAP. Presented by Sherrill (2013), the study examined six employment and training programs conducted by DoL and VA. Relevant data appeared to be not collected and/or reported. Data such as the number of TAP eligible servicemembers and the number of participants that showed up to the workshops were not received and/or reported (Sherrill, 2013). This led to a gap in reporting information needed to adequately review the performance of the VOW Act with regards to TAP (Sherrill, 2014). Once the reporting model adjusted to report meaningful metrics, the congressional review could identify some underlining issues to TAP.

In 2014, GAO took a different approach to understand the application of TAP; a phenomenological study was conducted to examine what was known about veteran experiences during the readjustment phase post-TAP. Presented by Bertoni (2014), the study was a hybrid of focus groups and literature review to learn more about what veterans endured. The research team visited eleven VA medical centers and conducted interviews of focus groups that totaled forty-five veterans. The literature identified only twenty-five articles that pertain to the veteran transition. According to Bertoni (2014), the resulting conclusion of the study was that “while the VA offers a wide number of services,” the VA continues to be unable to meet the needs of veterans as they transition out of the military (pg 31). Bertoni (2014), outlines issues of access to timely medical appointments, reasonable disability decisions (concerning time), and identification of individuals with PTSD prior to discharge from the military during TAP. While the focus of Bertoni’s report started to look at veteran experiences, there is a distinct lack of conversation around the preparedness of an individual as they transition from one culture to another.

Discussion on Transition Assistance Program

Since 2001, more than 3.3 million service members have participated in the TAP (Bertoni, 2014). Veterans reported difficulty with the civilian transition, which led to substance abuse, loss of personal relationships, legal conflicts, and even homelessness (Bertoni, 2014). TAP workshops are tailored to the concept of career transition. Moreover, the program of TAP is considered to be complete when a veteran enjoys gainful employment, defined as receiving continuous income from employment (Vow

Act, 2011). The congressional reports indicate that only earning an income did not address the underlining transition issues related to culture conflict (Bertoni, 2014). Veterans were transitioning to new jobs within civilian society, but some were unable to sustain employment within their perceived new culture (Transitioning Veterans, 2017). There is a change in the culture that an individual transitions, not just a career.

Culture

Culture is one of those topics in which a person can write about for volumes of books and articles. Entire fields of study are dedicated to learning and understanding what culture is and how it impacts each other. There are as many definitions and applications of culture as there are researchers (Hanlan, 2017). Yet, research is about the expansion of the body of knowledge. To expand a specific phenomenon, one should outline the relevance of information. Otherwise, the topic is three miles wide and skin deep. Reacculturation of veterans into civilian society is a specific sliver of relevant information as it relates to culture as a topic. Thousands of books, studies, and/or articles are available for culture and transition. Of which, few reflect the impact of cultural integration for veterans. Deeper still, only two on culture and TAP (Bertoni, 2014; Transitioning Veterans, 2018). The sporadic nature of information on culture can be overwhelming for some. Thus, for the purpose of this study, the topic of culture will be limited to the cultural transition of military veterans.

Culture Defined

One of the hardships to defining the term “culture” is that there has yet to be a standardization of the term. According to Kotter (2008), the original term was used by a

social anthropologist to describe primitive groups. When this term was expanded to apply to organizations, it was broadened to ascribe the shared values and group behaviors of the organization (Kotter, 2008).

With the vast number of researcher definitions, one set the stage for culture as it relates to an organization such as the military: Edgar Schein. His work with the culture of organizations has become a seminal study for anyone that deals with modern culture.

Schein (2017) defined culture as

The accumulated shared learning of that group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration; which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave in relation to those problems. This accumulated learning pattern or system of beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness (p. 6).

Schein (2017), identified three areas of culture: acceptable norms, values, and beliefs. This is an elongated manner in which to say that culture forms from the patterns shared within a group. There are group norms that become self-regulating. Those that are not aligned with the group norms, spoken or unspoken, maybe chastised, depending on the level of offense. The patterns would also include values (Schein, 2010). Any embodiment that holds great importance would be a group value. Whether it is tangible or conceptual, the values of the group or organization often act as the driver for behavior.

Schein (2017), described the beliefs embedded within the group patterns. Culture includes shared emotions, perceptions, and even ceremonies (Shein, 2017). Members of the military share these group patterns. There are acceptable norms, such as military regulations (Higbee, 2016). The military holds its own set of values with the warrior's ethos (Mattis & Schake, 2016). While also sharing ceremonial beliefs, such as the raising of the flag every morning. Thus, as culture applies to military transition, culture will be defined for this study as the acceptable norms, values, and beliefs.

Others deepened the application by applying the definition to the unseen conscious of the group that creates group identity (Cloutier, 2013). In his research, Cloutier (2013), denotes the process in which the collective group awareness forms its own culture and leadership. The culture is reflected through the group norms, shared values, and closely held beliefs even though no one in the group will openly speak of them (Cloutier, 2013). Just as Schien discussed, Cloutier denoted the acceptable norms, values, and beliefs of a culture.

Some research views culture as what it means to the individual. Hanlan (2017), the focus of culture centers more around the sense of identity. For his dissertation, Hanlan (2017), examined the experiences of a twelve-person team that developed into a transcendent team. The study had found that the sense of self, as connected to shared group identity, created a culture of extraordinary performance across all key metrics (Hanlan, 2017). Moreover, there were firmly held beliefs between individuals about the expectations within the group that must be adhered to. Hanlan (2017), presented this study as a set of unspoken group guidelines that individuals followed without the entire

team even speaking the same language. Although Hanlan's study did not directly apply to military culture, it did examine the transition that an individual takes from one culture to another.

Acceptable Norms

Explicit social norms are those that are explicit. These can be laws, regulations, and/ or policies. For the military, explicit norms follow the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and Department of Defense regulations. Explicit norms are far easier to follow and understand as they are often written and discussed. Within the military, these norms are wide-ranging from communication over the radio to symbols worn on a uniform. However, as continuously noted, the literature on this topic is limited to the norms of rank, self-discipline, ceremonial displays, and esprit de corps.

What is an "acceptable norm" in the military may not translate well to the civilian society in which a veteran venture. In 2017, a group of researchers attempted to understand the barriers to sustainable employment after discharge from the military. Keeling et al. (2017), surveyed thirty-three veterans about their experiences in obtaining and maintaining employment after the military. The study had found that 53% of the subjects could not find work, and of those that did, 37% struggled to keep the job (Keeling et al., 2017). One of the participants denoted that the lack of structural norms in the "civilian world" made it difficult to work. What is expected of a service member is very different from that of the civilian counterpart (Keeling et al., 2017).

When many people think of the military, one of the first associated adjectives is "discipline" (Rondeau, 2011). To which is a very accurate assumption. Yet, this adjective

is incomplete. In the report presented to the National Defense University, Rondeau (2011), denotes that it is the self-discipline that genuinely defines the military culture. Servicemembers are taught basic training on how to self-manage and self-care aligned with military customs (Rondeau, 2011). How a bed is to be made, how a uniform is to be worn, or even the report time for duty are all governed through the expectation of self-discipline (Rondeau, 2011). Rondeau's discussion on the profession of the military as cultural norms is a paragon for acceptable norms.

Similar to many civilian organizations, the military follows two forms of social norms: explicit norms and implicit norms (Schein, 2017). Implicit norms are far more difficult to articulate as they are almost always situational etiquette that is unknown until the moment of faux pas (Schein, 2017). Rank in the military is one of the cultural norms that are both explicit and implicit (Schein, 2017). Ceremonial displays of flags, parades, and organizational symbols are a sense of pride for the group or "unit." Many veterans still wear their unit hats, uniform, and badges to feel connected to the esprit de corps they had while serving (Adler et al., 2015; Ahern et al., 2015; Keeling, Kintzle, & Castro, 2018; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010; Strom et al., 2012). There is a sense of structure to these ceremonies and the subsequent displays that can be comforting to a service member. It is a constant reminder that an individual is a part of something greater than themselves.

Values

Values of culture, especially organizational culture, is often conflated with the published mission statement on a company website or a vision statement hanging near the

front door (Schien, 2017). Yet, the comments posted by the executives rarely capture the essence of the sense of group identity (Hanlan, 2004, 2017). The military values, according to the literature, is made up of concepts of professionalism, protection of the people, and “one team, one fight” (Collins, 1998; Demers, 2011, 2013; Higbee, 2016; Mattis & Schake, 2016; Rondeau, 2011).

Owens (2011) discussed the concepts and role of military values as part of civil-military relations. Employing a review of previous literature, he denoted that civilian oversight on the military, while necessary, could be at odds with military values. Owens (2011), argued that the politics of the civilian control could misalign with the “unified protection” of the military value system. The sense of togetherness and unification that Owens discussed is not widely seen in the world that the veteran reintegrates.

After the chaos of the Bush/Gore elections off 2004, a political scientist researched the political affiliation of the US army to examine the alignment of values to the “Commander in Chief.” Dempsey (2009) conducted a quantitative study of 1,188 US Army soldiers. The study had reported that of those surveyed, less than 15% identified as Democratic affiliation. Dempsey (2009), surmised that a possible explanation for the asymmetric political affiliation could be the alignment of values the military holds with a conservative perspective. Furthermore, he denoted that the ethnocentric nature of the civilian culture misunderstands the culture of the military. According to Dempsey (2009), the lack of civilian cultural knowledge of the military has led to the imposition of civilian values into the military. America continues to address societal issues related to race and ethnicity. In the post, the 9/11 era of the military, race, and ethnicity is rarely an issue

(Dempsey, 2009). This has been attributed to a critical military value that everyone is the “color” of the uniform, with no individual different, unique, or special (Dempsey, 2009).

Beliefs

Belief is a cultural aspect that is difficult to identify in a literature review, as it is a subjective element (Geertz, 1973). Beliefs tend to be implicitly held firmly to the chest and unknown until there is conflict (Schien, 2017). With regards to the military, common themes appeared around the notion that a servicemember is never “off duty,” the conception that inaction will result in death, and that problem must be dealt with head-on (Collins, 1998; Higbee, 2016; Mattis & Schake, 2016; Rondeau, 2011; Snider, 1999). Changing around the pronouns to match those used in each branch, the belief that a servicemember is always on call for a mission is embedded deep at the core of who they are (Adler et al., 2015; Ahern et al., 2015). This belief intensifies when coupled with the value of professionalism because many servicemembers fail to decompress healthily when the workday is done (Grossman & Christensen, 2017).

In the military, there is an expectation that you are always on duty (Higbee, 2016). Like in many organizations, the beliefs are often the same as the expectations. In 1995, John Childress wrote about the concept of the belief within an organization. Childress (1995), conveyed the notion as an unspoken manner among the workforce of “the way we are supposed to be around here” (pg. 82). For the military, there are many written regulations, but there are just as many unwritten or unspoken. It is the belief that the servicemember becomes accustomed to that becomes a part of their DNA.

Belief is a powerful perspective of the individual that connects them to a broader culture. A recent dissertation examined the nature of belief as it applies to veterans' benefits. Hostrander (2019), conducted a qualitative study of fifteen civilian participants to explore the civilian perceptions of veterans benefits. He found a mixture of difference and ignorance, which he referred to as “igdeference” (Hostrander, 2019). The study did discuss how an individual’s perception is belief. Applying this concept to the military, belief would be that unspoken assessment of a person’s surroundings.

To a military servicemember, problems do not disappear if they are ignored; rather, the problem intensifies (Rondeau, 2011; Snider, 1999). As the principal mission of the military is to defend its citizens against attack, it is understandable how a small threat can quickly produce a significant and negative impact. Thus, another core belief is the concept that a problem must be dealt with head-on; otherwise, the inaction may lead to the death of the citizens (Mattis & Schake, 2016; Rondeau, 2011; Snider, 1999).

Research on Initial Cultural Divide

Limited research has been conducted on the topic of cultural transition into the military. The focus has been primarily towards the career transition out and coping with Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). However, some researchers have synthesized pieces of literature that provide helpful background regarding the journey that a service member takes.

The United States Armed Forces seeks to recruit the individuals that are the best fit for military service. Recruiters find members of all races, creeds, genders, and social-economical environments. Christeson et al. (2009) were among the first to examine the

modern market segmentation of potential recruits. Funded by the United States military, the research team conducted a three-year study of the eligible for military service of individuals in the United States, ages 17–24. Over the three years, the team used U.S. Census data, Department of Education surveys, and Pew Center information to collect eligibility data on 26,022,688 individuals. Christeson et al. (2009) discovered that more than 75% of individuals in the United States are ineligible for military service due to health-related issues, inadequate education, and/or criminal record. The results of their study would indicate that 19.5 million people out of 26 million are ineligible for military service. Prior to the start of a servicemember's transition, he/she/zhe is already segregated to 75% of what was once their peers.

Of those that meet the requirements, they must take an aptitude test known as the Armed Services Vocation Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). Wall (2018), discussed the importance of this test for those entering into the military, as it not only determines a servicemember's job within the military but often their career after the military as well. Wall (2018), is (at the time of this dissertation) a career counselor with the US Department of Defense. In 2017, she examined the ASVAB scores of the 180,000 newly enlisted personnel that entered the US Armed Forces. She found that while there is an 88% crosswalk between military and civilian occupations, more than three-quarters of those that take the ASVAB fail to archive results required to gain admission into the military. Wall's research is another example of how the military start to isolate individuals from the civilian population, culturally speaking.

Each branch has its own terminology for the indoctrination programs, but they share the same goal of cultural indoctrination. Similar to private industry, the military needs to onboard individuals quickly. Yet, groups tend to take longer to adjust. Bodnar (1999) studies just how long it takes groups to shift in culture within the military. For his study, he argued that the cultural shift of technology was no different from the cultural change of racial integration at the Naval Academy. The sense of self, Bodnar argued, needed to be deconstructed to rebuild the group identity. Once the group identifies become that of inclusion, rather than exclusion, the culture fundamentally shifted at the Naval Academy. While Bodnar went on to relate this idea towards how the Navy can integrate new technologies, this concept becomes central to how unique individuals are indoctrinated into the new culture of the military.

The individual learns the acceptable norms, values, and beliefs shared within a society. These shared sociological characteristics are the established expectations in which the social regulate behaviors. Snider (1999) outlined four main concepts that every military service member must culturally share: Discipline, Professional Ethos, Ceremonial Displays & Etiquette, and Esprit de Corps. He described that individuals need to learn the discipline to minimize the level of confusion in communication that can occur on the battlefield. Ethos, to maintain group identity. Ceremonial displays to control and mask the anxieties servicemembers must endure. Lastly, esprit de corps to unite a group and build morale. Snider (1999), reviews how each concept becomes a foundational pillar to the sense of cultural acceptance within the military. His research was more of a literature composition of military culture.

Research on Military Culture

Military culture has long been an area of study in which the body of knowledge is limited. Throughout the 20th century, cultural anthropologists were censured by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) for doing any research related to the military (Higbee, 2016). The AAA discovered several anthropologists using the persona of cultural research of a military as a means to conduct espionage (Higbee, 2016). As a result, researchers added little to the knowledge base military culture until late in the century. Douglas Higbee (2016) compiled literature about military culture and education into his book in 2016. Higbee (2016) focused on the element of military culture in both military academies and training foreign forces. He surmised that the military culture positioned a person for the perfect student (Higbee, 2016). According to Higbee (2016), the military culture is one of time management, diligent in duties, dedication, and inquisitive on the critical path to accomplish one's task. In other words, the culture positions a person to always be on time, diligent in studies, dedicate long hours, never miss a class, and ask what is needed to understand a topic (Higbee, 2016). The military culture is a complex topic that, while may help position a student better academically, can be a double edge sword.

