

2017

# Successful Strategies for Recruitment and Hiring of Veterans

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Paul Gamble

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Walden University  
2017

Abstract

Successful Strategies for Recruitment and Hiring of Veterans

by

Paul C. Gamble

MBA, Touro University, 2008

BA, American Military University, 2006

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

October 2017

## Abstract

Transitioning from military service to the civilian workforce is both a daunting experience and a formidable challenge for many highly skilled veterans. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the successful strategies of Fortune 500 business leaders for the recruitment and hiring of veterans. Person-organization fit theory formed the conceptual framework for this study. The targeted population consisted of 3 business leaders from 3 separate Fortune 500 businesses in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area with successful strategies for recruiting and hiring veterans. Data collected from interviews and supporting documents were coded and analyzed using a mind-mapping technique, and 3 themes emerged: veteran awareness and edification, business leader awareness and edification, and working with strategic partners. The study findings may provide business leaders who lack veteran recruitment and hiring strategies opportunities to access skilled veterans seeking employment. The social implications of this study revolves around potential enhancements to business leaders' understanding of what highly skilled veterans may bring to their organizations' operational portfolio. Additionally, this study may contribute to veteran job seekers' awareness of the importance of preparing themselves for the career transition between military service and the civilian workforce.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this to my biggest fan and sole reason why I took this journey—my wife, Cheryl. She saw something in me back in 1987 that I failed to see in myself: a capacity for more. Because of you I strive each day to be a better person, so thank you for consistently bringing out the best version of me. I would also like to thank my children, Caitlin, Emilia, and Lillian, for being strong, loving, and compassionate women. With you, I share life's ultimate bumper sticker—*Work hard, be kind, and dream big!* And finally, I would like to salute my fellow brothers and sisters of the U.S. Armed Services. You are the very best of America, so to you I raise my glass and say, *To those and those like us, damn few left!*

“We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; For he to-day that sheds his blood with me Shall be my brother.”

—William Shakespeare, *Henry V*

## Acknowledgments

A sage professor once told me that the best doctoral study was one that was done. With that note in mind, I present the best doctoral study to academia. I would like to give a big thank you to my chair, Dr. Peter Anthony, for his guidance, support, and lightning-fast turnaround times. Normally, Army and Navy do not mix very well, but admittedly Dr. Pete was exactly what I needed to bring my doctoral journey to a close. So, this Soldier would like to say thank you to that Submariner (and Go Army, Beat Navy!). I would also like to say thank you to my second committee member, Dr. Greg Washington, for his words of encouragement and timely responses. I also would like to acknowledge Dr. Neil Mathur (URR) for his feedback and completely vanquishing my anthropomorphisms.

## Table of Contents

Section 1: Foundation of the Study.....	1
Background of the Problem .....	1
Problem Statement .....	2
Purpose Statement.....	2
Nature of the Study .....	3
Research Question .....	6
Interview Questions .....	6
Conceptual Framework.....	7
Operational Definitions.....	8
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations.....	9
Assumptions.....	9
Limitations .....	10
Delimitations.....	10
Significance of the Study .....	11
Contribution to Business Practice.....	12
Implications for Social Change.....	13
A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature.....	14
Person-Organization Fit Theory .....	18
Investment in Human Capital .....	20
Veterans’ Capability Portfolio .....	23
Recruitment and Hiring Strategies.....	26



Challenges Hiring Veterans .....	30
Veteran Bona Fides.....	35
Career Transition and Adaptability.....	38
Incentives for Hiring Veterans.....	42
Transition .....	43
Section 2: The Project.....	45
Purpose Statement.....	45
Role of the Researcher .....	46
Participants.....	48
Research Method and Design .....	50
Research Method .....	50
Research Design.....	51
Population and Sampling .....	53
Ethical Research.....	56
Data Collection Instruments .....	57
Data Collection Technique .....	60
Data Organization Technique .....	62
Data Analysis .....	63
Reliability and Validity.....	65
Reliability.....	66
Validity .....	66
Transition and Summary.....	68

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change .....	70
Introduction.....	70
Presentation of the Findings.....	71
Theme 1: Veteran Awareness and Edification.....	72
Theme 2: Business Leader Awareness and Edification .....	77
Theme 3: Working With Strategic Partners .....	82
Applications to Professional Practice .....	85
Implications for Social Change.....	89
Recommendations for Action .....	90
Recommendations for Further Research.....	91
Reflections .....	92
Conclusion .....	93
References.....	94
Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Questions .....	124
Appendix B: National Institutes of Health Certificate of Completion .....	126

## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Section 1 includes an outline of the business problem and the methods applied to explore the successful strategies that Fortune 500 business leaders used to recruit and hire military veterans. I provide a comprehensive review of the literature on the business problem and describe a new research study and design in this area. Finally, this section includes the potential academic contribution of this study and its potential positive social change impact.

### **Background of the Problem**

Over 300,000 veterans depart military service each year and enter the civilian job market (Faurer, Rogers-Broderson, & Bailie, 2014). Though the number of departing service members is substantial, the percentage of the U.S. population currently serving in the military is 0.4%, or 1.3 million people (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2016). Thousands of honorably serving veterans depart military service each year and enter a civilian job market that needs skilled workers (Faurer et al., 2014; Thompson & Jetly, 2014).

Military service members go through extensive levels of leadership and management training throughout their careers, and additional combat and high-stress experiences provide them with unique qualities and skill sets (Thompson & Jetly, 2014). According to a Defense Human Resources Activity (2011) report, 94% of military personnel have some level of higher education, compared to 59% of the general population. However, even with robust levels of education, veterans are not hired by

some businesses due to various concerns, such as questions about the transfer of military skills and preconceived notions regarding the military (Harrell & Berglass, 2012).

My study focused on the business problem of successful recruitment and hiring strategies for veterans. Additionally, I sought to determine the study's core ideology and envisioned future. The core ideology is the substance of a study that holds its root structure and organization together, while the envisioned future focuses on what the study seeks to accomplish, become, and generate (Azaddin, 2012).

### **Problem Statement**

Military service members go through extensive levels of leadership and management training throughout their careers, and their lived combat and high-stress experiences foster the development of unique qualities that may transfer to a civilian workforce that needs high-quality workers (Thompson & Jetly, 2014). An average of 300,000 veterans leave military service each year, and about 50% of them are unable to find equal employment in the civilian workforce (Faurer et al., 2014; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2015). The general business problem is that although the federal government incentivizes business leaders to hire veterans, many do not. The specific business problem is that some business leaders lack strategies for recruiting and hiring qualified veterans to fill vacancies.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the recruitment and hiring strategies that business leaders use to attract qualified veterans to fill organizational job vacancies. The targeted population consisted of three business leaders

from three separate Fortune 500 businesses within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area who had achieved success in using strategies for the recruitment and hiring of veterans. This study has implications for positive social change, in that it may promote the hiring of veterans, which can help to reduce the unemployment rate in the United States, and it may improve awareness and understanding of business leaders concerning what highly skilled veterans bring to their organizations' operational portfolio. Additionally, veterans possess qualities, such as leadership experience and an understanding of working in culturally diverse environments, which can positively affect society by showcasing those unique attributes to a potentially apathetic or unobservant society (McDermott & Panagopoulos, 2015).

### **Nature of the Study**

I employed a qualitative multiple case study. Longfield et al. (2016) stated that qualitative research offers a broad understanding of phenomena through enabling an investigation into a person's or group's barriers, culture, feelings, intentions, motivators, social norms, thoughts, and values. Because it was my intent to interview Fortune 500 executives who had developed and implemented effective strategies for recruitment and hiring of veterans, the qualitative research methodology fit the purpose of the study. A researcher's use of the qualitative method refines the research and provides a human component to the process by not only reminding participants of their goals and motivations, but also offering the researcher the ability to empathize with the study respondents (Choo et al., 2016). Halcomb and Hickman (2015) asserted that quantitative research encompasses the collection and analysis of numerical data to compare

differences among variables. Because this research was not intended to examine relationships or differences among variables, the quantitative method was not appropriate for my research study. Mixed method researchers use a combination of both the qualitative and quantitative research methods in a single research study. Mixed method research includes the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research in combining aggregate data (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015). In that there was no need to use any portion of quantitative methodology in this study, the mixed method was not an appropriate choice for this research study.