In 1998, a researcher attempted to articulate the complexity of military culture through the lens of combat readiness. Collins (1998) conducted an archival study at the Center for Strategic and International Studies to outline the duties and responsibilities of a servicemember in a twenty-first-century democracy. His research found that there is a perceived fear of the military culture of both the civilian and military leaders. On one side

of the culture is the inability to change and adapt to the civilian cultural counterpart (Collins, 1998). Moreover, the traditions and customs that make up the military culture are the same things that are deepening the gap between the civilian population (Collins, 1998). On the other side of the fear, the culture of the military is centered around combat readiness. The military proactivity training their members to hold the same acceptable norms, values, and beliefs regardless of the combat environment, otherwise commonly referred to in the military as “train as you fight.” It is for this reason that no distinction is made between combat and non-combat veterans (Collins, 1998). Collins’ research illuminated the duality of the military culture as it aligns with civilian society.

McFarland (2005) expanded on the previous research on defining military culture through his dissection on US Army culture. McFarland (2005), describes Army culture as a collectivistic organization that is unaware of the ritualistic nature of its behaviors, decision making, and communication styles. He also denotes the cultural emphasis on a task over relationships. The task-oriented mindset mixed with direct and explicit communication style generates a culture that is not conducive to establishing an outside relationship (McFarland, 2005). A concept that may help understand the cultural barriers with civilian populations.

The military is an organization just like any other. The organization is centered around a common mission with subsequent goals in which to achieve it. There are different departments for different functions. The oversimplification of their functions is: The Army and Marines act as ground forces, the Navy and the Coastguard are maritime protectors, and the Air Force is air support and transportation. However, ultimately, each

branch is bonded together by the mission of National Defense. In their book, “On Combat,” Lt. Col. Dave Grossman and Loren Christensen study both the physiological and psychological culture of the servicemen and women. Through a mixed-method approach, Grossman and Christensen (2007), identified the shared hardship that servicemembers endure transcends branches of service. Moreover, the longer a person is exposed to the culture, the more indoctrinated they become to the norms of the culture (Grossman and Christensen, 2007).

To those that have not shared in the hardship, have learned the cultural artifacts, or have learned the language, the culture of the military can be quite confusing. Strom et al. (2012), summarized the confusion in a succinct story:

In 2009, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) started treatment of a veteran that they thought had PTSD. The veteran told stories about the “secret missions” he went on and how he was afraid that he would be found. The VA, unable to retrieve his DoD records, became surprised at the veterans’ violent outburst. He was subsequently hospitalized. The hospital tracked down an old co-worker of the veterans, only to find that he never went on any mission. In fact, he had schizophrenia (pg. 69).

The VA used this story as a primer for medical personnel. According to Strom et al. (2012), cultural considerations must be made when dealing with veterans as their culture is different from that of the civilian population. Strom et al. (2012), denotes the language, rank, length of service, and even gender influence the culture traits veterans exhibit post-discharge.

Military Culture Traits Literature

As discussed in the previous section on culture, some define culture as a plural term to encompass the combination of the multiple subsets of culture that create a larger organization (Hanlan, 2017). The Armed Services is no different in this manner than other organizations. Each of the branches holds its subset of cultural traits that formed surrounding its mission. Yet, as servicemembers across the DoD encounter similar transitional processes, a comparison of branches is beyond the scope of this literature review.

Length of Service

There appears to be a correlation between the amount of time a veteran served in the military, and the level of cognitive dissonance encountered upon transitioning (Adler et al., 2015; Ahern et al., 2015; Olsen et al. 2014). In fact, on a dissertation focused solely on the impact, the length of service has on an individual's transition. Knight (2014), surveyed seventy-five US Army soldiers before discharge. The study divided the participants into two groups: those who had served over twenty years, and those who had served under twenty years (Knight, 2014). The participant then received a Likert Scale survey to evaluate their perceptions about their preparedness for the transition. Knight (2014) found that there were no statistically significant differences were found between the two groups on the dependent variables studied. Although this study found no statistically significant differences, this was a binary examination of the length of service without regard to medical discharges—Moreover, the sample of $n=75$ when $N=1,400,000$ may not be statistically representative. However, Knight's research did

provoke an interesting concept about the qualitative nature of an individual's length of service as it applies to the transition.

Rank

The military rank structure is explicitly set through laws, regulations, and policies in which to create a hierarchical structure (Huntington, 1959). Rank often determines the position and/or function in which a serviceman is assigned. Individuals interact with each other with regard to the level of respect associated with the rank, as is customary.

Military rank does not hold the same level of value after the transition as it did in the military. Similarly, to the length of service, veterans have reported conflict with their expectations in the level of a career as it related to their rank (Anderson and Goodman, 2014).

Anderson and Goodman (2014) conducted a multiple case study to examine the transition of veterans after discharge. The study followed three individuals through their first six months post-discharge. After the period was over, the researcher interviewed the participants to describe their perspectives. Of the three individuals, two males and one female, the first male reported a sense of loss and disconnection to his surroundings (Anderson and Goodman, 2014). He denoted that he had his "place" in the military as a sergeant (a military rank), and now he is just like everyone else within direction or placement (Anderson and Goodman, 2014). The female subject expressed a feeling of being "downgraded" in the job she had taken. She was a leader in her field, and now she is "entry-level" (Anderson and Goodman, 2014). The final male subject reported issues of connection with interpersonal relationships. In the military, he knew where his position

stood, but now he was unsure. (Anderson and Goodman, 2014). Rank, too many in the military, is a symbol of cultural placement and identity. Without Rank, many veterans lose their status.

Gender

Gender is a pertinent concept when discussing in terms of military transition. According to Mattis and Schake (2016), gender and/or biological sex has never been a specific issue for the military until the civilian policymakers imposed their culture on the military's' (pp. 1-20). Similar to race, gender is rarely viewed as a differential variable that separates servicemembers. Seldom do servicemembers treat female members differently from male members (Wallance, Sheehan, & Young-Xu, 2009; Demers, 2011, 2013). However, this may be a result of several reports from a female veteran that the culture of the military requires females to forgo their femininity to take on a masculine persona (Demers, 2011, 2013).

Demers (2011) examined the experiences of seventeen female veterans to ascribe their challenges to reintegration. Through phenomenological interviews, Demers (2011) found that the identity of the gender of females in the military is in stark contrast to that of the civilian culture. There is adjusted gender identity in the military for females (Demers, 2011). This adjusted self-identity reportedly caused a considerable amount of stress to female services upon transition when they have to, as one veteran stated in an article by Demers (2011), “ fit into a society that separates male and female” (pg. 505). The study concluded that the cultural (acceptable norms, values, and beliefs) expectations of females in the military changes the sense of self in a female veteran (Demers, 2011).

This conclusion may be a more substantial influence on the transition process that once thought.

Literature on Chester County, Pennsylvania

Chester County, Pennsylvania, is a vibrant Northeastern region that has a diverse socio-economic population estimated at 506,422 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Race, age, gender, household income, and local economic demographics are all within 5% percent of the region's average (Christaldi & Pazzaglia, 2020). This demographic profile makes Chester County a representative of the expanded region. The civilian culture and customs of Chester County is aligned with and is an accurate representation of the northeastern United States (Smith et al., 2016).

There is very little literature regarding the county. Most of what is there is focused on the nineteenth century. Yet, one study explored the culture of migrant mushroom workers in an attempt to ascribe Mexican enclaves. Garcia (1997) conducted an archival study of the migrant population of the southern part of the county. According to Garcia (1997), he had hoped to be able to describe the rationale for the double-digit increase in immigration numbers to the region during the 1990s. He surmised that as the white, black, and Puerto Rican populations were migrating away from rural farm areas into the suburban boroughs of Chester County, there became a more substantial need for more agricultural workers (Garcia, 1997). Garcia (1997) concluded that the cultural trend would continue to grow in such a fashion that Chester County would develop into cultural enclaves separated by work function rather than race. This may be a reason in

which veterans encounter a “shock” when reentering Chester County. The military culture is divided by rank, not work function.

Discussion on Military Culture

The military holds its own set of acceptable norms, values, and beliefs. There is an assumption held by some that the culture of the military differs between those who have been in combat and those that have not. Military servicemember often face the same cultural environment abroad as they do at home (Marinova, Moon, & Van Dyne, 2010; Mattis & Schake, 2016). The requirements needed to be a master of the Profession of Arms requires servicemembers to train for endure the same level of physical, mental, and emotional stress regardless of geographical location (Huntington, 1959). Both the literature and anecdotal research reflect the military proactively training their members to hold the same acceptable norms, values, and beliefs regardless of the combat environment; otherwise commonly referred to in the military as “train as you fight”. It is for this reason that no distinction is made between combat and non-combat veterans.

Culture Shock

Many veterans have expressed their culture shock once the honeymoon phase of reintegration has subsided (Adler et al., 2015; Ahern et al., 2015; Kukla, Rattray, & Salyers, 2015). The subtle nuances of everyday life start to become prevalent and unavoidable. Simple civilian concepts become challenging to navigate for many veterans. For example, arranging a meeting time with other people can be confusing because of the rigor the military culture mandates on service members to be early to every event. A civilian not used to such hardship may unintentionally offend the veteran by being late to

the meeting. Vice versa, a veteran, may unintentionally offend the civilian by arriving earlier than expected, which may lead to an individual feeling rushed. It is the areas of social interaction where a division of culture can be found. This refers to the notice that the individual must use the tools at their disposal to complete the task (Clements & Milsom, 2008; Smith et al., 2012). Alignment of expectations and culture is not a one-sided conflict. Many civilian individuals have the expectation of veterans to behave in a manner that is socially acceptable to the local area (Collions, 1998). In Chester County, Pennsylvania, this may include expectations of educational participation, involvement in community outreach, and professional history that is relatable to the general public (Andreason & Kinneer, 2005; Christaldi & Pazzaglia, 2020; Collions, 1998). Some individuals may have the expectation that a veteran has held the commonly held ideological norm of a nine to five routine with weekends for hobbies.

Studies on Culture Conflict

Seldom can a civilian individual relate to the lived experiences of that of the veteran. According to Huntington (1959), the military distinguishes itself from other professional functions because they are the “managers of violence” (pg. 9). The violence in which the military manages is that of national defense. The focus is that of defending against undue harm to the citizens of the United States. To achieve this mission, the military prepares for violence in all forms. Much in the way that law enforcement perceives threats in the general public, many veterans perceive many risks that are not shared with the general public. Discussions and actions taken by veterans outside the context of national defense may tend to view as inappropriate or even violent.

One of the prevalent pieces of literature on the military-civilian conflict is the work by Samuel Huntington in 1959. Huntington, a longtime political scientist, and teacher at Harvard University. In 1959, Huntington analyzed the politics that surround civil-military relations. His over five-hundred-page book covered everything from the ideology of the military culture to the role that the Joint Chiefs play in (what was then) modern politics. His work was brilliant for the time. While some ideas and concepts do not apply to the military of today, his view was that enlisted men and women are of lower intelligence (Huntington, 1959, pp 17-18). There was no other published work on the cultural divide between the military and the civilian population. Huntington (1959), discerned that there is a division of culture because the profession of the military cannot be found in the profession of the civilian. The jobs, duties, and responsibilities may appear the same, but the “military soldier,” according to Huntington, “must remain segregated from the State to ensure the citizen’s survival.”

A spillover from the stereotype of all veterans has PTSD that veterans are violent (Clement & Milsom, 2008; Hay et al., 2006; Higgins, 2012). One researcher proposed that the reason for this was the locational difference. As part of a strategic research project at the Army War College, Colonel Higgins examined the proximity of military bases to civilian populations. He had discovered that, as of 2012, 57.1% were located in the South region of the US, 31.7% were located in the West region of the US, 7.4% were located in the North Central and only 3.6% were located in the Northeastern region of the US (Higgins, 2012). Higgins (2012), surmised that the region of the United States that holds a population of fifty-six million civilians, there are only thirty-six thousand

servicemembers (pp 5-12). In other words, there are only six servicemembers per 10,000 people in the Northeastern United States. It does not take much to see how the people of Chester County do not hold the same culture as the military.

Understanding how cultural reintegration into the community is essential to examine the transition of the veteran. The first step for many researchers in this is to be able to measure the integration. One group of researchers attempted this in the 2000s. Resnil et al. (2012), wanted to define a standard measuring instrument for community reintegration. They studied over 800,000 veterans between 2001 and 2010. They found that 49% report issues participating in local activities, and 42% reported problems merely getting along with their significant other (Resnil et al., 2012). After almost a full decade of research, Resnil et al. (2012) concluded that there is an inability to accurately measure reintegration from a quantitative lens because the cultural element of civilian integration is too subjective. The work of Resnil and the rest of the research throughout the decade assist in directing the correct course of research to understand veterans' transition.

With a lack of environmental exposure to civilian culture, nontransferable profession, and inability to measure the integration success rate into a community, veterans are expected to get and keep gainful employment in a new culture. Adler et al. (2011) studied 797 veterans and their ability to maintain gainful employment once they are faced with a new culture. The research team applied a Work Limitation Questionnaire (WLQ) survey to the participants to measure their psychiatric and work impairments. The study concluded that there was a strong correlation between gainful employment and reintegration of veterans that had separated from the military between 2001 and 2010.

The study failed to define the term “gainful employment.” According to the VOW Act of 2011, gainful employment is defined as “any employment in which an employer provides a continuous income for a minimum of six weeks.” The research team of Adler et al. does not detail if six weeks of employment is enough for reintegration or not. To some, problems may not surface until six months.

Veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)/Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) continue to express conflict with the cultural norms of the civilian world. In 2015, a team of researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, explored some of the challenges that OIF/OEF veterans were reporting. Comprised of twenty-four veterans, Ahern et al. (2015), conducted a phenomenological study to ascribe such experiences. While the study focused more on family reintegration rather than social or community integration, the veterans reported the concept of the “Normal Alien” (Adler et al., 2011, pg. 5). Adler et al. (2011), discovered a disconnection between the expectations, culturally speaking, of the veteran and that of the social group in which the veteran attempted to reintegrate. The veteran then reported feeling emotions of being in an unfamiliar environment, almost as if the home that was “normal” once before is now “alien.” Adler et al. (2011), stumbled upon an interesting concept. They question whether a veteran return home to the same environment they left or did the culture of that environment changed and evolved.

The lack of shared common experiences creates an environment in which misunderstanding and false assumptions can thrive. In the absence of fact, the human mind will fill in the categorical placement of individual beliefs (Kaplan, Gimbel, & Harris, 2016). There are those that view military service members as low educated.

Members are recruited because they could not get into college. However, this is a false assumption. Military members hold a higher degree per capita than their civilian counterparts (McFarland, 2005). All active-duty military officers are required to hold at least a bachelors' level degree, with over eighty percent holding a graduate-level degree (Higbee, 2016). Enlisted personnel is required to hold at least a high school level diploma or General Educational Development (GED). The educational level of a military service member often differ from the expectations of a civilian member that has little to no experience interacting with military members.

TV, movies, and news reports often lead members of the public with incorrect assertions and expectations of veterans. One of the categories that some may mentally place a veteran is the visual elements that they have seen in a movie. Films such as "We Were Soldiers," "Saving Private Ryan," and "Blackhawk Down" are fantastic stories, but stories none the less. Military movies are purposefully designed to elicit extreme emotion from the view without regard to the reality of a situation. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a disorder that occurs when an individual experiences trauma that is beyond the normal realm of human experience (Lombard, 2014). Less than eleven percent of veterans have PTSD (Mann, 2016; Sayer et al., 2010). Yet, many Americans perceive most veterans to have some form of PTSD. It is the number one reason given by nonservice members as to why they would avoid and/or not hire a veteran (Keeling, Kintzle, & Castro, 2018; Lewis, 2012).

Civil-Military Divide

The civil-military divide is a concept from the late 1950s that illustrated the division between the military and the civilian population (Huntington, 1959). The lack of shared everyday experiences and shared norms creates a divide between those who have served on active duty and those who have not. 49% of veterans have sought some sort of social services from the Department of Veterans Affairs between six months and one year after separation from active duty (Resnik et al., 2012). Academic research indicates that this may have been a result of the social conflicts that veterans encounter. The expectations that some veterans hold towards reintegration has led to a misalignment of cultural norms. TAP provides veterans with the tools they need to effectively search for and obtain a job post active duty separation. However, there are reports of constant struggle for the veteran after a job is received (Kukla, Rattray, & Salyers, 2015; President's Council, 2015). If the right tool or resources are unavailable, then the service member is expected to complete the task anyway (Rondeau, 2011). This may appear extreme to some outside of the military. Thus, conflict can arise when a veteran receives a tasking in a job and then addresses complications in an unorthodox manner without supervisory approval. Specifically, military medical professionals are required to complete a new and costly program to become certified in areas of medicine which they have been doing for years. A service member may have been performing surgery on the battlefield. Still, they cannot fulfill a routine exam post-military (President's Council, 2015). When informed that their previous work experience is nontransferable, feelings of helplessness and despair can arise in the veteran.

Building upon Huntington's earlier work, Nielsen and Snider (2009), reexamined civil-military relations in light of an all-volunteer force. Their study reviewed the necessity of the military function within the State but is placed as a role that should be outside of "normal" society (Nielsen and Snider, 2009). According to Nielsen and Snider (2009), although the educational level of the enlisted serviceman and woman is higher than of the days in which Huntington wrote, they are still of less intelligence of the commissioned officer (pp 206 -207). The study concluded that the divide between civilian and military cultures exist because their functional role requires them to do so. The reexamination in which Nielsen and Snider conducted reinforces the long-held and unspoken concept that military and civilian cultures are divergent.

The limitation of knowledge and relatability to military culture deepened the disconnection between American civilians and the United States Military. A divide between the civilian population and the military population stemmed from a paradoxical relationship. Mattis and Schake (2016), studied the paradox of the civil-military divide. General (Ret) James Mattis (2016) outline the paradox:

Ordinary Americans support the military more than ever but know less than ever. In Washington, senior government policymakers simultaneously overestimate the military's capabilities and mistrust the military leadership. The US military is widely viewed as the strongest military in the history of the world. Still, military leaders see conventional military tools as less and less useful for dealing with the sophisticated security threats we face today. Meanwhile, although the military

itself is more professional than ever, its internal structures lag badly behind those in most civilian workplaces (pg. 21).

The study used quantitative surveys to collect data on American public attitudes towards the military. Mattis and Schake (2016), found that, in general, individuals not exposed to the military will fill in their perspective about the military through TV, film, and/or other media. The study recommended that an increase of civil-military exposure could decrease the paradoxical relationship. Applying Mattis and Schake's study to the cultural transition of veterans, an increased exposure before discharge may increase awareness of the cultural differences.

Few paragons exemplify the culture shock that the civil-military divide can create than when a veteran use their military benefits for education. Rumann and Hamrick (2010) studied the transition of the National Guard and Reserves from a warzone back to an educational institution. Using Schlossberg's Transition theory, the study interviewed six veterans about their experiences in returning from deployment back to college. Rumann and Hamrick (2010) found that the student had a difficult time readjusting to activities that did not align with a militarized culture. That is to say, events, classes, and projects required an element of structure, time management, and discipline for the returning veteran to feel conformable (Rumann and Hamrick, 2010). Five of the six participants report feeling as if there needed to "relearn" their home (Rumann and Hamrick, 2010). Interestingly, this study used Schlossberg's Transition theory as the model is structured around a singular event. However, for many veterans, the civil-military divide is ongoing.

Veterans are not the only group that experiences culture shock when transitioning to a new educational institution. Many international students experience the same feelings of stress. In 2008, a study was conducted at the University of Dundee (Scotland, United Kingdom) that examined the adaptation of students in higher education. Using an updated model of Oberg's culture shock theory, Zhou et al. (2008) evaluated the acculturation process that international students shared upon arrival at the university. They had concluded that culture shock is caused by the mismatch expectation of the student to the culture in which they are transitioning. When veterans transition, they, too, hold a set of expectations towards the new culture.

Imagine if, after 20 years of logistical supply chain management experience, the only work you could do is driving a truck (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). After this, it can be made accessible to understand the stress that this "new culture" imposes. Andreason and Kinneer (2005) studied the translatability of military experience to civilian employment as it related to reintegration. Through a synthesized review of the literature, they found "growing evidence of high attrition due to repatriation adjustment" (Andreason and Kinneer, 2005, pg. 109). The authors concluded that the loss of professional identity impacts an individual's reintegration process.

The reintegration process is an issue that even the Department of Veteran Affairs has researched. Kukla et al. (2015), conducted a mixed-methods study to understand the work integration of veterans. With a participant pool of forty veterans, the research group examined the mental factors that impacted the participant's work (Kukla et al., 2015). The study had identified a few critical elements of veteran reintegration. The first thing

that was noted was that the reintegration process is not a singular event, but rather it is a multitude of transitions. The study also found that there is a mismatch between the skills of the military and that of the civilian professions that creates a cultural divide. Finally, the study found that more than 70% of participants are diagnosed with at least one readjustment disorder from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Kukla et al., 2015).

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders fifteen edition (DSM-5) is the American Psychiatric Association (APA) definitive guide for describing and record mental disorders for treatment (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). This manual outlines all the psychiatric disorders that impact millions of people. Of these disorders is the diagnostic label of “Adjustment Disorder” that develops after an individual encounters ongoing stressor(s) stemming from a new environment. While Adjustment Disorder is the official terminology, others refer to it as culture shock (Van Tilburg & Vingerhoets, 2007).

Culture shock is hard to distinguish. Out of context, cultural conflict may appear to be a symptom of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, or even Personality Disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). However, the cultural norms of the previous culture may not view the behaviors as an issue or symptom of a more significant problem. Take the urgency of a military veteran to have a clean and pressed suit every day for work. To some, the necessity may appear to be signs of

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. Yet, in the context of military veterans, a person is expected to have a clean and pressed uniform every day for work.

The DMS-5 acknowledges the fine line to address cultural shock from other psychiatric impediments. In order to discern cultural issues from cultural distress, the APA provides a list of ethical and non-invasive questions for researchers to use (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Applications of Culture Shock Theory

Culture shock theory was first suggested by Kalervo Oberg in the mid-1950s to describe the social conflict reported by missionaries working in a foreign country. Oberg discussed the notion of mental, and sometimes even physical, discomfort with a new environment as negativity impact on the individual due to the unexpected culture (Oberg, 1954). He continued the study of cultural divergence in 1960 when he published the behavioral symptoms of culture shock. According to Oberg (1960), culture shock included “a feeling of helplessness; fits of anger over delays and other minor frustrations; a terrible longing to be back home” (pp 142-143). Oberg’s culture shock theory may be relatable to those that have ever felt “homesick” after being away on a trip for too long.

Many people have built upon Oberg’s theory. Adrian Furnham and Stephen Bochner (1986) expended the application through the examination of cultural contact. In this version of the culture shock theory, culture shock occurs when two divergent cultures hold competing expectations (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). The central concept is that the cultural norms of a host country would differ from that of the individual visiting. While the visiting individual may logically expect that the host country may have a different

language, food, and culture, there an unspoken expectation that the values would not differ for the individual from that of the individual's home country. When the inevitable divergent values become real to the individual, culture shock occurs. Over twenty years (1986- 2006), Furnham and Bochner (2005) studied this phenomenon. They reviewed tourists, international students, international businesspeople, immigrants, and refugees. They concluded that entering into a new culture and/or society is difficult, awkward, and stressful (Ward, Furnham, & Bochner, 2005).

Of the different definitions of culture shock theory, there is one that ascribes the process of social discomfort succinctly: Pedersen. According to Pedersen (1994), culture shock is “an internalized construct of perspective developed in reaction or response to the new or unfamiliar situation” (pg. vii). Pedersen discussed the concept of culture shock from the perspective of the internal struggle that a person endures with; there is a completing reality with that of the internalized expectation of events. People, according to Pedersen (1994), encounter multiple stages of adjustment to new social norms. This notion of various stages can be visualized as a “U” shape, similar to Lysgaard's U-curve hypothesis developed in the mid-fifties. The hypothesis states that adjustment to a new country is a step by step process that starts high, then dips into conflict before returning upward (Lysgaard, 1955). According to Pedersen (1995), the steps of adjustment uses the U-curve to outline the process of five stages.

The Five Stages

Culture shock theory asserts that a person experiences five stages of shock when immersed in a new culture (Pedersen, 1995). The five stages of culture shock theory are

(a) the honeymoon stage (b) the disintegration stage (c) the reintegration (d) the autonomy stage, and (e) the interdependence stage. It is important to note that this continuum of adjustment stages is fluid. Individuals may have different starting points, depending on familiarity with the new culture. Moreover, the transition between stages is often gradient. The gradient nature of the stages is similar to the transition from child to adult. Pre-teen to teen to adult, behaviorally speaking, can be seen as sporadic and situational. A teenager may be able to drive a motor vehicle without supervision, yet academic responsibilities may go to the wayside. In this manner, an individual transitioning between the stages of adjustment to a new cultural environment could shift in a way that is without a quantifiable predictor.

Honeymoon. Starting at the top-left of the U-curve, the honeymoon phase is often experienced by those that are idealistic about the new environment (Pedersen, 1995). An individual is naïve and idealistic about the new culture. Tourists are a prime example of this stage. An individual may travel to a new country to enjoy an experience previously unknown. The individual expects a difference in the environment and cultural norms with an element of delight, comparable to a newly married couple. Individuals will typically explore the main surface areas, try new foods, and interact with the culture. Yet, there is an underlying expectation of miscommunication and cultural faux pas.

Disintegration. At the bottom-left portion of the U-curve, the disintegration stage is the first stage of the conflict. Individuals begin to diverge from old norms without an accurate understanding of the new culture (Pedersen, 1995). This stage tends to experience most by sojourners. International students and/or global businesspeople travel

to foreign cultures for extended periods. To adapt to new surroundings, the sojourner will attempt to forgo their cultural norms for the acceptable norms, values, and beliefs of the new culture. Yet, the norms, values, and beliefs may be explicit to the sojourner. The sojourner may try to follow all the cultural “rules” but fail to understand the unspoken context and/or process (Ward, Furnham, & Bochner, 2005). This misalignment of cultural integration often leads to an internal sense of inadequacy, depression, and overall withdrawn isolationism (Pedersen, 1995). The individual may direct the blame of the conflict at themselves.

Reintegration. At the bottom-right portion of the U-curve, the reintegration stage, an individual begins to adopt new norms without a contextualized understanding of the new culture (Pedersen, 1995). In this stage, conflict swings from an internal process to an external one. Individuals tend to shift the blame from themselves to the new culture as a whole. Think as an example of an international businessperson whose business model is failing in a new country. While the business model thrived in the original state, the latest market does not share the same cultural norms. Regardless of the amount of time, money, and energy invested in the overseas expansion, the business fails. The businessperson will, according to Pedersen’s culture shock theory, blame the new culture for the misalignment conflict in the reintegration stage (Pedersen, 1995).

Autonomy. At the Middle-right portion of the U-curve, the autonomy stage is the stage in which an individual has the potential to successfully transitioned into the new culture. The autonomous individual obtained an increased ability to navigate the new cultural norms with minimal conflict. According to Pedersen (1995), this “person who

emerges from the detachment of stage one, the self-blame of stage two, and the hostility of stage three are in a position to build a new perspective between their former identity and the new host culture” (pg. 201). It is at this point in which an individual can navigate through the community without worry about a significant conflict. One example of this is the missionary that has the confidence to explore the geographical wilderness that surrounds the new culture without fear of safety or conflict. It is at this point in which individuals start to see a change in their lexicon from “them” to “us.”

Interdependence. At the top-right portion of the U-curve, the final and utopic stage resides. The interdependence stage occurs when the individual is completely immersed in the new culture. According to Pedersen (1995), the interdependence stage is the idealized state in which a new identity has formed into a sense of multicultural acceptance. This stage may appear to be fleeting to some as the acceptance into multiple cultures and environments can be at odds with each other. People have been known to pick one identity over another and forgo the previous cultural norms for the new (Ward, Furnham, & Bochner, 2005).

Discussion on Culture Shock Theory Alignment with Veterans

Culture shock theory asserts that a person experiences five distinct stages of shock when immersed in a new culture. Through Pedersen’s culture shock theory five-stage U-curve model, veterans can expect to encounter specific physiological and psychological indicators when transitioning back to civilian society. The model describes the cultural transition process that veterans unconsciously follow.

When veterans prepare for the transition to the reintegration of civilian society, there is a sense that they are returning home (Resnik et al., 2012). There is a sense that they understand the culture before returning (Demers, 2013). However, an estimated 49% of veterans encounter cultural conflict issues upon a transition (Resnik et al., 2012). There appears to be some a divergence from old norms without an accurate understanding of the new culture as outlined in stage two of culture shock theory. Many veterans report having difficulty controlling their anger with the cultural variances, a pivotal element to stage three of the culture shock theory (Resnik et al., 2012).

Conclusion

In this chapter, TAP, culture shock, and the civil-military cultural divide have been examined in different contexts. However, the literature review demonstrates that they have not been examined in conjunction with one another. These three topics are important and impactful to a veteran's during their transitional period. An ethnographic study of the cultural sharing patterns offered a holistic lens to the cultural transition a veteran endures. The TAP holds a high focus on career transition. Yet, many veterans are continuing to seek reintegration services in Chester County, Pennsylvania. If a veteran starts their transition at either Stage 2 or 3 of culture shock theory, then it begs the question, "To what extent does the Transitional Assistance Program help post-active duty veterans obtain Stage 4 of culture shock theory in Chester County, Pennsylvania."

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the unmet reacculturation needs of post-active duty veterans in Chester County, Pennsylvania, who have utilized the United States' DoD's TAP. Identification of the veteran's unmet reacculturation needs was conducted through a set of interviews. The findings from the interviews were used to make substantive policy recommendations. In addition, this study tested and extended Pedersen's culture shock theory by assessing cultural adaptation with respect to the military to civilian transitions.

Research Design and Rationale

Since 2001, more than 3.3 million service members have participated in the TAP prior to reintegration. To address the policies that influence post-active duty transitions, this study obtained the cultural impact of TAP as perceived by 12 veterans through an ethnographic design. The ethnographic design was selected because it is the optimal mechanism to map the position of veterans on Pedersen's U-curve culture shock theory after TAP, as determined by the individual and collective perspectives and experiences of the research participants. The participant responses produced cues and diagnostic data required to properly position on the U-curve. Behavior cues and thematic self-coding are ideally determined through ethnographic research methods.

This study used the U-curve to determine the reacculturation of veterans. The U-Curve classifies reacculturation according to five stages: (a) the honeymoon stage, (b) the disintegration stage, (c) the reintegration, (d) the autonomy stage, and (e) the

interdependence stage (a description of each stage is located in Chapter 2). There are a variety of instruments that could have been used to determine what stage of reacculturation an individual may be in, including written surveys, focus groups, discourse observations, videography, and journaling. However, each had potential methodological drawbacks. For example, written survey questions can be misinterpreted by the participant, which may lead them to classify themselves in the wrong stage of reacculturation. Additionally, the researcher cannot observe the participant's behavior--an essential indicator of reacculturation --through the use of written surveys alone.