I used multiple case study design to explore the recruitment and hiring strategies of Fortune 500 business leaders to attract qualified veterans to fill organizational job vacancies. The use of a multiple case study design is intended to facilitate a profound understanding of a research topic (Hall & Theron, 2016). Researchers use case study design to explore situations or experiences from different perspectives, with the aim of gaining a complete and balanced picture of a phenomenon (Taylor & Thomas-Gregory, 2015). Taylor and Thomas-Gregory (2015) defined the *case* in a case study as a unit of analysis that is identified to explore a phenomenon in a bounded context, and they emphasized the importance of a precise definition of the case at the start of research. Exploring the views and understandings of study participants offers researchers substantive and thorough qualitative data for understanding participants' experiences, detailed narratives of each experience, and the significance behind experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

I considered alternative research design options, but ultimately rejected them because they did not fit my study. Researchers use phenomenological research study designs to explore the core components and meanings of participants experiencing particular phenomena. Assarroudi and Heydari (2016) explained that researchers using phenomenology design attempt to garner a greater understanding regarding the meaning of experiencing a particular phenomenon. In that my research topic was reliant upon the experiences and objective dispositions of various Fortune 500 business leaders who had developed and implemented successful strategies for recruitment and hiring of veterans, phenomenology did not fit the purpose of my study.

Ethnography is a qualitative research design for collecting data from participants within their cultural setting. Researchers use ethnography to obtain significant information about the preferences and behaviors of individuals, especially in relation to how those attributes may change over time (Ranfagni, Guercini, & Crawford-Camicciottoli, 2014). Because I focused on the recruitment and hiring strategies of a particular demographic—Fortune 500 business leaders—rather than the strategies of an entire culture, ethnography did not fit the purpose of my study.

Researchers use narrative design to elicit an individual's perspective or story directly from a personal vantage point, as told through a variety of media, such as field notes, journals, stories, and interview transcripts (Joyce, 2015). Kaufman (2014) asserted that narratives are an important means for researchers to both acquire data and extrapolate knowledge or meaning. Because the intent of this study was to provide firsthand information and experiences from Fortune 500 business leaders and not to

research personal stories, employing a narrative design would not have been useful for addressing the purpose of my study.

### **Research Question**

The central research question was the following: What successful strategies do Fortune 500 business leaders use to recruit and hire qualified veterans?

### **Interview Questions**

The following interview questions correlated to the research question:

1. What challenges have you met with the recruitment of qualified veterans?
2. What challenges have you met with the hiring of qualified veterans?
3. What strategies do you use to improve the recruitment of qualified veterans?
4. What strategies do you use to improve the hiring of qualified veterans?
5. How do you assess the effectiveness of the strategies used for the recruitment of qualified veterans?
6. How do you assess the effectiveness of the strategies used for the hiring of qualified veterans?
7. In your experience, how have your recruitment strategies benefitted your organization?
8. Based upon your experience, how have your hiring strategies benefitted your organization?
9. Please provide any additional information on this topic not covered in the interview.



## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of a research study includes the theories, definitions, and models that form a basis for the research (English & Pengelly, 2016). I used person-organization fit theory for this study. Chatman (1989) proposed person-organization fit theory to measure the congruence between the norms and values of organizations to those of the values of the applicant. Kristof (1996) stated that person-organization fit theory defines the compatibility between the employee and the organization that occurs when either one side provides something the other needs or both parties share similar characteristics. The best outcome, according to Kristof, is when both employee and organization share something the other needs. Researchers use person-organization fit theory, according to Teimouri, Dezhtaherian, and Jenab (2015), to determine whether the characteristics of an employee have the possibility of converging with the patterns and behaviors of the organization and that the employees' attitudes may affect the level of similarity among the organization's and the employees' behaviors. The overall attitudes of the workforce are then affected by the degree of congruence between the behavior and characteristics of both the organization and its employees (Teimouri et al., 2015). To ensure person-organization fit congruence, an organization may adjust its recruitment and hiring strategies to ensure that future applicants share similar qualities and are suited for the organization. According to Cable and Edwards (2004), researchers use person-organization fit theory to match the behaviors and characteristics of the employee and the organization to achieve an overall better fit for the organization and greater job satisfaction for the employee. Person-organization fit theory provides researchers with a

potential lens for exploring the congruence between recruitment and hiring strategies for business leaders seeking to find a viable fit of a veteran to the organization and the organization to the veteran.

### **Operational Definitions**

The following definitions represent the meaning of atypical terms as applied to the study.

*Emotional intelligence:* The ability to empathize and identify with the feelings and emotions of employees so that business leaders may establish a mutual relationship (Hamidianpour, Esmaeilpour, Alizadeh, & Dorgoe, 2015).

*Human capital:* Related to individual employees and their capabilities, knowledge, training, experience, judgment, intelligence, and relationships in the workplace (Ferrary, 2015)

*Intellectual capital:* The sum of intangible assets within a business' enterprise, such as proprietary processes, patents, employees, customers' relationships, suppliers, and business partners (Gioacasi, 2014).

*Military veteran:* A person who served in the active military and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable (38 U.S. Code § 101). For the purpose of this study, a *veteran* is defined as any person who served on active duty as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard active components, or as a member of the National Guard or Reserves, and received an honorable discharge.

## **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

Researchers use assumptions to determine what is important, how things are related, and what qualifies as evidence (Flannery, 2016). The identification of research limitations is important and possibly affects both the validity and reliability of the data, and, to a certain extent, the conclusions (Emanuel, 2013). Delimitations within a research study are attained according to the purpose of the study and the research methodology and assist in defining the restrictions of the study and targeted population (Manescu, 2014; Yin, 2014).

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions consist of a researcher's personal beliefs regarding a specific topic, opinion, or discussion (Okimoto, 2014). As a researcher, I made several assumptions related to this study. Because my target population consisted of successful Fortune 500 business leaders, I assumed that (a) the veteran recruitment and hiring programs were extensions of existing conventional recruitment and hiring programs, (b) the participants provided complete transparency regarding their recruitment and hiring processes, and (c) the participants shared the benefits associated with the recruitment and hiring of veterans.

Additionally, because my target population was located within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and the federal government, I assumed that there were many businesses with close associations with the military, which would provide a large enough pool of potential candidates to interview. I also assumed that all participants would be open, honest, unbiased, and willing to provide clear and concise information related to

the research questions. Lastly, I assumed that the results of this research study would benefit those businesses that lack recruitment and hiring strategies aimed at veterans.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are the research constraints associated with a study that contribute to a finding or discovery (Lewin et al., 2015). Because I am a military veteran, a limitation of my research study could have been a participant's false assumption that my personal experience in the military and as a veteran reflected bias. It has been my experience that whether military service is stated openly or not, veterans subconsciously exude a military presence that is apparent to others. Another potential limitation was the willingness of the participants to provide honest and unfiltered information regarding their techniques, tactics, and procedures. Mecca et al. (2015) recognized the difficulties of bias avoidance due to conflicts of interest. Through thoughtful research techniques and strict interview protocols, I minimized the risk of any conflicts of interest by ensuring I adhered to the planned research objectives and procedures.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations assist a researcher in defining the limitations of the study and the target population (Yin, 2014). The intended scope of this study was limited to Fortune 500 businesses that had recruitment and hiring strategies targeting the veteran community. The intended scope of this study also included two Fortune 500 businesses within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area that had large populations of veterans. A Congressional Budget Office (2015) report concluded that the size of the workforce supporting the federal government exceeded \$500 billion, and according to a 2015 census

report, 8.3% of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area population, 6.1 million, are veterans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). This delimitation supported the identified study assumption of a large target population.

Another delimitation was the study's focus on the successful strategies of businesses that had a proven recruitment and hiring program targeting veterans. The intent of this delimitation was to garner any best practices from the participants to share with members of the business population who might not have focused on veterans as potential employees.

### **Significance of the Study**

Advances in technology and globalization are driving the demand for businesses to attract and hire a skilled workforce (Robertson & Aquino, 2016). To achieve these aims, business leaders need to synergize their recruitment and hiring strategies to acquire the skilled workers they need to execute their strategic goals (Kalaiselvan & Naachimuthu, 2016). Meanwhile, the U.S. military is investing heavily in the education and training portfolios of its service members to develop and ultimately sustain a skilled workforce that is able to meet its strategic objectives. Over \$8.7 billion of the 2016 Department of Defense's budget, 1.5% overall, was dedicated to training service members in a variety of hard and soft skill areas (U.S. Department of Defense, 2015). The significance of the study resides in its identification of the successful recruitment and hiring strategies of Fortune 500 companies and determination of whether the highly skilled veteran workforce met organizations' needs for skilled workers.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

Based on the Department of Defense's current plan to drawdown military forces by 2019 (Lytell et al., 2015), an average of 300,000 highly skilled veterans will depart military service each year and will be actively searching for employment in the civilian workforce (Faurer et al., 2014). According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2015), 50% of annually departing service members receive unemployment benefits because they are unable to find work upon separating from the military. The need for skilled workers is apparent as many businesses find themselves trying to keep up with both the demands of business globalization and the technological advances needed for a business to remain competitive (Robertson & Aquino, 2016). Business leaders are inclined to recruit and ultimately hire employees based on employees' knowledge and educational experience, as well as whether the organization's recruiter believes that the employees and their particular talents are suited culturally to the organization (Cappelli & Keller, 2013). The findings of this study may provide business leaders who lack veteran recruitment and hiring strategies with a basis to exploit their organization's organic strategies and gain access to skilled veterans seeking employment.