These study designs lack nuance because they may fail to identify individuals that overlap stages or are on the brink of a new reacculturation stage. This study, therefore, used an ethnographic design because it incorporates both observation and interviews to determine with precision the veteran's stage of reacculturation. For example, if the veteran appears hostile towards civilian culture during observation (a potential sign of stage reintegration), then follow-up questions can be applied in the interview to confirm whether the behavior is indicative of stage reintegration. Thus, the use of observation combined with interviews will help accurately classify the veteran reacculturation with respect to reintegration into civilian society. It is believed that the accurate classification of veteran reacculturation will help reduce veteran cultural adjustment related issues through recommending policy adjustments to TAP.

Research Question

RQ: To what extent does the TAP help post-active duty veterans obtain Stage 4, autonomy, of culture shock theory in Chester County, Pennsylvania?

SQ1: What are the shared perceived barriers to obtain autonomy in civilian society by post-active duty veterans in Chester County, Pennsylvania?

SQ2: How do military rank influence share perceptions to obtain autonomy in civilian society?

SQ3: How does gender influence share perceptions to obtain autonomy in civilian society?

SQ4: How does an individual's length of service influence the shared perceptions to obtain autonomy in civilian society?

State and Define the Central Concept

Many veterans have reported experiencing a degree of culture shock after the separation from the military. Difficulty adjusting to the reacculturation in civilian society has caused an uptick in the social service requests with the VA. The resolution of the conflict with the new culture occurs when an individual has obtained Stage 4 (autonomy; Pedersen, 1994). Thus, the research question for this study was to what extent does the TAP help post-active duty veterans obtain Stage 4 of culture shock theory in Chester County, Pennsylvania?

Research Tradition

The research tradition for this study was a qualitative method with a critical ethnographic approach. Ethnography is a form of research that explores the cultural-sharing patterns of a phenomenon. The focus of this form is to discover and interpret the

social configurations of a group (Madison, 2011). Ethnography incorporates theory as a means to process information.

The Rationale for Chosen Tradition

It has been determined that a critical ethnography design would best suit the research. “Critical ethnography is conventional ethnography with a purpose” (Madison, 2011, pg. 1). Often researcher bias can influence the voice of research when the subject of a study includes the researcher. In the evaluation of TAP from the perspective of cultural impact, this author has experienced TAP and the transition process. Thus, the “critical” element was included. Moreover, this form of research explores the cultural patterns of the phenomenon. As the focus is exploring the behaviors that stem from the values, ethnography is justified as the proper approach for this topic.

Three styles of qualitative methods that were evaluated for the use of this study: ethnography, phenomenology, and case study. Narrative and grounded theory were not used because multiple stories would not offer the proper context needed for the study requires. As Cultural Shock Theory is the theoretical framework for this research, the grounded theory approach would be inappropriate in this situation. Phenomenology explores the meaning of a phenomenon from the perspective of conscious experience. The exploration of the different experiences of TAP should incorporate the meaning of each impression as it applies to the situation. However, it was believed that more significant data would be found in the patterns of the behavior, as seen by veterans. A multiple case study approach would not offer a proper context for a cultural transition.

While a multiple case study would provide data, the data would not address the commonly shared acceptable norms, values, and beliefs shared among veterans.

For the reasons listed above, this study used critical ethnography to interpret the patterns seen with the cultural transition of veterans. Through observations and interviews of veterans, the information will convey the collective experiences and values to others outside the subject group. Culture shock theory will define the hermeneutics to connect the dots between the policies of TAP and the reintegration patterns of veterans.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher will be that of a participant observer. Participants within this study were observed only during the interview process. The researcher recorded and reviewed the non-verbal communication of the interviewees. As this author is a veteran, there was a naturally occurring socialized connection to the group observed.

There was an inherent subject bias on the part of the researcher, who is a veteran. While every attempt was made to mitigate the impact, the bias requires disclosure. To address researcher bias, three different non-veterans were conducted periodic reviews to ensure neutrality. This tactic, coupled with a triangulation of sources, will mitigate researcher bias.

Methodology

The ethnographic research interviewed post active duty veterans to evaluate the extent that TAP assists veterans obtain Stage 4 of culture shock theory. Individuals were selected through snowball sampling, as long as each participant was in line with the

selection criteria. Each participant was asked the same five open-ended questions to address all research questions while retaining the ability to expand on their own experience. Upon completion of data collection, the researcher conducted a visual thematic analysis to analyze the themes that represent the experiences of a post-TAP transition.

Participant Selection Logic

Participants were selected based on the categorization of the type of active duty service status (e.g., Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve, AGR), geographical location (Chester County, PA), and VA (Department of Veterans Affairs) disability rating. The recruitment process started with the network of individuals that identify themselves as veterans that separated post-2001. The sample conveyed a relatable impression of the veteran population that transitioned to Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Population

Chester County, Pennsylvania, is a vibrant Northeastern region that has a diverse socio-economic population estimated at 506,422 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Chester County has an estimated 7.1% veteran population that is below the national average of 8.7%. Race, age, gender, household income, and local economic demographics are all within 5% percent of the region's average. This demographic profile makes Chester County a representative of the expanded region, as well as a population sample worthy of study.

Sampling Method

Purposive snowball sampling technique was used to obtain participants for this study by having each participant refer the next potential participant. The identification of participants largely depended on the ability to identify the veterans' status. At the time of this dissertation, veterans' status is recorded only after self-identification and self-reporting. A chain-referral model technique to identify 12 participants was used to generate an adequate sample size (Kirby, 2020).

Criteria

The sample will consist of individuals that were discharged from active-duty military service after 2001. Individuals who held a disability rating of 30% or less will address the issue of covariates. Individuals have reported much more difficult if they reintegrate with PTSD, paralyzed or missing appendages, or forced retirement due to medical condition (Hinojosa, & Hinojosa, 2011; Miller, & Warner, 2013; Pfeiffer et al., 2012). A criteria requirement of 30% or less will control for this undue influence without a violation of the Healthcare Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). All of these issues are above a rating of 30%. PTSD is 50%, paralyzed or missing appendages is at least 40%, and medical retirements are a minimum of 40%. It was believed that the limitation of the VA rating would mitigate the covariate without asking medically related questions.

Procedure for Participant Recruitment

Initial participants were contacted through recruitment flyers in areas known for the veteran congregation, requesting volunteers for the study. Upon expression of interest

in the study, each potential volunteer received a written Lay Summary, Consent Form, and Statement of Understanding for review. These three forms informed each potential participant in the purpose and expectations of the study. Individuals understood and agreed to all expectations of the participant.

Sample Size

The study was narrowed down to one region of the United States and targeting a select number of individuals to represent the veteran population of the region. The sample size was determined based on the level of quality and saturation of information. The target goal was 12 individual veterans. Twelve is appropriate to sample size for qualitative research before the over-saturation of data occurs (Morse, 2000; Saldana, 2018). Qualitative interviews require fewer participants in a study. This was consistent with similar studies presented in the literature review.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation used for data collection was a telephone interview with veterans from around Chester County, Pennsylvania. The researcher conducted interviews. The instrument included the Schensul-LeCompte model of a semi-structured open-ended interview that inquired about the five-question area of the main research question, along with the four sub-questions. The interviews consisted of a conversation surrounding the five pre-established questions.

Interview Protocol

Interviewees were provided, prior to the phone conversation, with a copy of the lay summary and interview questions. Each telephone conference session was set in a location that was free of outside interference involving unwanted persons or environmental distractions. Upon verbally meeting with the participants, a full review of the lay summary, the consent form, and the agenda for the interview was conducted. Interviewees were reassured that all questions are voluntary and that the session could end at any time if participation becomes uncomfortable. The participants were informed about the strict requirement for confidentiality by all members of the research team. Participants received a twenty-dollar gift card as compensation for their time.

The Intent of Interview Data

The interviews intended to collect information about the perceived barriers to social reintegration post active duty. Perceived experiences on social conflict, job hunting, and alignment of social expectations offered a large amount of quality data used to establish a baseline for culture sharing patterns of veterans. Data from interviews produced patterns of behaviors that lead to either social conflict or social acceptance. Information obtained from interviews was analyzed to identify the best practices for future veterans.

The Validity of the Instrument

There were two forms of validity utilized in this study: (a) content validity and (b) construct validity. Content validity measures the research instrument's ability to evaluate all relevant variables within the study. Overlapping questions on one topic provided data

to identify isolated attributes accurately. Construct validity measured the instrument to the overall theoretical framework. In this study, the theoretical framework was culture shock theory. Aligned with this theory, individuals were questioned about their personal experiences, perceptions, and expectations towards reintegration. These questions offer insight into the attitude climate of military reintegration that was applied to transitional policies and programs.

Published Data Collection Instruments

The Schensul-LeCompte model of a semi-structured open-ended interview was developed in 1999 for ethnographic research. This model provides a guided interview with individuals that allows for the exploration of experiences while ensuring a specific question is addressed. This model of interviewing has been used in over 50 other ethnographic studies (Duneier & Murphy, 2014; Schensul & LeCompte, 2013; and LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). It was believed that this form of interviewing addressed the study's central question and all subsequent research questions while providing the opportunity to explore areas of possible TAP conflict previously unknown.

Procedures for Pilot Study

The pilot study consisted of one test interview, as outlined in this chapter. The researcher interviewed one individual to gauge the quality level of inquiry, the accuracy of the recording device, and the alignment with the protocol. The interview participant received an interview packet containing survey questions for their review before the meeting. The interviewer recorded the responses by a digital record and by hand as the interviewee discusses their answers to the questions. It was believed that the process of

the interviewee not recording their own answer allowed them to speak more freely. Thus, providing more quality answers for the study. Upon completion of the interview, a digital copy of the recorded responses was sanitized of all identifiable information and uploaded to a private server.

Procedures for Data Collection

The researcher collected the research data during the telephone interview through a digital recording device and hand-written notes. Each interview produced its own set of data that is store in an offline computer that only the researcher has access. Upon completion of the interview, the researcher transcribed the interview and sent an electronic copy to the participant to review for accuracy. Any correction that the interviewee requested was made. Once no further revisions were required, the participant received a debrief of their part of the study with an option to follow up on the completion of the study as a whole. Participants were then asked if they were able to recommend another potential volunteer that meets the study's criteria.

Data Analysis Plan

The qualitative analysis of this study was conducted through visual thematic analysis. Information collected during this ethnographic study was organized into a categorical system using the invivo coding method of using the exact words of the participants. Once all material was assigned a proper code, data was uploaded to the NVivo system for storage and organization. The analytical strategy of visual thematic analysis expressed the data in a manner that was comparable and easily understood. Themes were generated from the invivo coding process. The researcher reviewed all

interviews for the alignment of data with the perceived barriers to obtain Stage 4 of culture shock theory after attending the TAP. Under this alignment umbrella, the common phrases and concepts developed the coding. These codes became synonymous with research themes.

Issues of Trustworthiness

This study addressed these concerns of credibility, validation, and reliability through a combination of actions designed to instill trustworthiness of results. Substantive validation was accomplished by reviewing the strengths and limitations of the literature, emersion in the subject's culture, and personalized interviews. The strategy of triangulation of sources was another method used to instill the trustworthiness of research (Patton, 2002). This project analyzed data collected from multiple sources to confirm emerged patterns. The participants reported data (Emic) that compared with the researcher's observed data (Etic).

Ethical Procedures

All American Psychological Association (APA) ethical guidelines' responsibilities was followed to the letter. Each participant received a lay summary outlining the full scope of the research. Participants retain the right to protect their information. Participants provided information to the researcher with the trust that such information will be safe and used solely for purposes illustrated in the lay summary. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that personal data is both safe from theft and used responsibly. To reduce the risk of stolen data, personal information was removed before storage. Information from participants was recorded under an assumed code. A

master list of coding was handwritten and stored in a locked filing cabinet. It was believed that the security of data collected is ensured through such means.

Summary

This chapter outline the method in which the researcher collected the data that addressed the extend the Transition Assistance Program helps post active duty veterans obtain Stage 4 of culture shock theory in Chester County, Pennsylvania. This was conducted through a critical ethnographic qualitative approach. Through the sampling method of snowball sampling, the post active duty veterans were interviewed on the central and four sub research questions. Interviews were a semi-structured open-ended process that allowed for further exploration where warranted. Participants reviewed and verified the transcript from their respective interviews. Upon completion of the review of the interview, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify the shared patterns of reacculturation as it was impacted by TAP. The next chapter will provide the data that was collected from the interviews.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the data that was collected in the fall of 2020 during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. Of the 112 individuals referred to this study, 13 individuals met the selection criteria outlined in Chapter 3. A pilot study of one individual was performed to ensure protocol was appropriately applied. The only adjustment to the protocol was the self-labeling of participant pseudonym. Upon completion of the pilot study, 12 more individuals were interviewed over a 30-day period. The inductive coding and thematic analysis were conducted simultaneously as the two processes so closely interwoven (Miles et al., 2020).

The results of the study were assembled in a waterfall model. Starting with Subquestion 4, each group of themes informed the next subsequent grouping of themes. Excerpts that exemplify the theme were conveyed from interview transcripts. After the themes of each subquestion are the corresponding answers.

Pilot Study

The pilot study consisted of an interview with one individual to gauge the quality level of inquiry, the recording device's accuracy, and the alignment with the protocol. The pilot study was conducted on September 20th, 2020. A pseudonym was used to anonymize the participants of the study. The pilot participant received an interview packet containing five survey questions for their review before the telephone interview. Each question was carefully articulated to the individual, and then the responses were examined for comprehensibility. Each of the five base interview questions was

understood with the intended level of clarity and comprehension. I recorded the responses by a digital recorder as the interviewee discusses their answers. The process of the interviewee not recording their answers on their own allowed them to speak more freely, thus, providing more quality answers for the study.

Setting

At the time of this study's data collection phase, the Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on social and physical interactions. Like much of the country, Pennsylvanian residents were required to maintain a physical distance of a minimum of 6 feet. This "social distance" caused an inability to hold private in-person interviews with study participants. The pandemic limited interviews with participants to telephone conversations only.

Demographics

This study was purposeful in the selection of participants. Over a 30-day data collection period, 112 individuals were referred to the study. Through four rounds of qualification screening requirements, 13 individuals meet the criteria of the study. As this study was focused on the reacculturation of post-active duty veterans, four essential criteria were required to participate in the study. Individuals need to consent to be recorded, to have been separated from active duty military after 2001, and to not hold a VA disability rating greater than 30%. Three individuals were perceived to be impersonating a military veteran. As this study was a paid study and impersonating a veteran for financial gain violates the Stolen Valor Act of 2013, I decided not to proceed with individuals that may or may not have broken the law. Table 1 reflects the

qualification screening process that identified the pilot interview and the twelve subsequent participants.

Table 1

Qualification Screening Process

Qualification Screening Round	Referred Individuals	Individuals Disqualified During Screening Round	Rationale for Disqualification	Remaining Individuals after Screening Round
1	112	62	Individuals did not consent to be recorded.	50
2	50	27	Greater than 30% VA Disability Rating	23
3	23	7	Did not Separate from Active Duty after 2001	16
4	16	3	Perceived Stolen Valor	13

Of the 13 that met all study qualifications, one fulfilled the pilot study, and 12 were the core study group. The demographics collected for this study were directly related to the research question and subquestions. Rank, length of service, gender, and CS stage were collected to apply to the question and subquestion. The service branch was also identified to provide context to the military jargon used during the interview, as each component differs in linguistic terminology.

As shown in Table 2, this study contained nine Army veterans, two Navy veterans, one Air Force veteran, and one Coast Guard veteran. The ranks were aggregated into the DoD pay scale as a means to ascribe symmetry. These groups were segregated into Junior Enlisted (E-1 through E-4), Non-Commissioned Officer (E-5 through E-9), Warrant Officer (W-1 through W-5), and Commissioned Officer (O-1 through O-10). The length of service was aggregated by the military service obligation (MSO). The initial contract that every service member signs is for 8 years. The next two arrangements are “mid-terms,” while the last term is for retirement. Gender was self-identified by the individual participant. The participant's grouping into a culture shock stage was identified via a contextual analysis of the interview.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Branch of Service	Rank	Length of Service	Gender	Culture Shock Stage
Army	9 E1 –E4	6 [>8]	9 Female	2 Honeymoon 0
Air Force	1 E5 – E9	6 [9-19]	2 Male	11 Disintegration 4
Navy	2 Commission Officer	1 [20+]	2 Non-binary	0 Reintegration 6
Coast Guard	1 Warrant Officer	0		Autonomy 3*
Marines	0			Interdependence 0

Note. Two individuals reported requiring therapy after separation (significantly antecedent before the study) to reach the autonomy stage.

Data Collection

I collected the data during the telephone interview with 13 individuals, one in the pilot study and 12 in the core study. The duration of the interviews was between 15 minutes and 40 minutes in length. Each participant received a verbal review of the study's consent form at the start of the interview to ensure that they knew their rights and protections. Interviews were recorded via a Philips VoiceTracer Digital Voice Recorder and hand-written notes. Upon completing the interview, the researcher transcribed the interview and sent an electronic copy to the participant to review for accuracy. None of the 13 participants requested corrections to their transcribe. The participant received a debrief of their option to follow up on completing the research as a whole. Participants were then asked if they could recommend another potential volunteer that meets the study's criteria. Data collection followed the plan presented in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis of this study was conducted through visual thematic analysis. Information collected during this ethnographic study was organized into a categorical system using the invivo coding method of using the participants' exact words. Once all material was assigned a proper code, data was uploaded to the NVivo system for storage and organization. The analytical strategy of visual thematic analysis expressed the data in a comparable and easily understood manner. Themes were generated from the invivo coding process. All interviews were reviewed to align data with the perceived barriers to obtain Stage 4 of culture shock theory after attending the TAP. Under this

alignment umbrella, the common phrases and concepts developed the coding. These codes became synonymous with research themes.

Inductive Coding and Thematic Analysis

The inductive coding process and the thematic analysis are so interwoven that it is difficult to separate them into two distinct phases (Miles et al., 2020). The process started after all the research participants verified their transcript was accurate and error-free. The pilot interview was included in the analysis because the information both affirms and informs the central research. All thirteen transcripts were coded into a pre-cycle coding, referred to as Zero cycle codes. According to Miles et al. (2020), the Zero cycle codes are foundational codes from the literature review that help transform data into themes. The Zero cycle codes were generated by the sub research questions one through four and the main research question. Once each node had been labeled, a first-round code cycle began to subcategorize each of the nodes.

Subquestion 4 involved the perceived influence of the length of individual service and time of military separation; therefore, the SQ4 nodes were categorized by (a) TAP design between 2001 through 2010, (b) the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) design between 2011 through 2016, and (c) post congressional review after 2017 (see Table 3). Subquestion #3 involves the perceived influence of gender; therefore, the SQ3 nodes were categorized by influence type: positive response, neutral response, and negative response (see Table 3). Subquestion #2 involves the perceived influence of rank; while accounting for the different variations between the service branches, the SQ3 nodes were categorized by pay grade type: Junior Enlisted (Jr Enl), Non-Commissioned Officer

(NCO), and Commissioned Officer (CO; see Table 3). Subquestion #1 involves the perceived barriers to reacculturation; the SQ1 nodes were categorized using in vivo modeling: cultural expectations, resume qualifications, and therapy (see Table 3). research question #1 involves the extent that TAP helps posts active duty veterans obtain Stage 4 of CS theory; therefore, the RQ1 nodes were categorized into purpose, experience, and recommendations (see Table 3).

Table 3

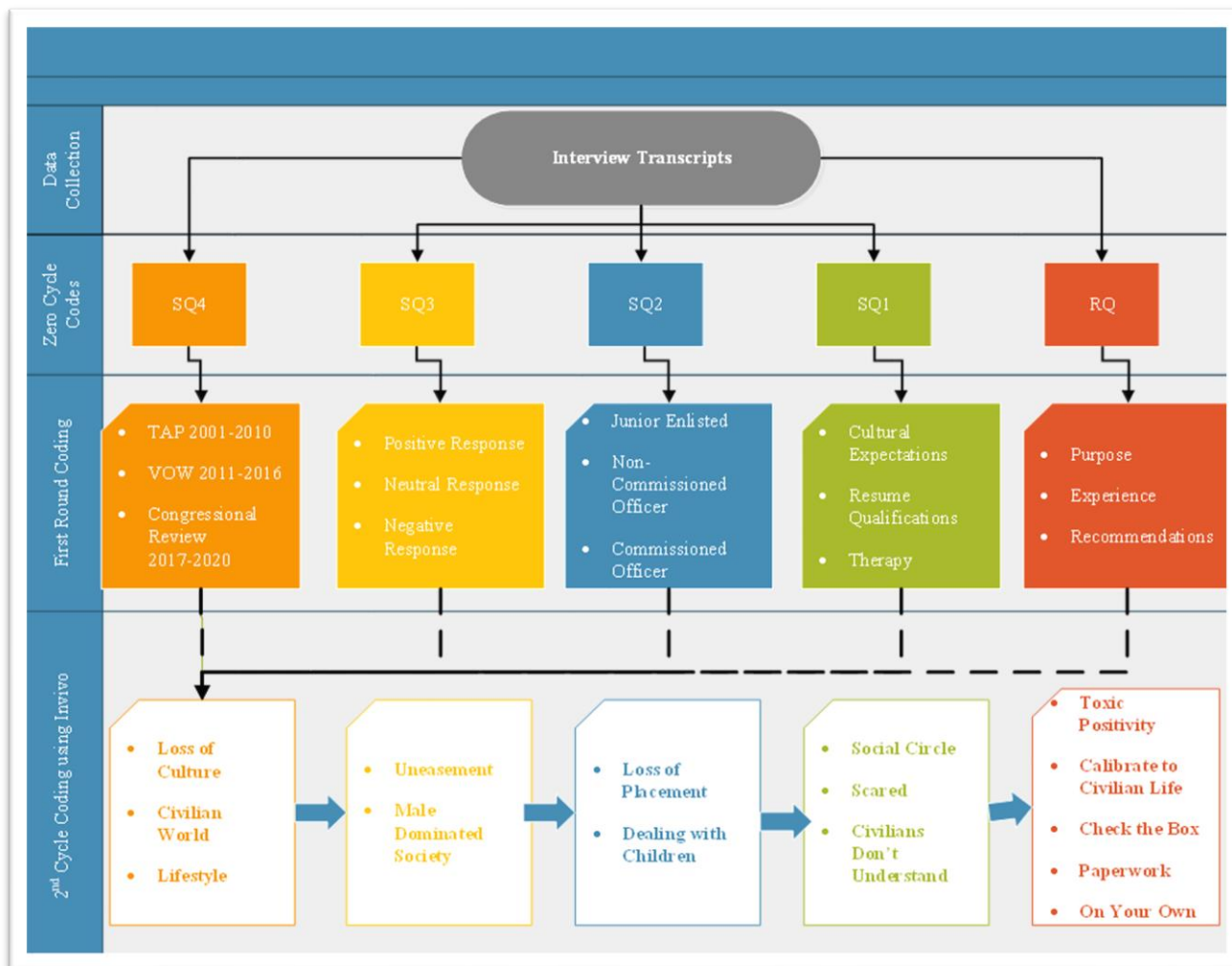
Research Nodes

SQ4	SQ3		SQ2		SQ1		RQ1		
TAP	12	Positive	2	Jr Enl	10	Cultural Expectations	16	Purpose	15
VOW	15	Neutral	7	NCO	15	Resume Qualification	12	Experience	79
Congress Review	7	Negative	4	CO	2	Therapy	8	Recommendation	14

The second cycle coding utilized the first cycle codes to identify a single sub question's themes, which informed the next subsequent question's themes in a waterfall model. The collective first cycle nodes enlightened the themes for SQ4, thereby priming the themes of SQ3, and so on (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Inductive Coding Process



Three themes emerged using the in vivo coding method in the second cycle SQ4: Loss of Culture, Civilian World, and Lifestyle. Participant responses to the influence of their service length indicated that there was a Loss of Culture. Several participants used the terms Civilian World and Lifestyle to describe how their length of service influenced their perspectives about the transition to civilian society.

Incorporating the sense of loss that participants expressed in SQ4, two themes developed when analyzing the perspective of gender on reacculturation: Uneasement and

Male-Dominated Society. Of the 13 individuals, nine appeared discomfited by any question surrounding gender. Filler words, stuttering, and deflective statements accompanied the issue. Thus, through inductive reasoning, the term *uneasement* becomes a gender theme. Of those that openly discussed the military culture involving gender, the term Male-Dominated Society was used repeatedly.

The loss of culture and male-dominated society informed two themes in SQ2: Loss of Placement and Dealing with Children. As discussed in Chapter 2, military rank determines the position and/or function in which a serviceman is assigned. Several of the participants expressed a loss of placement without a clear set hierarchical structure. Moreover, individuals interact with each other concerning the level of respect associated with the rank or status, as is customary. As reported by the participants, many civilians interact within them in a manner that would typically be observed in a servicemember with no rank or status, and therefore are “Children.”

The mounting loss of culture, self, and placement informed the three themes of SQ1: Social Circle, Scared, and Civilians Don’t Understand. Several of the participants discussed the reduced social network and interactions with nonmilitary-centric groups. Other participants expressed fear and anxiety when talking about acculturation to life post-military, hence the term *scared*. The participants expressed a sense of being scared about the new environment, being nervous about dealing with new people, and be anxious about a new culture. Moreover, several of the participants repeatedly used the phrase “Civilians Don’t Understand” when discussing cultural reintegration barriers.

Applying the lens of both the first cycle codes and the sub-questions' themes provided context to the five aggregated phases that emerged as the research question's themes. These themes were (a) Toxic Positivity, (b) Calibrate to Civilian Life, (c) Check the Box, (d) Paperwork, and (e) On Your Own. Toxic Positivity is the respondents' notion that depicts the false optimism instilled in them during TAP regarding their transition. The participants referred to TAP's experience as a “check the box” program that was little more than a bunch of “paperwork was thrown at them,”; hence the two emergent themes. Several of the participants used the military jargon term “calibrate to.” This is a military analogy that refers to the calibration of instruments to align oneself to a correct alignment with their surroundings. Lastly, most of the respondents' noted that they felt “on their own” after separation from the military.

Discrepant Case

Of the 13 individual participants, there was one individual classified as a discrepant case. The individual referred to as Participant Golf did not attend the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP). Participant Golf separated after 2010, when all DoD elements were required to ensure 100% attendance in the program (Sherrill, 2013). Despite not attending TAP, Participant Golf met all of the study's eligibility requirements. Moreover, the experience that Participant Golf had post-transition from the military offered a unique perspective to the reacculturation of Veterans. The lack of TAP influence on the reacculturation process acted as a qualitative control group for the study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was found within this study through a combination of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Substantive validation was accomplished by reviewing the literature's strengths and limitations, immersion in the subject's culture, and personalized interviews. This project analyzed data collected from multiple sources to confirm emerged patterns. The participants reported data that was compared with the researcher's observed data and the information collected during the literature review.

Credibility

Credibility was assured in this study by triangulating participant responses, information obtained from the literature review, and the researcher's embedded experiences in the culture. Individual transcripts were received a contextual analysis to ascribed cultural meaning of military jargon. These participant inferences made through military jargon were compared with the literature review and researcher's previous military history to ensure that conclusions were aligned with the original intent of the phrasing.

Transferability

The findings from this study are transferable because results from a group of post active duty veterans is relatable to any sub-group of individuals that face a transition in organizational culture. Examples of relevant subgroups are international students who move to a new country for the duration of their education, prisoners released from incarceration after a prolonged period, or even other military entities outside of the

United States. Each subgroup faces transitional unknowns that are similar to those found in this study.

Dependability

Dependability in this study was achieved in two ways: (a) a pilot study and (b) applying the same structure to each of the interviews. Each participant received the same five base questions. The structure of each interview remained congruent throughout all thirteen interviews.

Confirmability

In this study, participants received a copy of their transcript to review, and to safeguard each participant's voice was recorded in their intended manner. All thirteen participants agreed that their transcript was genuine and accurate to their voice.

Results

This study sought to address the extent to which TAP helps post active duty veterans obtain Stage 4 of culture shock (CS) theory in Chester County, Pennsylvania. Stage 4 of the CS theory is autonomy, which is label as obtained when the researcher observed specific attributes. These attributes include (a) little or no conflict with the new culture, (b) use of the term "us" when referring to civilian sociality, (c) little or no fear of safety, and (d) ability to enjoy a new culture. The study results directly answer the research question and each sub-question by ascribing the shared themed perceptions of veterans.

The results of the research study were assembled in the same waterfall model utilized in the thematic analysis. Starting with sub-question #4, each group of themes informed the next subsequent grouping of themes. Excerpts that exemplify the theme were conveyed from interview transcripts. All passages are transposed from interviews conducted between September 20th, 2020, and October 19th, 2020.

Subquestion 4

Subquestion 4 is, “How does an individual’s length of service influence the shared perceptions to obtain autonomy in civilian society?” To address this question, participants were directly asked how they perceived their service length influenced their social reintegration to civilian society. As denoted in Figure 1, three themes emerged: (a) loss of culture, (b) civilian world, and (c) lifestyle.

SQ4: Theme 1, Loss of Culture

The acceptable norms, values, and beliefs that participants once lived by are now perceived to be lost after the military's separation. Respondents report the civilian culture as an alien concept that they are not used to; it is the new “normal alien.” For example, the following participants responded:

Participant Echo. I don't think the same as the people around me. It's not the same anymore.

Participant Foxtrot. It was just kind of an alien concept.

Participant Hotel. Some habits are hard to break but then, you know, others, in terms of kind of breaking out of those standard military regimes that are kind of feed into you know, over years of service.

SQ4: Theme 2, Civilian World

The participants perceive civilian society as another world than that in which the veteran is a custom. They report a sizable difference in their worldview than the military-centric daily routines, even though many have lived and shopped in nonmilitary areas during their service. Thus, it appeared to them as a new “world.” For example, the following participants responded:

Participant Delta. I guess difficult. I mean, uh, really difficult from what I was actually expecting. I had to do pretty much everything for myself falling back into the civilian sector. I guess wasn't really, really well prepared going back to the civilian world. I was just expecting it just to be the same as when I went in, a lot has changed, coming back home.

Participant November. It's a very different world

Participant Uniform. Take that soldier out of that mindset of every day it's gonna be the same old same old because in the civilian world it isn't.

SQ4: Theme 3, Lifestyle

Many respondents expressed difficulty adjusting to nonmilitary norms and activities connected with the length they were immersed in the military. Military service

is perceived as more than a job by those who serve, “it is a way of life.” The following respondents exemplify this notion:

Participant Bravo. The longer you go living that lifestyle the harder it is to-to change to the civilian life.

Participant Kilo. You get used to a lifestyle in the service. It's, um, very regimented and, you know, even the people who only do three or four years or one hitch, it's a lifestyle you adapt to. The early mornings, you know, the PTs, the rules and regulations, the uniforms, the salutations. I mean, it's a lifestyle and even the ones who are the most disgruntled will still tell you, they knew what was always expected of them. There was clear lines, clear definitions.