Military veterans are known for their leadership skills and teamwork and are considered major assets to businesses due to the discipline required of them during their military service (Hall, Harrell, Bicksler, Stewart, & Fisher, 2014). This study may help business leaders, once they discern the full breadth of military veterans' capabilities, to develop strategies to obtain and harness those unique veteran attributes to increase profitability.

## **Implications for Social Change**

According to Sharma and Monteiro (2016), social change involves the alteration of a person's thought in a way that ultimately transforms the person's thinking in a positive social direction. Equivalently, Walden University (2015a) defines social change as the deliberative process of developing concepts, strategies, and actions that enlighten a targeted population's understanding and ultimately improve human and social conditions. The social change implications of this study involve potential enhancements to business leaders' understanding of what highly skilled veterans may bring to their organizations' operational portfolio. According to Beauchesne and O'Hair (2013), service members go through many iterations of specialty job training, which continuously afford them unique educational and progressive on-the-job experiences as their careers progress. Some of the training that service members receive within the military's educational or operational arenas do not lead to structured academic credentialing. Therefore, society may arbitrarily dismiss veterans as not having the proper education or requisite skills to work in the civilian workforce (Beauchesne & O'Hair, 2013). Additionally, the unemployment rate for military veterans is higher than for the proportional and commensurate civilian workforce demographic (U.S Department of Labor, 2017). According to Kleykamp (2013), military service affects all service members in unique ways that may later influence their ability to obtain civilian employment after they transition from service. Because the unemployment rate is higher for veterans than for their civilian counterparts, veterans face significant stress during their transition to civilian life, which may amplify mental health concerns (Elliott, 2015; Kleykamp, 2013). The results of this research

could support the knowledge base for the hiring of veterans and help reduce the unemployment rate of U.S. veterans.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The intent of this qualitative study was to explore the successful recruitment and hiring strategies that Fortune 500 business leaders use to attract veterans. For this literature review, I took a holistic look at veterans and how their continuous military education and situational military experience factor into their overall suitability for a career in the private sector. This literature review also addressed both the basic personnel and skills needs of Fortune 500 businesses and that of the organization's desired goal of acquiring a skilled and suitable workforce.

Business leaders have a responsibility to make their goods and services available to the public, thereby increasing their profitability and ability to attract future investors (Clarke & Friedman, 2016). Once these aims are achieved, sustaining corporate profitability through economic success, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility is consistent with the corporate objective of long-term growth (Rae, Sands, & Gadenne, 2015). Continued success and profitability are vital to business leaders, and attracting, retaining, and developing the workforce talent needed for the organization's survival in today's competitive environment are important considerations (Rae et al., 2015). To do this, business leaders develop formulas to measure the talent needed to sustain organizational objectives; cost, educational level, professional training, intellect, business qualities, and the ability of an employee to work as hired are all major factors for consideration (Kamenetskii & Yas'kova, 2015).



An average of 300,000 highly skilled, educated, and experienced service members depart military service annually, and about 50% are unable to find equal employment in the civilian workforce (Faurer et al., 2014; Thompson & Jetly, 2014; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2015). The information garnered from this study may provide Fortune 500 business leaders with the strategies needed to acquire skilled employees from the pool of veterans departing service. The purpose of this academic and professional literature review was to compare, contrast, inform, and summarize various sources related to the successful strategies that Fortune 500 business leaders use to recruit and hire veterans. This research may indicate whether business leaders are cognizant of the full breadth of veterans' educational and experience portfolio and whether veterans' unique qualities are transferrable to the civilian workforce and ultimately beneficial to organizations (Thompson & Jetly, 2014).

Conducting an exhaustive literature review assists a researcher with classifying pertinent research into applicable themes that address the coherent issues needing future attention (Huang & Yasuda, 2016). A literature review is a holistic and crucial analysis of research written about a certain topic that provides a deeper context and examination of the subject (Wakefield, 2015). According to Ribeiro Serra (2015), an important aspect of a literature review is that it serves as a basis for the entire study and assists in shaping the conceptual framework, in addition to providing a foundation for an educated discussion. A thoughtful review of literature demonstrates the benefits a study brings to its field and assists in the process of detailing relevant gaps and contributions (Ribeiro Serra, 2015).

Researchers use literature reviews to validate their assumptions. The specific purposes for conducting a literature review are the following: (a) it provides the framework for the study; (b) it defines relevant terminology used in the study; (c) it provides a thoughtful overview of evidence, helping the researcher to gain fresh perspectives and to consider supporting assumptions; (d) it identifies the methodologies and research techniques previously used in related inquiries; and (e) it identifies gaps in the literature to strengthen the study's argument (Baker, 2016). This literature review was connected by person-organization fit theory.

I read peer-reviewed scholarly articles and journals for this literature review. Additionally, to develop a baseline argument, I accessed government websites, reports, and documents related to veteran recruitment and hiring strategies. The primary source that I used to locate scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles, other published research studies, and dissertations was EBSCOhost, which I accessed through the Walden University Library. Though I conducted research using multiple databases, ProQuest was the primary database I accessed.

I reviewed literature related to the proposed conceptual framework of the study, exploring person-organization fit theory to understand the compatibility between an employee and an organization that occurs when either one side provides something the other needs or both parties share similar characteristics (Kristof, 1996). Search terms included (a) *veteran*, (b) *hiring strategies*, (c) *recruitment strategies*, (d) *Fortune 500*, and (e) *person-organization fit theory*. At times, when appropriate research material was unavailable via the Walden University libraries, I used Google Scholar to find additional

research material related to the study topic. Finally, to locate the most current studies and statistics on labor or resources, I used several government websites pertaining to the topic, including the websites of the Department of Defense, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Office of Management and Budget.

I began my search of existing literature from a broader perspective, eventually narrowing my search to single phrases or combinations of terms related to veteran recruitment and hiring strategies. I placed quotation marks around Boolean search phrases to limit the search criteria to the specific phrases and to avoid superfluous research results. For example, the search of the literature in the Walden University database began with the Boolean search phrases “veteran AND hiring practices,” “veteran AND recruitment strategies,” and “veterans preference,” with a filter specifying peer-reviewed material. The literature review included 104 articles, of which 90% were peer reviewed with publication dates between 2013 and 2017.

This literature review is organized around eight subject categories: (a) person-organization fit theory, (b) investment in human capital, (c) veterans’ capability portfolio, (d) recruitment and hiring strategies, (e) challenges related to hiring veterans, (f) benefits of hiring veterans, (g) career transition and adaptability, and (h) incentives for hiring veterans.

The U.S. government has identified a gap between highly qualified veterans seeking employment and veterans actually achieving employment in the private sector upon departure from the military (Harrell & Berglass, 2012). In November 2011, bipartisan cooperation between the President of the United States and Congress led to the

enactment of the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act. Both the Department of Labor and the Department of Veterans Affairs took leading roles in assisting corporate America in actively seeking out veterans to hire (Harrell & Berglass, 2012).

### **Person-Organization Fit Theory**

The purpose of this section is to review and explore person-organization fit theory. Person-organization fit theory focuses on measuring congruence between the norms and values of organizations and applicants (Chatman, 1989). Kristof (1996) stated that person-organization fit theory defines the compatibility between an employee and an organization that occurs either when one side provides something the other needs or when both parties have similar characteristics. The best outcome, according to Kristof, is when both employee and organization have something the other needs. Person-organization fit theory indicates that the characteristics of an employee have the possibility of converging with the patterns and behaviors of the organization and that employees' attitudes may affect the level of similarity among the organization's and the employees' behaviors (Teimouri et al., 2015). The overall attitudes of the workforce are then affected by the degree and distinction of congruence between the behavior and characteristics of both the organization and the employees (Abraham, Kaliannan, Mohan, & Thomas, 2015; Teimouri et al., 2015). To achieve person-organization fit congruence, an organization may adjust recruitment and hiring strategies to ensure that employees share similar qualities and are suited for the organization.

According to Cable and Edwards (2004), person-organization fit theory indicates that matching the behaviors and characteristics of the employee and the organization will result in an overall better fit for the organization and greater job satisfaction for the employee. The correlation between employees' behaviors and characteristics determines the correct fit between employee and employer and identifies the best suited employee for the organization by analyzing values, needs, and interests (Abraham et al., 2015). Person-organization fit theory provides a potential lens for exploring the congruence between the recruitment and hiring strategies of business leaders seeking to find a viable fit for a veteran to the organization and the organization to the veteran.

How potential job applicants perceive an organization based upon person-organization fit directly affects the overall attractiveness of the position and may influence the applicants' attitude during the recruitment process (Jutras & Mathieu, 2016). According to Molaei, Zali, Mobaraki, and Farsi (2014), employees select their line of work based on their attitudes and ability to fit into the organizational culture of a business. Based upon individual employees' proclivities, some will fit the roles and responsibilities of their positions better than others and will likely be more successful (Molaei et al., 2014). As veterans transition from the military to the civilian sector, one of their main concerns is the skills transferability of their skills and their ability to fit into the civilian workforce (Thompson & Jetly, 2014). By design, military institutions present clear organizational differences from most contemporary civilian organizations, and although person-organization fit occurs in most types of organizations, business leaders are encouraged to verify the suitability of prospective employees within the context of

their organization (Sousa & Porto, 2015). The onus is on both employee and employer to find the congruence and similarities between corporate and military processes and determine how well the veteran's military portfolio translates into the civilian workforce (Vellenga, 2014).

### **Investment in Human Capital**

Business leaders consistently point to deficiencies in leadership and management talent as a leading concern within their organizations, given the importance of both leadership skills and technical proficiency associated with their human capital assets (Ben-Hur, Jaworski, & Gray, 2015; Natrajan & Chattopadhyay, 2014). Technical proficiency without the requisite leadership skills in human capital has the likelihood of an undesirable outcome, according to Natrajan and Chattopadhyay (2014), these skills assist leaders in exercising the influence and authority needed to direct teams and act as a bridge between the needs of the business and the successful outcome of the effort. To ensure that employees receive training and to perpetuate their strategic human capital goals and initiatives, considerable investment is required by business leaders to train, compensate, and professionally develop the workforce as the organization progresses toward its strategic goals (Ferrary, 2015). Human resource managers, on the other hand, are challenged to keep pace with the continuous forward momentum of business and struggle to mitigate the requirements of business leaders and the organic business capabilities required in achieving strategic relevance of their human capital plan (Gobble, 2016; McCarty & Gottschalk, 2014).

Business leaders are obligated to make their goods and services available to the public and to ensure that their business is both sustainable and profitable (Clarke & Friedman, 2016). Sustaining corporate profitability through economic success, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility is consistent with the long-term growth objectives of a business (Rae et al., 2015). Sustaining and perpetuating long-term growth and prosperity requires the integration of core business strategies and prudent decision making within the organization. Integrating a sustainable business strategy requires (a) developing an integrated vision; (b) cultivating risk consciousness; (c) inculcating the principles of regulation, responsibility, and rewards; and (d) promoting quality participation within the organization (Venkatraman & Nayak, 2015). Achieving all four steps allows business leaders to successfully integrate their sustainable practices into the sustainable performances within their human capital assets.

Two key elements that business leaders consider when contemplating investing in human capital are attracting a desirable talent pool and the development needed to sustain talent in perpetuity (Lin, Wang, Wang, & Jaw, 2017). The onus, however, is on the organization to determine the quality of character and level of knowledge it requires of its employees, and in order to defend its initial investment, to identify the education needed to sustain its workforce at the desired level of productivity (Lin et al., 2017). These investments in the workforce minimize the attrition rate of employees by focusing on how to retain the personnel who are best suited for the organization (Arora, 2016). Additionally, investments in the workforce lead to more productivity and eventually higher salaries for the employees responsible for the increase (Bae & Patterson, 2014). A

well-planned human capital investment has the potential to sustain an organization's economic growth in perpetuity because unlike tangible infrastructure investments, human capital investments will not diminish (González, Gómez, & Douzet, 2017). According to González et al. (2017), increased productivity occurs when activities within an organization allow its intellectual capital to prosper by fostering a stimulated environment for its human capital to operate and enabling its workforce to perpetuate its knowledge base and ideas.

Investing in human capital is not exclusive to the private sector. The U.S. military has recognized the need to continuously grow and foster the educational development of its service members to keep up with the complexities of modern warfare (Cooper, Huscroft, Overstreet, & Hazen, 2016). In 2008, the Office of the Secretary of Defense conducted a study to analyze the human capital requirements across the military enterprise. The results of the study indicated a need for the military's human capital to be aligned across the full spectrum of its enterprise and to incorporate new business rules, emerging management systems, and the strategic goals of the military services (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2008). In 1973, during the waning years of the Vietnam War, the modern military evolved from conscripted labor to an all-voluntary force, and many new challenges developed as the military aligned its human capital management to its overall military strategy (Patrichi, 2015; Yuengert, 2016). Investment in human capital reflected a more economic perspective toward workforce enhancements and training, with the goal of maximizing the benefit while minimizing the risk of the investment. Since the transition to an all-voluntary force, government policy makers have provided a



broader scope for consideration within their policies and procedures to offer a more efficient and equitable use of human capital (Bae & Patterson, 2014; Patrichi, 2015).

### **Veterans' Capability Portfolio**

A profession is a cohort of individuals voluntarily performing the same occupational specialty to make a living and openly serving in a morally permissible fashion beyond what any law, market, moral code, or social expectation would otherwise dictate (Davis, 2009; Schwab, 2016). According to Efflandt (2014), continued fulfillment of these expectations allows society to perpetuate a profession's relevance, authority, and autonomy. The *profession of arms* is associated with military service and is considered by some the noblest of professions (Bruce & George, 2015; Sanbhat, 2014). Military personnel serve society by espousing an institution capable of managing and projecting violence to deter war and to protect the security of the United States (Efflandt, 2014).

The United States spends billions of dollars each year to properly train service members and sustain a fighting force (U.S. Department of Defense, 2015). Both the education received and the experiences gained by all service members comprise the full scope of their capability as added assets to the profession of arms. Though some Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen share similar or even identical educational tracks, each unique experience gained by members is exclusive to them alone, and their past military experience will assist them in making tough decisions in the future (Horowitz & Stam, 2014). Those unique experiences and intangible qualities (e.g., courage, flexibility, leadership, etc.) are commonly attributed to service members (Papa, Solheim, & Lefton, 2013), and according to Horowitz and Stam (2014), are often

misconstrued by people without a military background or experience. The military teaches its service members how to be flexible (Papa et al., 2013) and how best to be prepared for any situation, rather than aggressive and reckless (Horowitz & Stam, 2014).

Part of the modern military equation is the application of technology into the knowledge portfolio of today's service members, and both technical and tactical improvements have enhanced battlefield tactics and operations (Warren, 2014). Since September 11, 2001, more than 2.8 million veterans served in the military, and currently they represent a skilled workforce for employers here in the United States and around the globe (Hall et al., 2014). Though veterans build upon their comprehensive knowledge and experience portfolio throughout their military careers, they are most known for their leadership skills and teamwork skills and are considered major assets to businesses based upon the discipline required of them during their military service (Hall et al., 2014).

Regardless of whether service members spend 3 years in uniform or 30, all receive some level of rudimentary skills training required to serve in the military. However, throughout the entirety of their military careers, service members receive extensive training in both their technical specialty (e.g., infantry, military police, etc.), but also in nontechnical training, such as discipline, leadership, endurance, decisiveness, and communication (Hardison et al., 2015). More advanced training is offered later in the careers of service members, and topics like critical-thinking, decision-making under pressure, and managing and team building in dynamic situations are introduced to enhance their overall skills portfolio (Hardison et al., 2015).

Research by labor economists on how military service affects the civilian job prospects of veterans is important to those who are considering military service, policy makers, and veterans themselves (Routon, 2014). The consequences of military service and the service members' employability before the post-9/11 era have been extensively researched, and according to Routon (2014), though there is a relatively small amount of research from past eras, the results differed greatly during each period. As technologies and opportunities became readily available throughout the generational gaps, the level of military experience and training received by soldiers changed too (Routon, 2014). As service members prepare for the transition from military service to the civilian sector, though their knowledge capacity is formidable based upon the number of years of service, they face several stressors during the transition process as they tend to look for comparable work in terms of the transferability of their particular military skillset (Higate, 2001; Kato, Jinkerson, Holland, & Soper, 2016). Military separation brings feelings of uncertainty and fear to separating service members who are seeking employment, so recognizing and responding to their expected adjustment concerns is important to ease the transition (Kato et al., 2016). One of the greatest challenges facing veterans during their transition is finding employment and explaining to prospective employers the transferability of their military skills to the civilian workforce (Roost & Roost, 2014). To maintain its lethality and ability to stay ahead of the threat, the military routinely trains its service member new skills, so an advantage veterans seeking civilian employment have, is their capacity for continuous learning (Roost & Roost, 2014; Snider, 2016). Though veterans may not be fully prepared for the employment transition, they do

enter the job market with a fully burdened knowledge-base filled with significant educational credentialing and unique experiences to offer to business leaders.