SubQuestion 4: Answer

Through the three themes of loss of culture, civilian world, and lifestyle, the respondents provided an answer to the sub research question #4: How does an individual's length of service influence the shared perceptions to obtain autonomy in civilian society? Veterans have expressed a lifestyle change, an inability to adapt to the civilian world seamlessly, and a loss of culture associated with their service length.

Subquestion 3

Sub-question 3 is, “How does gender influence the shared perceptions to obtain autonomy in civilian society?” To address this question, participants were directly asked how they perceived their gender influenced their social reintegration to civilian society.

As denoted in Figure 1, two themes emerged: (a) uneasement and (b) male-dominated society.

SQ3: Theme 1, Uneasement

Many self-identified male participants exhibited nervousness, anxiety, and an overall uneasy nonverbal communication towards discussing gender's role during their cultural reintegration. These nonverbal communication cues were filler words, stuttering, and nervous laughter. The following are examples of this theme:

Participant Bravo. Uh... I don't-I don't-I don't really uh... Gee, I don't know-I don't know if... uh, I've never really... I've never really thought about that. Um... Yeah, I don't-I don't-I don't know if... I'm not really sure on that.

Participant Golf. Hm. That's a tough question, considering that I've dealt... Well, not dealt. I've served next to some strong females in the military and, you know, they can, they could drive a tractor trailer.

Participant Tango. Well, I am... My gender. Well, I am- I am a male, so, I would say that most people would look at- at that in- a- as a problem of Western culture and society in general, that you just need to man up. (laughing)

SQ3: Theme 2, Male-Dominated Society

All of the self-identified female participants and a few self-identified male participants expressed a notion of constraints and assumptions placed on female veterans, which are not placed on male veterans. Among the examples are the following:

Participant Echo. I kinda check all the boxes because it's like they get a tax write-off for hiring somebody that's a veteran, and then to have a female, it's somebody that, I don't know, checks a box, I guess, in a male-dominant society that I live in.

Participant Kilo. I distinctly remember, um, local law enforcement agencies coming to the TAPs class and giving speeches and, um, talking about recruitment and what they're looking for and, um, and I remember going up to the one specific one from one local agencies and kind of gave him my resume and he didn't care. All he wanted was, was the men. Every single one of them was more, um, apt to listen to, or, um, or try to recruit the male veteran over the female veteran. And it was evident from their demeanor, their character, their presence, um, you know, just everything from top to bottom. They really didn't seem to care too much about what the female veterans in the class were up to. And I specifically remember having a group of civilian agencies we're only going to the male counterparts and not worrying about those females. I think it put a lot of people off knowing that there's a female there, who's got more training, more real life experience than them and it rubs people the wrong way. Um, a lot of males in the civilian population don't know how to respond to a strong female, and they're either intimidated by her or they try to wash her out. It's pretty miserable.

Subquestion 3: Answer

Through the two themes of uneasement and male-dominated society, the respondents have answered the sub research question #3: How does gender influence the shared perceptions to obtain autonomy in civilian society? Male respondents exhibit shared traits of uneasement towards the perception of gender in civilian society; female

respondents express gender-focused barriers of a male-dominated society that limit autonomy 's obtainment.

Subquestion 2

Subquestion 2 is, “How does military rank influence shared perceptions to obtain autonomy in civilian society?” Participants were directly asked how they perceived their rank influenced their social reintegration to civilian society to address this question. As denoted in Figure 1, two themes emerged: (b) loss of placement and (b) dealing with children.

SQ2: Theme 1, Loss of Placement

Rank in the military is extrinsic and explicit placement in an organizational and social structure. To the respondents, the loss of rank was reported as a loss of placement within society. Some respondents expressed this loss through statements of “they don’t care,” referring to the civilian social structure. For example, the following participants reported:

Participant Golf. It doesn't matter. If my if my rank would have done anything for my reintegration into the civilian world, I would have been a manager. They, they don't... You know, the civilian world doesn't see rank as a qualifiable.

Participant Tango. Oh, it was very difficult. Because I know I'm not the one with the most chevrons and rockers in the room all the time, but most of the time I am. And no one is going to question what I want to do. That loss of authority and power is what, probably hits you the most as an NCO when you get out. Because you have none.

SQ2: Theme 2, Dealing with Children

To some of the respondents, interactions with civilians reminded them of their interactions with the military members of the lowest enlisted rank. A common metaphor in the military is that junior enlisted personnel are liked “children” who need to be taught everything in simple terms. This hermeneutic connection has created a conflict for respondents. A couple of examples are:

Participant Foxtrot. When I went back to college, and had interactions with the children. I had to remind myself repeatedly that they were not my soldiers, and would not respond well if I treated them so. I never did, but the urge was there multiple times.

Participant Tango. It was- it was very difficult to get out of that mind-set of, "I have a better idea of s- what we're going to do. Do not question me." And I didn't make a lot of friends because of that. It became very difficult when you're used to improvising and adapting on the go, making decisions for other people, and then coming home to, no one has to listen to you. They can walk away. They don't have to stand at parade rest, you can't walk 'em up, you can't make 'em do push ups. That was very difficult.

Subquestion 2: Answer

Through the two themes of loss of placement and dealing with children, the respondents have answered the Subquestion 2: How does military rank influence the shared perceptions to obtain autonomy in civilian society? Veterans have displayed a sense of loss of placement within a social structure, which has led some to inappropriately interacting with civilian societal adult members as “children,” thereby inhibiting autonomy obtainment.

Subquestion 1

Subquestion 1 is, “What are the shared perceived barriers to obtain autonomy in civilian society by post-active duty veterans in Chester County, Pennsylvania?” To address this question, participants were directly asked what barriers and/or enablers have they experienced during their social reintegration to Chester County, Pennsylvania? As denoted in Figure 1, three themes emerged: (a) social circle, (b) scared, and (c) civilians don’t understand.

SQ1: Theme 1, Social Circle

Respondents report a smaller “social circle” of individuals that they choose to be around. As seen in many other cultures, the veterans in this study congregate around those who expressed feeling most culturally comfortable. This comfort was reported in terms of both communication and anxiety. Few examples of this theme are:

Participant Alpha. I think when you're in the service, you are provided a social circle. Even if it's not huge, it's there. When I got out, um, that social circle was gone. There was no circle, it was me and my family. It took me almost six to nine months to really develop a social circle. There was absolutely no support from the service, there was no service or organization specifically reaching out to me.

Participant Echo. We just, we were just family. Like it, it was weird. It was these are your family. Everybody was there for you. Whenever you needed somebody, you could always pick your phone and call somebody. And out here, you know, you can't just call somebody at the drop of a hat.

Participant Tango. Finding other veterans, especially army and marine veterans. Those who, I've been able to hang around with.

SQ1: Theme 2, Scared

Respondents expressed fear and anxiety toward social reintegration. A few reported requiring professional therapy to learn how to integrate back into civilian society. The reported perception of being scared has become a barrier to reintegration for several participants. The following are examples of this theme:

Participant Alpha. I have fairly significant social anxiety. I don't know that that was specifically, triggered by the service, however, uh, I think the service exacerbated that.

Participant Bravo. I think a lot of people are scared at the idea of becoming a civilian and having to all of a sudden pay for rent and-and uh find a job and develop your career. And so they try not to think about it.

Participant Echo. I've had to go through a lot of therapy to just, I guess, figure out how to be a civilian, that it helped me to kinda see what everybody else is like in a sense, I guess, I... I don't know.

SQ1: Theme 3, Civilians Don't Understand

Nearly all of the participants expressed an inability to translate their military experience into a manner in which a nonmilitary person could relate. This inability to communicate effectively was reported with regard to social interactions, employment

qualifications, and cultural reintegration. The following are a couple of examples of excerpts from the participants:

Participant Lima. Civilians don't understand what it's like, you know, to live away from home, from your family, and to be with your other family, your military family, you know? And suffer, and be happy all at the same time, you know? it's a lot. You align with the vets more, it's easier for me to talk to a vet about what branch of service, um, than to a civilian, cause they just don't get it. You know?

Participant Uniform. Well, the biggest hindrance was the civilian world not understanding how the mat- military world is. A lot of times they're just like, "You need to adjust to us." What they don't realize is that we've adjusted ourselves twice in life. Once to how we lived before we went to the military, then how we adjusted ourselves to live in the military and now we've are trying to come back to it and it's a lot harder than it is to go into it than it is to come out of it 'cause they don't understand how hard it is to take off that uniform.

Subquestion 1: Answer

Through the three themes of social circle, scared, and civilians don't understand, the respondents have answered the sub research question #1: What are the shared perceived barriers to obtain autonomy in civilian society by post-active duty veterans in Chester County, Pennsylvania? Veterans have expressed a diminished social circle, inability to translate military norms, and feelings of fear towards civilian society among autonomy obtainment barriers.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 is, “To what extent does the TAP help post active duty veterans obtain Stage 4 of culture shock theory in Chester County, Pennsylvania?” To address this question, participants were directly asked to what extent did they feel that TAP has helped them socially reintegrate into Chester County, Pennsylvania? As denoted in Figure 1, five themes emerged: (a) toxic positivity, (b) calibrate to civilian life, (c) check the box, (d) paperwork, and (e) on your own.

RQ1: Theme 1, Toxic Positivity

Upon reflection of their TAP experience, many of the participants reported a false sense of optimism instilled in them during the program. There were reports of guaranteed employment and expectations of a seamless social transition. The false optimism and incorrect expectations created an element of positivity in the TAP that was perceived by the participants as toxic behavior exhibited by the TAP instructors. Participants reported feeling ill-prepared for the transition as a result of TAP. A couple of examples of this notion are as follows:

Participant November. They thank you for all the time that you've been in and you all dive in, right away to all the benefits that you are entitled to when you leave the Army. In reality, I believe the program is more of a waste and more harm than it is good. They sell you the song and dance. When you get out of the military, there's gonna be so many jobs waitin' for you. There's gonna be so much. They build that expectation that, oh my God, I'm gettin' out of the military, this is gonna be great. Everything's gonna be good. You couldn't really trust them with what they was saying.

Participant Uniform. There were a lot of videos showing how soldiers, getting recognized like we were used to in the military. It's like if you did a job and it was done right a lot of times the soldier got some kind of recognition right off the bat and it's like saying, expect this in the civilian world.

RQ1: Theme 2, Calibrate to Civilian Life

Several of the participants used the military jargon term “calibrate to.” This is a military metaphor that refers to the calibration of instruments to align oneself to a correct alignment with their surroundings. This metaphor was applied by the participants to express the idea that they needed to realign themselves to another “way of life.” The following are a few excerpts that illustrate this theme.

Participant Alpha. Just to kind of help calibrate us to more civilian life, 'cause there are huge differences, especially after doing 20 plus years. I do not believe, that the military allocates enough time for transitioning folks to fully participate. They don't allow enough time for people to adequately actually transition. I don't know that the Transition Assistance Program is in depth enough prepare some folks.

Participant Delta. Experience was a lot of outbrief, what to expect coming back into the civilian world and not to get discouraged when looking for a job. Basically, they set us up, let us know how to transition into the civilian lifestyle.

Participant Sierra. I probably revert back to my military self, is a lot more is, just high conflict situations of the workforce and production. I'll check myself and go, "I'm not in the army anymore."

RQ1: Theme 3, Check the Box

Several respondents indicated that TAP was sampling “checking a box.” This is a military jargon term used to refer to a situation in which an activity is conducted solely because it is required to; not because of an understanding of its purpose nor application. Applying this jargon in the context of TAP, respondents were implying that the program did not have a purpose, rather people attending TAP solely on the rationale that “they had to.” For example, the following participants responded:

Participant Alpha. It was really being fed through a fire hose. It really seemed as if they were trying to push the buttons. They just trying to check the box, to give me the information that I needed to have.

Participant Foxtrot. It was kind of like check the box, move on.

Participant Tango. They treated it more like a, "All right, we all gotta be here to check the box. Get the signature on your clearing sheet."

RQ1: Theme 4, Paperwork

Respondents report having a lot of perceived unnecessary documents to fill out in order to complete TAP. Several respondents did not understand the value of the TAP documents, even years after completion of the program. Paperwork was more of a derogatory term by those that used the phrase. A few examples are as follows:

Participant Bravo. I remember it was a lot of papers. Basically, they hand you... they give you some information, just like about your benefits. If I spoke with somebody it was no more than maybe twice and then I had a bunch of paperwork basically. Not so

much work on my part but uh, information on... documents telling me, you know, pretty much what we talked about and how to go about pursuing some of these benefits like the education benefits. It kind of feels like they chat with you because they have to and they want to say that they did... the government wants to say that they did something and then they throw you all this-all these paperwork and... all this-all these papers and send you on your way. It feels like that, but how do they help? They-they gave me all the paperwork. Just kind of talked to somebody, you know talked to that person, received all the paperwork and I was just... still lost.

Participant Delta. Oh, at my time, my TAPs was really not very helpful at all. They just gave us a bunch of paperwork and just a bunch of sites to go on if we had any further questions on calibrating back into the civilian world. It was very stressful at that time of leaving the military.

Participant Sierra. I feel like it didn't help me, to be honest. The TAP on camp was basically, all right, do this workbook, do this worksheet, fill out two job applications and that's it, good luck.

RQ1: Theme 5, On Your Own

Several participants reported feeling “on your own” during TAP; others said this feeling even after separation. This term may have originated from the culture of collective camaraderie embedded within the military. Some reported the lack of social backing left feelings of being “on your own” for the first time since before the military. The following are a few examples of this theme:

Participant Alpha. It was very fire hose, here's two bullet points and here's a link, go here and figure it out.

Participant Foxtrot. I guess to know what resources were available. You were stressed out, or, or felt alone. There was people and places you could go and talk to. I didn't have, I didn't, I didn't feel like I got that.

Participant Golf. They told me, they were like, "Here's your ticket. You're going to Philly." And that was it. And there, there wasn't, there wasn't anything about it, you know, "Let's try to set you up with a job or, you know, let's see if we can reach out to Philly or anywhere in your area, in Jersey or, you know, Maryland or Delaware and see if we could set you up for, for, you know, an interview." There was nothing like that. You know, they just had you check of their checklist, 'cause that way they could get you the hell out of there.

Research Question 1: Answer

Through an application of the five themes: toxic positivity, calibrate to civilian life, check the box, paperwork, and on your own, the respondents have exhibited self-placement onto the corresponding stage of the CS Theory U-curve to address research question #1: To what extent does the TAP help post active duty veterans obtain Stage 4 of culture shock theory in Chester County, Pennsylvania? The TAP helps post active duty veterans obtain autonomy to the extent of career transition preparation only. In areas of reacculturation, veterans report feeling on their own to manage mounds of paperwork during a perceived pointless “check the box” out process course set to calibrate an individual to civilian life through “toxic positivity.”

Summary

In this chapter, each subquestion was directly addressed with precise answers from the study's participant. Subquestion 4 was addressed by veterans expressing a lifestyle change, an inability to adapt to the civilian world seamlessly, and a loss of culture associated with their service length. Subquestion 3 was addressed with male respondents exhibiting shared traits of uneasement towards the perception of gender in civilian society. In contrast, female respondents expressed gender-focused barriers of a male-dominated society that limit autonomy's obtainment. Subquestion 2 was addressed through the notion that veterans have displayed a sense of loss of placement within a social structure, which has led some to inappropriately interacting with civilian societal adult members as "children," thereby inhibiting autonomy obtainment. Subquestion 1 was addressed by veterans having expressed a diminished social circle, inability to translate military norms, and feelings of fear towards civilian society among autonomy obtainment barriers.