### **Recruitment and Hiring Strategies**

The labor market is currently experiencing a shortage of skilled workers (Abraham, 2015). Business leaders are obligated to make their goods and services available to the public and ensure their successful business is both sustainable and profitable, so having a pool of skilled workers available is in the company's best interest (Clarke & Friedman, 2016). Reasons for the shortage of skilled workers is due to the lack of an educated workforce and workers not having enough experience to perform the job (Harrell & Berglass, 2012). To recruit talent, business leaders use external means to seek prospective employees (Cappelli & Keller, 2014). Higher level positions, such as managerial, professional, and specialty positions, are more likely sought using external recruitment means rather than lower density positions, such as administrative and supporting positions (Gërxhani & Koster, 2015). According to Gërxhani and Koster (2015), using external recruitment opens the organization up to certain risks associated with the candidates' proclivities, such as productivity, motivation, or trustworthiness. Business leaders use the recruitment process to discover the entirety of a potential candidates' background to assist in determining their suitability within their organization (Gërxhani & Koster, 2015). The need for outsourcing recruitment is high, and the demand fostered an entire industry of consultants designed to find the suitable candidates for businesses (Bonet, Cappelli, & Hamori, 2013).

The need for a business to find the best-suited person for a position is high, so business leaders are pressured to strengthen their customer service and human resource teams to develop successful recruitment strategies for the organization (Kinnunen & Parviainen, 2016). A successful recruitment strategy is about puzzle solving, and according to Kinnunen and Parviainen (2016), to ultimately determine the right personalities needed within the company. A thoughtful recruitment program can be a positive influence on employees and fosters an increase in employee commitment, productivity and the overall quality of their performance (Sutanto & Kurniawan, 2016). Conversely, Sutanto and Kurniawan (2016) suggested that a lack of a thoughtful recruitment strategy will result in lower employee performance and higher turnover in the position.

Recruitment strategies that foster inclusivity and diversity amongst its targeted audience and workforce directly impact the organization's attractiveness to both its internal workforce, external clientele, and job seekers (Lambert, 2015). Indeed, creating cultures of diversity and tolerance within an organization assist business leaders to better understand their target recruitment audience (Lambert, 2015). The success of a business' recruitment strategy is dependent on its attractiveness to job seekers, and the easiest way to hire the best possible fit for the organization is to manage and control the recruitment (Sameen, 2016). Since business leaders are obligated to ensure their successful business is both sustainable and profitable, it is imperative they hire the right people for jobs because employees are the means by which the organization will generate revenue (Clarke & Friedman, 2016; Sameen, 2016).

The company image and branding is also a consideration during the recruitment process of the organization (Khalid & Tariq, 2015). How a job seeker views a prospective employer based upon the brand or external image of the company, is an important aspect for business leaders to consider when developing a prolific recruitment strategy (Khalid & Tariq, 2015). According to Khalid and Tariq (2015), if prospective employees connect with the employer branding and image, they are more inclined to find an affiliation with that organization. Due to the competitiveness of today's business, some business leaders are now required to increase their overall attractiveness by ensuring their brand entices job seekers to want to work for their organization (Jain & Bhatt, 2015). This would also, according to Jain and Bhatt (2015), attract talent that potentially could assist the organization with retaining the target audience they hire. Often recruitment and retention strategies are concurrent and coordinated efforts, so they have a larger impact collectively, rather than each effort executed separately (Näppä, Farshid, & Foster, 2014). Ultimately, fostering an organization where employees enjoy what they do and who they work for, sends the right strategic message about the organization and its brand to the targeted audience during the recruitment process (Ghadeer Mohamed Badr, 2016). By doing this, business leaders showcase their commitment to their employees and potentially shorten the recruitment process and costs along the way (Ghadeer Mohamed Badr, 2016).

Finding the right person for the job is a challenge for business leaders, and often newly hired employees fail to meet organizational expectations (Rudman, Hart-Hester, Richey, & Jackson, 2016). A failed hire cost to the organization is estimated at 50 to

200% of the employees' first-year salary, while the cost associated with an employee who leaves the organization within the first year may reach 162% of their first-year salary (Rudman et al., 2016). Additional findings, according to Rudman et al. (2016), suggested the cause for failed hires are often due to a lack of those intangible skills which are difficult to assess during the recruitment process, such as trainability, emotional intelligence, motivation, and personality conflicts. The amount of failed hires that leave an organization within the first-year are due to technical or professional competency issues is relatively low (Rudman et al., 2016).

Strategic staffing is a hiring tool business leaders use to align their recruitment strategy to their overall strategy, mission, and operational planning (Engel & Curran, 2016). Strategic staffing purports an increase in productivity and competitive advantage in the specific business market if the company's hiring strategy correlates with employee performance (Chung, Park, Lee, & Kim, 2015). Competitive advantage is identified as those intangible resources, such as the knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees or their collective experiences, which business leaders exploit for the benefit of the organization (Chung et al., 215).

A key component to today's hiring strategies is the use of emotional intelligence, which is becoming more popular with business leaders who want to start weighing the emotional intelligence of prospective employees before an offer of employment (Singh, 2014). Emotional intelligence, according to Singh (2014), offered a strong indication as to how the employee will perform at the position and other proclivities, such as leadership, the employee shows a propensity for enhancement. Research suggests that

employees with lower emotional intelligence scores are more prone to failure in the workplace (Rudman et al., 2016). Employees hired with increased emotional intelligence scores are less likely to consider leaving the organization based solely upon job dissatisfaction, while employees with lower scores increase their likelihood of quitting (Singh, Singh, & Singh, 2014).

Establishing an effective and efficient strategic hiring strategy provides benefit to business leaders by ensuring the requisite skills and talent needed to fill positions are targeted during the hiring process (Asmat, Ramzan, & Chaudhry, 2015). According to Asmat et al. (2015), strategic hiring produced true leaders who have the ability to influence people and significantly affect the effectiveness of the organization. Strategic hiring also assists business leaders in hiring employees capable of providing new ideas and perspectives on opportunities to the organization (Tarus & Aime, 2014). Tarus and Aime (2014) stated that new ideas from employees allow the organization to maintain its competitive advantage over their competition, and provide new perspectives on old problems.

### **Challenges Hiring Veterans**

A growing narrative within transitioning military members going back to civilian life describes their journey as a time of uncertainty while they try to acclimatize into their interpersonal life with friends and family, as well as their new life as a civilian (Kukla, Rattray, & Salyers, 2015). For recently transitioning veterans, according to Kukla et al. (2015), reintegration back into being a civilian is rife with issues, and they describe the challenges of relearning to be a civilian for the second time in their lives. While seeking



civilian employment, veterans believed their military skills and experiences translated well; however, civilian-hiring managers thought otherwise (Kukla et al., 2015). While seeking civilian employment, veterans believed both their military education and experiences in management and leadership were discounted by the civilian sector as not relevant experience (Kukla et al., 2015). Veterans experience stressors associated with separation, such as unemployment, perceived employment discrimination, homelessness, health care, and issues associated with receiving their military benefits (Jahnke, Haddock, Carlos, & Jitnarin, 2014).

Veterans who seek to use their skills for employment after leaving the military face numerous challenges (Watts et al., 2016). Though there were pilot programs developed to assist with transitioning veterans, according to Watts et al. (2016), they were rare and limited in focus. Additional challenges associated with veterans seeking civilian employment are their lack of state licensure or certificates to work technical positions (Watts et al., 2016). According to Watts et al. (2016), the lack of open positions at a commensurate skill-level to the veterans' exacerbated the job hunt.

The higher unemployment rate for veterans compared to non-veterans is because some business leaders are apprehensive and biased to hire veterans based on the potential for mental or behavioral issues (Furst, 2016). Conversely, some veterans who suffer from mental or behavioral issues related to their military time find their employment efforts hindered once they depart service (Kintzle et al., 2015). According to Kintzle et al. (2015), the preponderance of unemployed veterans who have difficulty finding work will report greater mental or behavioral issues, such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD,

compared to other veterans who garnered civilian employment. To remove bias from the hiring process, business leaders must reevaluate their understanding and misconceptions of veterans so they may have a more efficient process (Osborne, 2014). Not having the proper information to formulate an educated argument only perpetuates the false narratives of misconceptions and bias (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014). When struggling with preconceived notions, business leaders must, according to Delbourg-Delphis (2014), step outside of their comfort zone and get to know veterans so they can empathize and work towards debunking any stereotypes.

The recent military conflicts in the Middle East, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, provide specific barriers for veterans seeking and finding employment after military service (Tamez & Hazler, 2014). According to Tamez and Hazler (2014), female veterans faced unique challenges that potentially encumbered their ability to garner employment after leaving service. Currently, rehabilitation counselors are limited to address the concerns of females in reaching and securing successful employment (Tamez & Hazler, 2014). Though female veterans may experience similar issues to that of male veterans when transitioning back into civilian life, such as mental health problems, financial distresses, and employment concerns, they are also more likely to experience gender-specific issues at higher rates than male veterans (Tamez & Hazler, 2014). These issues, according to Tamez and Hazler (2014), included sexual assault and body disfigurement issues due to a catastrophic injury. Without adequate assistance, female veterans are often challenged when seeking employment after they depart service (Tamez & Hazler, 2014).

Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan experienced many types of challenges during their deployments (Ahern et al., 2015). One of their main challenges for veterans when returning to civilian life, according to Ahern et al. (2015), is transitioning between military and civilian environments and how they navigated challenges when confronted, as well as what tools they used to mitigate their difficulties. During the employment process into the civilian job market, disclosing a disability to a potential employer is both a very personal decision and one that may have far-reaching consequences for both the veteran and employer (Von Schrader, Malzer, & Bruyère, 2014). While disclosing a disability may assure the veteran they will have appropriate accommodations when hired, they may also result in negative employment consequences for veterans, such as lower expectations from leadership, isolation from others, and a likelihood for termination (Von Schrader et al., 2014). According to Von Schrader et al. (2014), it is imperative business leaders construct a workplace environment that encourages full disclosure while reducing the likelihood of negative consequences for employees and applicants who do so.

Some veterans also have difficulties finding employment opportunities when they depart military service because they find they are not fully prepared for the transition, and there is a substantial gap between the civilian job requirements and that of the veteran's own skills (Gao & Yuan, 2015). Veterans' attitudes are generally positive when they prepare themselves for civilian employment, but according to Gao and Yuan (2015), it is important veterans understand that they should further enhance their marketable job skills before departing military service. If veterans show care and initiative towards achieving civilian employment before departure while still in military service, they may pursue the

means necessary to improve their skills and individual employability (Gao & Yuan, 2015). Additionally, adding job enhancement skills before entering the civilian workforce increases the veterans' confidence level in achieving their enhancement goals (Gao & Yuan, 2015). As a veteran recognizes their increased skills and civilian employment marketability, according to Gao and Yuan (2015), they will express motivation to seek training opportunities.

Veterans who retire from the military after serving 20 or more years in the military led a good portion of their adult lives in a very structured and formal military setting (Bonura & Lovald, 2015). Veterans are indoctrinated into the military at a very young and formidable age and according to Bonura and Lovald (2015), spend their professional career in such a structured way, that they need assistance transitioning into the civilian workforce. Not only do some of their military-specific skills and training not translate well into a civilian context, but veterans often need to seek other education or training opportunities to gain the new skills needed for their targeted career field of choice (Bonura & Lovald, 2015; Gao & Yuan, 2015). Another challenge for hiring veterans at the time of transition is their level of maturity based on the hardships and tense situations they experienced in the military (Bonura & Lovald, 2015). According to Bonura and Lovald (2015), when veterans transition from the military they move from a position of authority and responsibility to a position of receptivity and subservience, and in some cases, these are new skills they must learn.

### **Veteran Bona Fides**

The United States Department of Defense is the largest employer in the world and employs over 3.2 million service members and civilian employees who serve across the world (MacLean, 2016; Taylor, 2015). Service in the military means its service members must de-individualize and learn how to work together as a team (Naphan & Elliott, 2015). The process service members go through, according to Naphan and Elliott (2015), builds upon their sense of cohesion; something that serves them well as they transition to the civilian sector as a veteran. Most men and women who enter military service for the first time, often find the experience to be a turning point in their lives and affect their personality in a positive way (Whyman, Lemmon, & Teachman, 2011). Some of the personality changes that occur, according to Daffey-Moore (2015), are increased maturity, situational awareness, common sense, leadership skills and the ability to work in a team. Comparable to college students, serving in the military offers valuable skills and relevant occupational training that is transferrable to the civilian life as veterans start their transition to the civilian job market (Whyman et al., 2011). Much of the occupational training service members receive is transferable directly to its civilian job equivalent, including both technical and managerial positions (Routon, 2014).

The transferability of the training and education associated with the service members' military occupational specialties during their transition into the civilian job market increased after the military ended operations in World War II (Gabriel, 2017). Though some service members earned more than non-veterans when they entered the civilian workforce, Gabriel (2017) noted that some veterans' measurable characteristics

did not transfer and were not well received by some employers. Comparatively, Benmelech & Frydman (2014) noted that the amount of CEO's within Corporate America that have some level of military training or experience has diminished since World War II and the Korea War ended. Today, most non-veteran CEO's receive their leadership and management training through the traditional educational process of obtaining business degrees and professional executive education programs (Benmelech & Frydman, 2014). Recently, some companies have decried the lack of experience and leadership amongst its junior managers and initiated programs to recruit junior officers with combat experience in Afghanistan and Iraq to mitigate the shortage of leadership talent (Benmelech & Frydman, 2014). Some business leaders embrace the fact that military experience portrays veterans as virtuous and having good judgment and business sense in day-to-day operations and during times of crisis (Benmelech & Frydman, 2014). Veterans are extremely capable of making a positive change in the civilian job market (Benmelech & Frydman, 2014).

Today's military faces new threats and challenges, and the fluid operational environment the military faces requires a cultural change within its ranks to maintain its ability stay ahead of technical and technological advances (Costa, 2014). According to Costa (2014), a cultural change should occur so the military can benefit from those learned technical and technological advances that influence its overall techniques, tactics, procedures, and doctrine. The military's investment in education in these areas, according to Costa (2014), allowed its service members to sustain the technical and technological capability and upgradeability of the requirement in perpetuity. Rigorous cognitive skill

training is relevant across most business applications and particularly salient in the full spectrum of military occupational specialties performed by service members (Adler et al., 2015). According to Adler et al. (2015), cognitive skills are important for high-risk professions, such as military and law enforcement, due to the volume of new tasks they are required to perform under psychologically and physically demanding conditions (Adler et al., 2015). Adler et al. and Costa highlighted similar core ideologies in guiding veterans into the civilian workforce: decisiveness, maturity, and leadership. These core ideas provide veterans with the bona fides regarding confidence in their abilities to conduct themselves appropriately after transitioning (McDermott & Panagopoulos, 2015).

Veterans bring a unique set of experiences, skills, and insights with them into civilian life, and most derived from and influenced by their particular branch of service, rank structure, and the situations they faced during times of combat or contingency (Bonura & Lovald, 2015). Though these experiences and lessons learned influence how the military evolves its training and doctrine, they offer the civilian sector unique challenges if they lack the exposure to the veteran demographic since only 0.5% of the American population currently serve in the military (Bonura & Lovald, 2015; Eikenberry & Kennedy, 2013). According to Bonura and Lovald (2015), the fundamental differences between the five branches of service, the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard, is they offer each of their service members unique service-specific training and cultures that build upon the service member's overall skills portfolio

The military trains its service members to live and act like professional warriors (Clark, 2016). The definition of military professionalism evolved from mastering character, common sense, and aptitude according to Clark (2016), to one of mastering a body of knowledge that is collected, communicated, and controlled through training, professional education, and doctrine. Military professionalism takes many forms reflecting the social norms and values at the time, but the fundamental nature of military professionalism is stalwart by design (Clark, 2016).

### **Career Transition and Adaptability**

Veterans transitioning from military service are predominantly career-focused and more likely to seek long-term employment opportunities (Osborne, 2014). Career transition is defined as that period of time between when an individual changes their job or occupation to a new role or position (Bennett et al., 2015). According to Bennett et al. (2015), this definition aptly applies to those service members departing military service and enters the civilian workforce. Transitioning from military service to the civilian job market can be a stressful time, as the departing service members prepare themselves to make the appropriate cultural and social adjustments into their post-military life (Bennett et al., 2015). Successful transitioning is predicated on, according to Bennett et al. (2015), whether those veterans are able to match their military skills and experiences to a comparable job opportunity in the civilian sector (Bennett et al., 2015). A measure of success after making the career transition is whether the employee was able to adapt enough to identify adequate career opportunities that facilitate job mobility within and between organizations (Hennekam, 2015).



During the transition period, veterans are highly motivated to pursue a career outside of the military and are willing to scrutinize the relevance of their skills, abilities, and training to that of their prospective job opportunities (Hennekam, 2015). Having a situational awareness of all aspects of the transition will help employees establish a professional identity so they are more able to be adaptable (Pollard & Wild, 2014). Adaptability is linked to a person's personality and is relatively stable, but it is not inert and can be developed over time (Hennekam, 2015).