Research Question 1, on the other hand, was not directly nor explicitly answered. Although the results reflect the extent to which the TAP helps veterans obtain autonomy in career transition, the excerpts alone are not enough to provide context to this complex question. In Chapter 5 of this dissertation, an interpretation of the findings will provide a more precise and succinct answer to this research question.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to examine the cultural transition of post-active duty veterans to Chester County, Pennsylvania, that have utilized TAP. Through the theoretical framework of culture shock (CS) theory, this study identified the extent that the TAP helps post-active duty veterans obtain Stage 4: autonomy. The TAP helps post-active duty veterans obtain autonomy to the extent of career transition preparation only. In areas of reacculturation, veterans report feeling on their own to manage mounds of paperwork during a perceived pointless “check the box” out process course set to calibrate an individual to civilian life through “toxic positivity.”

Throughout this study, veterans have identified four key perceived barriers to obtain autonomy in civilian society: (a) loss of culture associated with the length of service, (b) a difference between male and female veteran transition, (c) loss of social placement which has led to inappropriate forms of communication, and (b) Generalized Social Phobia (GSP). These four barriers have accumulated into a straightforward approach to confronting policy misalignments in TAP.

In this chapter, the findings from Chapter 4 are interpreted and applied to the field of public policy. Data is presented in a manner that provides recommendations for policy improvements for the TAP and veteran reacculturation. Moreover, applications of interpretation are proposed in a manner that offers suggestions for further research.

Interpretation of the Findings

Subquestion 4: How does an individual's length of service influence the shared perceptions to obtain autonomy in civilian society?

Veterans expressed that their service length caused a lifestyle change, an inability to adapt to the civilian world seamlessly, and a loss of culture. These three themes emerged as impediments to the autonomy stage obtainment. Each participant reported a direct correlation between their length of time in the military and their ability to readjust to a perceived "new world." The longer the exposure to the military culture, the more difficult it is to readjust to the civilian culture without conflict.

Loss of Culture

Culture is the accepted norms, values, and beliefs of a team, social group, or society (Schein, 2017). Embedded within every indoctrination program upon entry into the military is the abdication of an old culture for military culture. Yet, the TAP does not incorporate a similar approach to help veterans abdicate military culture when it is time for them to return to civilian society. Instead, TAP focuses on career transition (Sherrill, 2014). Without an explicit set of acceptable norms, values, and beliefs for the veterans to set expectations towards, it becomes understandable how the veterans would cling to the culture they lived and embodied for years.

The loss of culture did not appear to be a conscious behavior to many of the participants. They discussed the unusual behavior of the civilians around compared to military culture. When questioned about how they perceived the acceptable norms, values, and beliefs of local society, many participants could not articulate any elements or

even acknowledge a new culture. This may be an indication of denial as a coping mechanism for grief, but further research is needed to be certain (Tyrrell et al., 2020).

Civilian World

The civil-military divide that prevents the general public from understanding the military culture also affects the military from understanding civilian society's culture (Nielsen & Snider, 2009). Although individuals live outside of a military post, their work, social circles, and many of their extracurricular activities are military-centric. Which, almost by definition, excluded nonmilitary personnel. Thus, the military creates its own perceived world that they live, work, and seldom stray.

Participants described civilian society as a new and alien world. Many of which labeled it the “civilian world.” Of those that referred to the general public as the civilian world, it was done to communicate the concept that the longer they were in the military, the more removed from the civilian culture they felt they became. For example, one participant described it as “it makes it more difficult to leave the military because the longer you go living that life, the harder it is to change to the civilian world” (Participant Bravo.). Many reported conflict stemming from the clear division between the two cultures. The civil-military divide has impacted servicemembers concerning reacculturation.

Lifestyle

The lifestyle of the military is rich in customs and traditions (Higbee, 2016). Servicemembers live each day through a series of predefined routines. It is the lifestyle that embodies the esprit de corps that united the individuals to the military. Anxieties

such as social interactions, professional expectations, financial responsibilities, and family commitments that were concealed by the military's customs and traditions are now needed to function in civil society (snider, 1999). Many of the respondents indicated that the removal of customs created a drastic change in their lifestyle. For example, Participant Alpha defined it as a “social struggle.” The daily routines, work ethic, social interactions, and even communication style were elements that needed to be changed to adjust to a new lifestyle. Many respondents stated a direct correlation between the length of service and the difficulty of adjusting to a civilian lifestyle.

Subquestion 3: How does gender influence the shared perceptions to obtain autonomy in civilian society?

Gender was a noteworthy topic to observe the responses of the participants during the interviews. Male respondents indicated they did not feel comfortable discussing gender issues with civilian society members; female respondents indicated that being a female male-dominated society made their transition more difficult.

Uneasement

Many of the male respondents displayed confusion towards gender and self-identity. This is partly due to the lack of exposure the military has had to gender as a self-identified concept. It was not until 2016 that the military allowed its personnel to discuss the idea of their gender as it relates to their identity (Schvey et al., 2020). Most of the participants in this study lived in the military's “Don't ask, Don't Tell” policies (Nielsen & Snider, 2009). Although those policies explicitly outlined homosexuality, they applied to transgenderism and the distinction between gender and biological sex.

Thus, after being immersed in years of a culture that had laws banning the discussion of gender identity, individuals would be discomfited when discussing the topic.

Those that identified as male reported that they have not thought about how their gender has influenced their reacclimation. Some stumbled nervously through their response to answer that they do not believe that had an impact, while others became aggressive in their shortened answers of deflection towards the topic. This was a new and uncomfortable topic to a group of individuals that lived by a set of legal requirements that would have exiled them from the culture if they would be open about their thoughts.

Male-Dominated Society

Females in the military have a different transition than males (Demers, 2013). In the military, people must adapt to the acceptable norms, values, and beliefs of the service branch that they enter. Women face an added level of adaptation; they must adapt to the male-dominated culture that is the military (Demers, 2013; 2011). Many of the traditional feminine behaviors are repressed through social conditioning and replaced with more masculine behavior traits. As reported by the female veterans, gender identity and traditional gender traits are barriers to civilian society transition. For example, Participant Kilo expressed frustration with their career in law enforcement stating that “ I see a lot of male officers that, if I give an order, they'll look past me to the next senior male officer standing with me or near me and ask them.” The male-dominated traits that females adopt while serving in the military becomes a part of their identity. During the transition, many female veterans feel that their male-dominated characteristics are not culturally acceptable in civilian society under the gender identity of “female” (Demers, 2011).

Female participants indicated that their reacculturation was reported with more barriers due to gender than their male counterparts. They perceived that their gender hindered their ability to reintegrated back to society without conflict. Among other civil-military divide elements, the notion of non-distinction regarding gender and job performance is a given in the military. However, there is still an ongoing distinction in both pay and promotions in many civilian organizations. Although the idea of the gender pay gap has been disproven, many people still perceive discrimination due to gender (Hamidullah et al., 2020). It is difficult for these veteran females to transition to a new culture that they perceive to be discriminatory.

Subquestion 2: How does military rank influence the shared perceptions to obtain autonomy in civilian society?

Military rank is a symbol of stature within a social structure (Mattis & Schake, 2016). Veterans have displayed a sense of loss of placement within a social structure without their military rank, which has led some to inappropriately interacting with civilian societal adult members as “children,” thereby inhibiting autonomy obtainment.

Loss of Placement

Military rank is a symbol that is worn externally (Hostrander, 2019). The rank determines social customs, responsibilities, and assignment. To many in the military, rank provides purpose and direction when there is no clear guidance otherwise (Deibler, 2011). There was a sense of hopelessness in the participants' voices and words when discussing their military rank. Many of them spoke about “no one caring” and “it doesn't matter” to nonmilitary persons. They expressed that they knew exactly where they fit in

the military but were lost now that they were out of the military. This may result from the removal of the military culture without proper acculturation to a new one. The loss and hopelessness are both indicators of stage two of the CS Theory because individuals in this stage tend to direct blame of conflict at themselves.

Dealing with Children

The customs associated with military rank extended to communication etiquette. It is the duty and responsibility of a military officer to train, educate, and develop the servicemembers of a lower rank (Deibler, 2011). When a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) is in charge of a Junior Enlisted (Jr Enl) servicemember, the custom is to communicate with the assumption that the Jr Enl does not have the knowledge nor experience required to understand. Therefore, the belief often translates into parental behavior. In some situations, this is exhibited as protective; it is exhibited as condescension in other situations.

As reported by the participants, the absence of rank post-transition had impacted the way they communicated with others. Most former NCOs stated that they often found themselves treating everyone who appeared younger than them as Jr Enl and speaking in a condescending tone in many encounters. The lack of a formalized social structure impedes the transition process regarding communication. TAP should include communication transition to enable service members to convey information more accurately and without conflict in the civilian world.

Subquestion 1: What are the shared perceived barriers to obtain autonomy in civilian society by post-active duty veterans in Chester County, Pennsylvania?

There are three perceived barriers to obtain Stage 4 shared by veterans. Veterans have expressed (a) a diminished social circle, (b) inability to translate military norms, and (c) feelings of fear towards civilian society among autonomy obtainment barriers. These barriers have reportedly impacted veterans by creating unconscious social segregation between themselves and the local public members.

Social Circle

Individuals seek out others that share the same experiences. Humans are biologically “hardwired” to feel more comfortable around people like ourselves than those we perceive differently (Bahns et al., 2017). As more than 75% of individuals in the United States are ineligible for military service due to health-related issues, inadequate education, and/or criminal record, it becomes increasingly more difficult for a service member to relate to their experience with more than 75% of society (Christeson et al., 2009).

The study's participants reported that they had limited the number of people they could socialize with personally. When asked why they thought they needed a limited social circle, they responded that they could be “themselves” with other veterans. The lack of shared common experience between a military person and a nonmilitary person has created more than a civil-military divide; it has created a communication barrier. It is hard to socialize and open up to others when a person struggles to communicate lived experiences.

Scared

There is fear in the unknown. Cultural transition is often an unknown entity to individuals that did not receive the proper preparation for a change in group norms and behaviors (Reina & Reina, 2016). The cultural expectations of society tend not to be in an explicit format, such as law or policy. Instead, they are often found in implicit cultural behaviors, such as a group identity, tribal knowledge, or not using profanity in public (Hanlan, 2020). The acceptable norms, values, and beliefs are generally acceptable because the group implicitly agrees to them (Hanlan, 2019). Yet, veterans are not a part of the group to learn the acceptable norms before entering the culture.

Many participants reported feeling trepidatious towards interaction with the new culture because they were unfamiliar with the social norms. Some participants reported feeling paralytical fear regarding that civilian society's cultural norms. Moreover, they feared that unfamiliarity with the new culture was a cause of unemployment. Some even stated that they needed therapy to become a civilian after leaving the military because they were always feeling a sense of fear and dread. Some have referred to the constant state of being afraid as the “Kindling Effect” of a traumatic experience (Schumm et al., 2005). The Kindling effect refers to the brain and body to become incredibly sensitive to the psychological “flight or fight” state. The traumatic experience becomes a collection of kindling waiting for a spark to ignite it. A spark creates similar to a fire. If individuals encounter a situation that they perceive to be similar to a fearful event, the kindle will quickly start. This kindling effect often leaves veterans scared and in conflict with others.

Civilians Don't Understand

Many veterans have expressed difficulty communicating their military experience to individuals that have not been exposed to the military culture (Ahern et al., 2015; Danish & Antonides, 2013; Santella, 2020). This is mainly due to the absence of a shared common experience that could act as a Rosetta Stone to translate two different communication forms. It is like explaining the color blue to a blind person (Hanlan, 2017). This difficulty can manifest as extensive frustration in veterans; or, as the participants phrased it, “civilians don’t understand.”

Among the barriers to autonomy obtainment that veterans perceive, communication of the military experience and culture were ranked among the top. The professional experience that may appear quite impressive in the military has little or no bearing on a civilian application. One example of this was Participant Kilo that worked as a “Corpsman.” This position required extensive medical knowledge and surgical training before the first assignment. These skills are not transferable to the civilian world because the DoD (Department of Defense) was the credential authorizing agency. Even the VA (Department of Veterans Affairs) does not recognize the military experience as a valid form of professional work history (Mann, 2016). The VA has a veteran employment rate of 6%, the lowest of any government agency (Storm et al., 2012). Yet, it is the VA that veterans seek assistance for readjustment. Without a person with a shared common experience, it is understandable that veterans' frustrations grow.

Research Question 1: To what extent does the TAP help post active duty veterans obtain Stage 4 of culture shock theory in Chester County, Pennsylvania?

As noted in Chapter 4, the answer to this question is not simple. CS Theory involves the perception of conflict with members of a new culture during a transition. For veterans, the transition is not a singular event for a career change, but a multi-dimensional change to their social structure, customs, environment, and (to some) perception of the world. TAP does not address all the variables that influence veterans' transition because it is not implemented in a manner that would (Sherrill, 2014). The TAP helps post active duty veterans obtain autonomy to the extent of career transition preparation only. In areas of reacculturation, veterans report feeling on their own to manage mounds of paperwork during a perceived pointless "check the box" out process course set to calibrate an individual to civilian life through "toxic positivity."

Toxic Positivity

Toxic positivity is the excessive behavior of someone who is constantly encouraging others who are suffering from adversity to always see things from the good side, without considering the experience they had endured beforehand (Satriopamungkas et al., 2020, pg. 1). Individuals that go through a cultural transition are often unaware of the adversity they are suffering (Furham, 2012). Veterans are not excluded from the unconscious tribulation that culture shock has inflicted on so many others.

Logically, if the individual in TAP were unaware of the adversity, then it would make sense for the instructors of TAP to be oblivious as well. Toxic positivity does not necessarily have to be malicious or conscious behavior; it merely requires encouragement

without considering the experience. Several participants reported feeling a sense of toxic positivity from instructors of the program because the instructors presented the positive side of leaving the military. Some respondents stated that there were false expectations of guaranteed employment because they believed civilian employers value military experience. For example, Participant Bravo noted that the toxic positivity created an atmosphere of “heads in clouds” that people missed a lot of detail needed to reintegrate back to the civilian world.

Calibrate to Civilian Life

As earlier remarked, several participants used the military jargon term “calibrate to.” This is a military metaphor that refers to the calibration of instruments to align oneself to a correct alignment with their surroundings. Veterans used this term to convey that they felt that they needed to readjust themselves to a new and different environment. Some participants reported requiring professional therapy to accomplish this task. Yet, each of the individuals that stated that they needed to “calibrate to civilian life” recognized that the transition was more than merely a career change; it was a substantial culture change.

Check the Box

People in organizations tend to conduct programs and follow procedures without understanding the driving forces (Hanlan, 2020; Schein, 2017). The implementation of TAP appears to have fallen in this same tendency. Many of the TAP elements are implemented without an appreciation of the veterans' transitional needs (Sherrill, 2014). Instead, the program's implementation is focused on the career transition that a service

member will endure. Servicemembers enter the TAP with a different set of expectations than the program's design (Sherrill, 2013; 2014).

Many veterans in this study reported that they perceived that TAP's purpose was to prepare them for the civilian world. The program objectives are solely targeted towards veterans' benefits and employment transition (DoD Transition Assistance Program, 2019). The misalignment of expectations appears to have left several of the respondents perceiving to have missed vital information about their transition prior to separation.

Paperwork

Paperwork is inevitable in a bureaucracy, especially when five different bureaucracies are involved in one program such as TAP. Service members need to fill out the proper forms and workbooks to ensure that all of the information for out-processing is provided. However, there is a point in which the servicemember becomes overwhelmed by the volume of administrative correspondence they complete during TAP. Many people are unable to adequately comprehend the information presented to them if there is too much presented at once (Hoffman, 2016). The timing of TAP occurs at the end of a person's military service. Individuals tend to be so hyper-focused on the post-separation that they often overlook the importance of the information provided (Santella, 2020).