Career adaptability is a resilient resource and relates to a person's ability to adapt to new demands at work and has the ability to impact other occupational areas, such as engagement (Tladinyane & van der Merwe, 2016). Employees who are able to adapt demonstrate concern about their job's future, exercise control, exhibit curiosity, and display the confidence to pursue their aspirations (Fouad, Figueiredo, Ghosh, Bachhuber, & Chang, 2016). Career adaptability, according to Fouad et al. (2016), is defined as the ability to perform the predictable task of daily work processes and successfully react to any unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work or conditions.

Adapting to changes at work predicated by employer demands are active ways for employees to stay employable (Hennekam, 2015). Veterans are optimistic about their chances looking for a job, and most are confident that they would be able to adapt well to a new position (Hennekam, 2015). According to Pollard and Wild (2014), being successful means employees must be adaptable and recognize the importance of self-awareness and emergence into a complex chaotic work environment (Pollard & Wild, 2014).

Service members become indoctrinated once they enter military service and soon learn transitioning into military life includes continuous supervision, physical fitness, team collaboration, discipline, and separation from family for extended periods of time (Lieberman et al., 2014). When they depart the military, some service members view college as a means to connect the military to the civilian workforce (Wilson, 2014). Veterans who identify their entire military training and educational portfolio will provide meaningful credentialing to prospective employers the career field of their choosing and ease the transition (Wilson, 2014). Conducting a transition assessment will assist the veteran identifying their true abilities and potential in a real-time environment and under natural conditions before they depart service (Rowe, Mazzotti, Hirano, & Alverson, 2015). According to Rowe et al. (2015), assessing a veteran's transition from military to civilian life provides a viable roadmap to ensure a smooth process.

The U.S. Department of Labor (2017) indicated the United States is not prepared to handle the arrival of departing military service members' entering the civilian workforce at a time of high unemployment. Since the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, the unemployment for post-9/11 veterans has been predominantly higher than the national average (Robertson & Brott, 2013). As the two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq downsized and large numbers of veterans started returning home at a time of high unemployment across the nation exacerbated the situation and inundated both career and mental health services for veterans (Humensky, Jordan, Stroupe, & Hynes, 2013; Robertson & Brott, 2013). In some instances, according to Robertson and Brott (2013), service members transitioning to a new career field all together because

they saw their transition from the military as an opportunity for a true career change. Some veterans believe the constant military-centric transitioning between jobs and tasks, better prepared them for the transition (Robertson & Brott, 2013). Robertson and Brott (2013) stated veterans routinely cite the skills they learned in the military, such as communication, leadership, and characteristics such as duty, loyalty, and hard work, were all mentioned as facilitators in the transition process.

Veteran career adaptability and occupational engagement assist in predicting their overall readiness aspect of career transitions (Ghosh & Fouad, 2015). If a veteran controls their transition from military service to civilian life, according to Ghosh and Fouad (2015), they are more willing to accomplish the career planning tasks needed for success. Though some military training and experiences adequately translate well into the civilian job market, veterans may not be aware of this and other opportunities and resources, and they may lack the confidence needed to make the transition (Ghosh & Fouad, 2015). Some of the cultural differences between the military and civilian life are challenging, but according to Ghosh and Fouad (2015), veterans investigating the civilian culture before departure can assist them in becoming more engaged in the transition process.

Compared to the greater population of the United States, veterans showed a greater prevalence of difficulties adjusting to civilian life across the spectrum of health, disability, and employment (MacLean et al., 2014). According to MacLean et al. (2014), achieving resilience before separating from military service protected veterans through the transition process. Veterans who transitioned from military service and had either a

disability or health related issue experienced more difficulties with the transition than those without health concerns (Humensky et al., 2013; MacLean et al., 2014). Some of the challenges disabled veterans experience during the process is learning new tasks, dealing with demands, social interactions, and according to MacLean et al. (2014), the activities associated with daily living.

### **Incentives for Hiring Veterans**

In December 2015, President Obama passed into law the modified Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program (WOTC), which resulted in an extension of the Returning Heroes and Wounded Warrior Credits. These programs incentivized business leaders to hire veterans by offering opportunities to receive tax credits for employing qualifying veterans (Devereux & Bala, 2017). Over 300,000 veterans depart military service each year and enter the civilian job market and represent a substantial portion of the population targeted by WOTC (Devereux & Bala, 2017; Farooq & Kugler, 2015; Faurer et al., 2014). According to Devereux and Bala (2017), WOTC is a voluntary employment tax incentive program sponsored by the federal government since 1978 that provided civilian employers more than \$1 billion in tax credits under the program since inception. Since its enactment in 1996, the WOTC expired and extended numerous times, most recently by President Obama in 2015 (Potter, 2016). Business leaders who take advantage of WOTC can receive up to \$2,400 per employee, or 40% of the employee's first-year qualified wages up to \$6,000 (Potter, 2016).

President Obama signed the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) into law in 2011 to encourage business leaders to hire veterans (Bosco, Murphy, Peters, & Clark,

2015; Potter, 2016). The VOW program created two new tax credits for business leaders who targeted veterans to hire: the Returning Heroes Tax Credit and the Wounded Warrior Tax Credit (Potter, 2016). According to Potter (2016), the Returning Heroes Tax Credit provided employers incentives to hire both short-term and long-term unemployed veterans, and the Wounded Warrior Tax Credit doubled the existing tax credit for long-term unemployed veterans with identified service-connected disabilities. According to Potter (2016), incentives for hiring disabled veterans is a tax credit of \$12,000, and if a veteran is hired within the first year of departing military service, business leaders may receive a \$24,000 tax credit.

### **Transition**

Section 1 of this qualitative study comprised the (a) background of the problem, (b) problem statement, (c) purpose statement, (d) nature of the study, (e) research question, (f) theoretical framework, (g) definitions, (h) assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, (i) significance of study, and (j) the review of the professional and academic literature. From the review of the professional and academic literature, I identified the strategies Fortune 500 business leaders use to recruit and hire veterans. The review of the professional and academic literature covered the following areas: (a) person-organization fit theory, (b) investment in human capital, (c) veterans' capability portfolio, (d) recruitment and hiring strategies, (e) challenges hiring veterans, (f) veteran bona fides, (g) career transition and adaptability, and (h) incentives for hiring veterans.

There is a bona fide need for business leaders to hire the best-qualified and best-suited person for a position to ensure profitability, and veterans departing military have

unique skills and experiences that may offer those businesses another source of a talent pool to consider. Using a multiple case study design is a suitable means to determine the strategies used by Fortune 500 business leaders to recruit and hire veterans. The findings of this study may provide business leaders who lack veteran recruitment and hiring strategies, a basis to exploit their organization's organic strategies and grant them access to skilled veterans seeking employment.

In Section 2, I offered the research method of the case study design based on the research question and the (a) role of the researcher, (b) research method and design, (c) population and sampling, (d) ethical research, (e) data collection instrument, (f) data collection technique, (g) data organization technique, (h) data analysis, and (i) study validity. In Section 3, I present the findings of this research study and its practical application to professional practice.

## Section 2: The Project

In this section, I offer a detailed explanation of the steps I took to explore strategies that some Fortune 500 business leaders in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area used to recruit and hire military veterans as a means to acquire skilled workers. This section includes discussion of the approach taken to ensure the quality of the findings. This section includes subsections on the following: (a) purpose statement, (b) role of the researcher, (c) participants, (d) research method, (e) research design, (f) population and sampling, (g) ethical research, (h) data collection, (i) data analysis, and (j) reliability and validity.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the recruitment and hiring strategies that business leaders use to attract qualified veterans to fill organizational job vacancies. The targeted population consisted of three business leaders from two separate Fortune 500 businesses within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area who had experience with successful strategies for the recruitment and hiring of veterans. The implications for social change from this study include the potential for greater awareness and understanding of business leaders concerning what highly skilled veterans may bring to their organizations' operational portfolios and how the hiring of veterans can help to reduce the unemployment rate in the United States. Additionally, veterans possess qualities, such as leadership experience and an understanding of working in culturally diverse environments, that can positively affect society (McDermott & Panagopoulos, 2015).