Several participants thought TAP information and its forms were an unproductive use of time. The reported perception was that there were workbooks and documents to fill out only for the sake of filling them out, not because there was a known purpose. Some

stated that they rushed through their paperwork because they did not understand the need, outcome, nor impact the program would have on their lives outside of the military.

On Your Own

Camaraderie is more than mutual trust and friendship to those in the military; it is about family (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011, pg. 1151). That family assists each other in all aspects of each other's lives: relationships, education, financials, living arrangements, career development, and anything else that may burden the soul. Military connections transcend words like camaraderie and friendship (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011, pg. 1152). Thus, when a person loses that connection, they can feel as if they lost a piece of themselves.

There was a paradoxical sense that they both missed being in the military and were glad that they were out of the military. An evident desperate longing was identified in the participant's voice and tone of several participants during the interviews for the people they missed from the military. Yet, Participant Alpha articulated an element of freedom as "not knowing what to do with all that extra time during the week." Participant Echo, on the other hand, stated, "You are a family in the military. Now, you are on your own. Just left there, without anyone to help. To go to. Just you, alone". It is a feeling that many veterans know all too well. It is a feeling that they are missing a connection and support structure that they lived and depended on that is suddenly gone. That after TAP, the veteran is on their own in life and is in a state of culture shock.

Culture Shock Theory Interpretation

The theoretical framework for this study was culture shock (CS) theory. CS theory asserts that a person experiences five stages of shock when immersed in a new culture (Pedersen, 1995). The five stages are (a) the honeymoon stage, (b) the disintegration stage, (c) the reintegration, (d) the autonomy stage, and (e) the interdependence stage. According to Pedersen (1995), a person obtains autonomy when they can navigate the new culture without significant conflict. As veterans have expressed conflict via disassociating behavior, unemployment, and homelessness, the autonomy stage's obtainment would indicate a sustainable and acceptable reacculturation.

Throughout the data collection phase, various forms of qualitative information were collected that indicated which stage each participant should be appropriately assigned. The Disintegration state is when an individual begins to diverge from old norms without an accurate understanding of the new culture. The individual tends to direct blame of conflict at themselves. Four participants exhibited the behavior of withdrawnness and self-directed responsibility towards adapting to the new lifestyle. Reintegration is the stage in which an individual will continue to diverge from old norms without an accurate understanding of the new culture. However, in this stage, the individual tends to direct blame of conflict outward towards the new culture as a whole. Six participants demonstrated aggressive verbal behavior when discussing adjusting to life as a civilian, post-military. As noted above, autonomy is the stage in which the veterans become accepted as a member of the new culture and can navigate without significant conflict. In this stage, the lexicon changes when discussing civilians from

“them” to “us.” Three individuals were identified as obtaining this stage. However, it should be noted that two of those individuals reported requiring therapy after separation (significantly antecedent before the study) to reach the autonomy stage. No participants displayed traits that would assign them to either the Honeymoon stage or Interdependence stage. Therefore, these stages were not discussed.

CS theory was shown to illuminate the path in which many veterans endure post-separation. A few of the participants reported feeling optimistic towards the transition (Honeymoon stage) but was faced conflict with the new culture shortly after that. Those that reflected on that conflict directed the conflict blame towards themselves (Disintegration stage), while others focused more on the conflict they currently tolerate (Reintegration stage). autonomy is obtainable for veterans, as demonstrated by three of the participants. Although Stage 4 may require more work for some than others, it is a process that helps ascribe the experience veterans have.

Extend the Knowledge of Public Policy

This study extends the knowledge of Public Policy in three ways: (a) through the examination of program implementation amongst the intersection of five different governmental organizations, (b) through the evaluation of the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP) as it applies to cultural transition, and (c) through the conveyance of the impact of public policy from the perspective of the service population.

TAP is a program that is administered by the Department of Defense (DoD) with the assistance of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Labor (DoL), Small Business Administration (SBA), and Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

(Kamarck, 2017, pg. 1). The intersection of multiple governmental organizations working together on a singular program for veterans is a unique opportunity to evaluate and expand the study field. This study has demonstrated that areas of cultural awareness are missing in a multiagency program.

The participants have affirmed the TAP to be an excellent career transition program. The workshop embedded within the program provides a structured curriculum for developing a civilian resume and learning about veterans' benefits post-separation. However, TAP has several opportunities to improve in terms of cultural preparations and contact with the service member post-separation.

The service population's impact is an area that offers significant benefit to the public policy's knowledge base. Policymakers and program administrators would be wise to listen and learn from those that are recipients of TAP. The lessons they provide in this study offer areas to improve TAP and curve the culture shock that previous veterans have endured.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited by two factors: (a) the Covid-19 Pandemic and (b) the inability to identify veteran participants. The Covid-19 Pandemic limited both the recruitment of potential research volunteers and the interactions with the participants. All communication was conducted through email and telephone. No visual observations were able to take place due to social distancing restrictions. The identities of veterans are not public knowledge, making the ability to contact random individuals complicated. The veteran status is a self-reported status, which is not always accurate. Some veterans

choose to conceal their status for personal reasons, and some non-veterans claim the status for personal gain, which imposed many constraints on the participant validation process.

Recommendations

As a public policy program, TAP was studied to provide evidence-based policy recommendations to progress veterans' programs and transitional needs. Through literature research, one-on-one interviews, and researcher experience, policy recommendations were formulated to assist TAP and the veterans' the program serves. As shown in Table 4, this study identifies five key policy recommendations.

Policy Recommendations for TAP

Table 4

Policy Recommendations for TAP

Recommendations	Elements of Plan	Implementation of Plan	Benefit of Plan
Cultural Transition Plan	Expectation setting, Goal Setting, and regional norms	Meet with transition counselor one year before separation to develop a plan. Check-in once a quarter until six months after separation.	Set appropriate expectations. Align the needs of the individual with more targeted resources and reduce the expended cost of the program.
Gender Inclusion Training	Social trends & military readiness vs. civilian employment	Have nonmilitary, nonDoD-civilian conduct yearly civilian employer training that focuses on gender identity in the workplace.	Reduce the CS impact of Vets once they gain civilian employment and aligned with social trends.

Communication Training	Civilian social structure in employers and common communication skills that differ from the military	Conduct periodic workshop (within at least every six months) with members of the local chamber of commerce to expose both military & civilian on cross-communication styles.	Creates an avenue to communicate with civilians and possibly form a new relationship while minimizing conflict.
GSP Screening	Behavioral screenings pre & post-separation	Meet (virtually) with a nonmilitary psychologist for GSP screening six months before separation and again with the same provider six months after separation to compare the results.	Early detection and intervention can get treatment before issues set in.
Program Expansion	Include the previous four recommendations, cultural transition counseling sessions, employment lectures on keeping the job rather than applying for jobs.	Start TAP 1 year before separation. Meet with a counselor to develop a transition plan. Identify goals and milestones. Use 10 USC to address cultural needs of loss of culture and loss of placement.	Reduce CS, reduce funds for the program, reduce suicide.

Recommendation 1: Cultural Transition Plan

Veterans in this study have expressed a loss of culture since they left the military. It was observed that there was an appearance of a correlation between the length of service and cultural indoctrination. To which, participants agreed with this observation. It is advised that individuals develop a cultural transition plan one year prior to military separation. The service member would meet with a transition counselor to set transitional expectations, goals, and milestones with dates. The counselor would work with the servicemember to identify the regional cultural norms of the area in which that individual plans to acculturated. Developing a plan one year prior to discharge will allow the service

member time to prepare for and understand the cultural transition. This will have the additional benefit of providing a buffer in scheduling for the servicemember to emotionally deal with the change without dealing with moving and founding a new job.

Recommendation 2: Gender Inclusion Training

Those in this study conveyed a distinct and robust difference between males and females in the transition process. The male-dominated society that was described illustrates a need to gender-neutralize the process. To address this issue, TAP should include gender inclusion training as a part of the program. The training should consist of a nonmilitary or nonDoD-civilian conduct a yearly private sector workforce trend training that focuses primarily on gender identity. This training would offer exposure to military personnel on civilian employment trends and workplace culture. Regardless of the military's culture, many civilian employers require gender identity and inclusion training as a requirement for employment. Including this form of training may help reduce the culture shock that a veteran would endure in civilian employment.

Recommendation 3: Communication Training

The loss of social placement has led to improper forms of communication. As some articulated, they were “dealing with children.” While the communication style may be suitable for military audiences, it is intimidating to those unaccustomed to the style. Based on this finding, service members should receive communication training six months or greater prior to separation. The communication training could manifest in the form of a workshop with the local Chamber of Commerce. A cross-cultural workshop would expose both the military and private sector to the different communication styles

through an experiential learning model. Learning the new culture's interaction techniques can reduce culture shock and ease the veteran's reacculturation process. Moreover, this will offer an avenue to translate military language and concepts in a manner receptive to civilians.

Recommendation 4: GSP Screening

Among the findings of this study, veterans have been observed to display symptoms of GSP. GSP is defined by the persistent fear of embarrassing social transgressions (Blair et al., 2010, pg.2). Several participants who were scared expressed unremitting anxiety towards the civilian social norms and alien nature. Requiring social services is clear, Yet the VA does not currently offer post-separation social services without a cost to the individual. Based on this finding, it is urged that the VA provide screening for servicemembers for GSP and culture shock under the DSM-5 no less than six months prior to military separation. Then require the same provider to screen the veteran again for six months after separation from the military. Those individuals who are found to exhibit GSP and/or culture shock would receive readjustment services at no cost to the veteran under 38 U.S. Code § 3100. To which currently, veterans are required to provide the cost of behavioral evaluations until such time that the veteran can prove the problem is service-connected (Mann, 2016). Providing a comparison of no-cost screening for GSP and culture shock can reduce cultural conflicts and the veteran's adverse effects.

Recommendation 5: Program Expansion

The current implementation of TAP is hyper-focused on career transition. The underlining premise of which is that veterans only change their employment when discharged from the military. This study has found that veterans do not perceive separation from the military as solely a career change but as a cultural and lifestyle change. TAP does not address the needs of cultural and/or lifestyle changes, which has availed the impediment of veterans' reacculturation through autonomy obtainment. It is recommended that TAP expand the application of 10 U.S.C. §1142(b)(10) to include cultural transition as a part of the transition plan to help reorient the focus from primarily oriented towards career transition to a more holistic program that addresses veterans' cultural needs.

TAP should start one year prior to a servicemembers' separation and continue until six months after separation. The service member would meet with a transitional counselor to develop a cultural transition plan that details the transition objectives, expectations, and milestones. The transition plan should include assessing the servicemember on the Pedersen's U-curve culture shock scale, a gap analysis, gap mitigation, and action items to move forward. The servicemember and counselor would meet once per quarter to review each tollgate's alignment with the milestone. This will provide the servicemember ample time and context to comprehend the cultural change. This would reorient the focus of TAP to the cultural needs of the transition. Moreover, this focus will address the identified perceived barriers to obtain autonomy in Chester County, Pennsylvania.

The TAP 5-day workshop application of 10 U.S.C. §1142(b) would include lectures on civilian cultural norms to help veterans keep employment rather than simply apply to jobs. The topics should comprise of common corporate practices, soft skills, and accountability etiquette. As the military manages timelines and accountability in a drastically different style than many private sector employers are accustomed to, courses on these subjects could reduce veterans' culture shock that transition. Moreover, a reduction in culture shock can reduce the readjustment services required by those recently separated from the military.

Recommendations for Future Research

During the qualification screening for study participants, a significant number of individuals referred to this study were disqualified because of refusal to consent to being recorded and/or their VA Disability rating greater than 30%. A possible explanation of these rejection criteria is beyond the purview of this study. Sixty-two individuals were disqualified due to refusing to consent to be recorded. The United States military has a long history of unethical, by current standards, research on service personnel (Ketchum & Ketchum, 2012). Veterans have not forgotten the studies conducted on service members such as Operation Whitecoat that tested biological weapons on 2,300 soldiers, Project 112 that stored and tested chemical weapons on naval ships during the 1970s, or the LSD (Lysergic acid diethylamide) and PCP (Phencyclidine) that the US Army tested on its soldiers during the 1960s (Ketchum & Ketchum, 2012). Although exploring the rationale behind refusal for consent to be recorded is beyond this study's scope, it is worth

researching in another study because understanding veterans' perception of being recorded could assist future research on veterans and their participation.

More than half of the candidates who agreed to the study's terms were ineligible due to their VA Disability rating. A criteria requirement of 30% or less was selected to align with HIPAA and ensure the protection of vulnerable research group members. Many of the issues observed were above a rating of 30%. PTSD is 50%, paralyzed or missing appendages is at least 40%, and medical retirements are a minimum of 40%. Therefore, a question emerged about the disqualifications, "why are so many veterans above 30% disability?" Exploring possible reasons for the high number was beyond the scope of this study. However, it is an area recommended for future research.

To help explain the high number of disability ratings, future research could investigate: (a) If there are more injuries in Iraq and Afghanistan than in other conflicts? (b) Could these higher numbers result from the military being able to medivac those that could be saved in this war but not in previous wars? (c) Are there more programs available for veterans to receive disability presently than in previous eras? (d) Is there more information available to veterans about their benefits to receive disability ratings? or (e) Is society more socially accepting of seeking mental/behavioral health treatment than ever before? Any of these questions are recommended to explore regarding veteran disabilities.

Implications

Research for the sake of research does not help the human condition learn, grow, and improve. Positive social purpose in the research provides a directed impact on that

improvement. This study has demonstrated an opportunity for positive social change in three areas: (a) for veterans, (b) for the five governmental organizations involved in the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP), and (c) for the theoretical validation of culture shock (CS) theory.

As discussed throughout this study, veterans endure culture shock after they separate from the military. The culture shock has resulted in disassociating behavior, unemployment, and homelessness in the veteran community. As many as 61% of veterans have sought reintegration services after the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to help them cope with culture shock. Explanation of 10 U.S.C. §1142(b)(10) to include cultural transition as a part of the transition plan will reduce the adverse effects of culture shock.

TAP is the result of a five interagency partnership. Each of the five governmental organizations contributes to the estimated 181.3 million dollars per year cost of TAP (Kamarck, 2017). The VA also allocated more than 300 million dollars to readjustment services for veterans due to the overwhelming reacculturation issues veterans are reporting (Bertoni et al., 2014; Sherrill, 2014). This study provided several recommendations that would assist the TAP's effectiveness to transition and reacculturated servicemembers that are conducive to social norms. This would increase the return on investment that each organization allocates while also decreasing the required readjustment services.

This study validated the U-curve hypothesis of CS Theory through an ethnographic design as it applied to veteran transition. Application of this framework to

veterans transition has created a roadmap to forecast the behavioral patterns after separation from the military. This five-stage roadmap should create positive change in the transition process through anticipation of potential barriers to reacculturation. If a problem can be identified, it can be avoided.

Conclusion

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) has helped more than 2 million service members through their career transition since 2002. However, military to civilian transition is not solely a career change from the servicemember perspective; it is a culture change. The acceptable norms, values, and beliefs in which an individual once held have transformed. In many cases, this transformation has occurred outside the conscious knowledge of the newly labeled “*veteran.*” It is at this point that culture shock sets in and impacts the veteran. Conflict arises between others and themselves due to a misalignment of culture. Unaware of the new cultural norms, the veteran struggles to reintegrate.

Reacculturation into the civilian world is a deep-seated issue for the veteran community. An estimated 20 veterans commit suicide per day due to readjustment issues (Horwitz et al., 2018). Addressing the TAP's cultural expansion will reduce the culture shock endured by those that separate and, hopefully, reduce the number of those that are lost to the fight at home.

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