### **Role of the Researcher**

For this research study, my responsibilities as the researcher included recruiting all participants, facilitating interviews, analyzing and interpreting data, and offering the findings. Fortune 500 business leaders participated in an open-ended interview forum. For qualitative research, researchers use an interpretive approach to be personally involved with participants and the interview process (Finlay, 2013). According to Arslan and Yildirim (2016), the first role of a researcher is achieving *epoche*, or a suspension of judgment, by abstaining from presuppositions and preconceived notions on the research topic. Achieving *epoche* requires researchers to put aside any perceptions, judgments, and knowledge related to the topic throughout their data collection and analysis process (Arslan & Yildirim, 2016). Another role of the research is minimizing the potential risk of backyard research. *Backyard research*, as defined by Arslan and Yildirim (2016), occurs when a researcher shows bias for the validity of the study by having a relationship to the topic. To minimize the risk of backyard research, researchers must (a) practice data triangulation by using multiple sources; (b) member check to ensure validity of the data; (c) conduct peer debriefing for an impartial validity check; (d) note, reflect, and mitigate possible biases; (e) provide descriptive research context; and (f) ensure that participants understand their role in the process (Arslan & Yildirim, 2016).

Researchers must guide the conversation and control the interview process without diminishing the participant's response (Marshall & Edgley, 2015). Identifying the active role of the researcher is imperative to sufficiently and accurately collect and analyze data while understanding that the interview is a social interaction between two



people (Easterling & Johnson, 2015). In qualitative research, according to Easterling and Johnson (2015), the researcher is part of a fluid and social exchange, with new research questions developing through the collaborative process between interviewer and interviewee.

The 1978 National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, better known as the Belmont Report, established protocols for researchers about sharing data and protecting the rights of participants (Brakewood & Poldrack, 2013). According to Brakewood and Poldrack (2013), the Belmont Report detailed three fundamental principles to guide ethical human subject research: (a) *justice* and the equitable balance of benefit versus burden, (b) *respect* for the participants' autonomous decisions, and (c) *beneficence* to do no harm. For my research study, I adhered to the principles of the Belmont Report by obtaining informed consent, thoughtfully balancing the risks and benefits associated with the data, and ensuring the fair treatment of any participant data collected.

The intent of this research study was to explore successful practices used for recruitment and hiring of veterans by Fortune 500 companies within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. I have a peripheral relationship with the topic of this research study, as I am a retired veteran of the U.S. Army. However, I have no direct relationship with any Fortune 500 businesses, as I am in the employ of the U.S. government as a civil servant. To mitigate any potential risk of bias, I strived for *epoche* and adhered to the protocols of the Belmont Report.

## **Participants**

A requirement in conducting a qualitative case study is recruiting participants with experience in the topic being researched (Yin, 2014). To meet the criteria for participation in this research study, participants needed to (a) be Fortune 500 business leaders in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, (b) represent Fortune 500 businesses with successful and sustained veteran recruitment and hiring programs, and (c) be business leaders with a firm understanding of veterans' capabilities. I used a qualitative research method and a multiple case study design for my research study.

To initiate the participant selection process, I conducted Internet market research on Fortune 500 companies within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and selected three businesses that had successful programs for the recruitment and hiring of veterans. I contacted the three businesses to determine both their willingness to participate and the name of the participant to schedule an interview. All participants received instructions via e-mail detailing the intent of the study and the deliverables required for participation. Contacting participants requires a researcher to garner permissions to initiate the conversation and ultimately collect the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). The e-mail contained a consent form, and I ensured that the participants reviewed, signed, and returned the document. The e-mail also informed participants that any proprietary organizational information provided by them could be included in the data analysis. Interviews were not conducted without a consent form.

I conducted interviews with three Fortune 500 companies within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Once I received Walden University's Institutional Review Board

(IRB) approval to conduct the study, I initiated contact with the identified businesses. As a contingency, I ensured that additional businesses were in queue in the event of an unwilling business. Upon contact with a business, I spoke with the business leader who managed the recruitment and hiring programs within the organization. After introductions, I explained the intent of the research study and expounded on what was required of them as participants, as well as the confidentiality and informed consent process. During the entire process, from initial interview scheduling by telephone, to conducting the interview, to follow-up conversations during the member checking process, I used empathy to establish rapport with each participant (Harvey, 2016; Reilly, 2013). Empathizing and building rapport with the participants is important in a research study. Empathy assists researchers in connecting with each participant, understanding their feelings and behaviors, predicting reactions, and responding as appropriate to the context and climate of the conversation (Peck, Maude, & Brotherson, 2015). According to Peck et al. (2015), empathy assists a researcher in understanding the values, views, and behaviors of participants. Establishing rapport assists a researcher in encouraging participants to feel comfortable in providing full disclosure during the interview process (Wolgemuth et al., 2014).

To ensure alignment with the central research question, I selected participants by conducting Internet market research on Fortune 500 companies within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area that had successful programs for the recruitment and hiring of veterans. I ensured that the personnel selected to participate were knowledgeable of their

organization's recruitment and hiring practices, and could extemporize on the topic without hesitation or reservation.

### **Research Method and Design**

I used the qualitative method and a multiple case study design in this research study to collect pertinent data on successful veteran recruitment and hiring strategies. In this section, I describe the fundamental principles of the research method and design used in this study, as well as the justification for their selection. I used a qualitative study to increase my understanding of the strategies used by participants as they managed their programs and to share their lessons learned and best practices (Longfield et al., 2016).

#### **Research Method**

I selected a qualitative multiple case study to explore successful practices for the recruitment and hiring of veterans by Fortune 500 companies within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Longfield et al. (2016) stated that qualitative research offers a broad understanding of phenomena by enabling an investigation into a person's or group's barriers, culture, feelings, intentions, motivators, social norms, thoughts, and values. According to Yilmaz (2013), qualitative research is defined as any research that results in findings not derived from a statistical process or means of analysis. The qualitative method refines research and provides a human component to the process not only by reminding participants of their goals and motivations, but also by offering the researcher the ability to empathize with the study respondents (Choo et al., 2016). Because it was my intent to interview Fortune 500 executives who had developed,

implemented, and sustained effective strategies for recruitment and hiring of veterans, the qualitative research methodology fit the purpose of the study.

Halcomb and Hickman (2015) asserted that quantitative research encompasses the collection and analysis of numerical data to compare and contrast the differences among variables. Quantitative research is defined as research that clarifies phenomena according to numerical data analyzed by mathematically based methods (Yilmaz, 2013). Because this research was not intended to examine the relationships or differences among variables, the quantitative method was not appropriate.

Mixed method researchers use a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research methods in a single research study. Inherent in its approach, mixed method research includes the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research in combining their aggregate data (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015). Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie (2013) defined the mixed method approach as research that uses two or more qualitative or quantitative methods within one research study. In that there was no need to use any portion of quantitative methodology in this study, the mixed method would also not have been an appropriate methodology for this research study.

### **Research Design**

I used the multiple case study design to explore the recruitment and hiring strategies of Fortune 500 business leaders to attract qualified veterans to fill organizational job vacancies. Using a multiple case study design is intended to facilitate a profound understanding of a research topic (Hall & Theron, 2016). Researchers use case study design to explore a situation or experience from different perspectives in order to

gain a complete and balanced picture of the phenomenon (Taylor & Thomas-Gregory, 2015). Taylor and Thomas-Gregory (2015) defined the case in a case study as a unit of analysis that is determined in order to explore a phenomenon in a bounded context, emphasizing the importance of a precise definition at the start of research. Exploring the views and experiences of study participants offers researchers substantive and thorough qualitative data for understanding participants' lived experiences, detailed narratives on each experience, and the significance behind their experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). In multiple case study design, researchers engage in unambiguous cross-case analysis and compare the cases in terms of measurable characteristics (Ketokivi & Choi, 2014).

Phenomenological research study design is intended to explore the core components and meanings of a participant experiencing a particular phenomenon. Assarroudi and Heydari (2016) explained that researchers using phenomenology attempt to garner a greater understanding regarding the meaning of experiencing a particular phenomenon. Phenomenological research study design is defined as an academic perspective advocating for the study of individuals' experiences because the outcome of human behavior is defined by the phenomena of experience rather than objective (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Because my research topic was reliant upon the experiences and objective dispositions of various Fortune 500 business leaders who had developed and implemented successful strategies for recruitment and hiring of veterans, phenomenology did not fit the purpose of my study.

Ethnography is a qualitative research design for collecting data from participants within their cultural setting. Researchers use ethnography research to obtain significant

information about the preferences and behaviors of individuals, and especially how those attributes may change over time (Ranfagni et al., 2014). Ethnography research study design encompasses direct observation of subjects' behavior when operating in their social environments (Leslie, Paradis, Gropper, Reeves, & Kitto, 2014). According to Leslie et al. (2014), an ethnography research study design is conducted over a sustained period of time, with a trained researcher observing study context material through written, audio, or video recordings. In that I focused on the recruitment and hiring strategies of a particular demographic (i.e., Fortune 500 business leaders) in contrast to an entire culture, ethnography did not fit the purpose of my study.

A narrative research design elicits an individual's perspective or story directly from a personal vantage point as told through a variety of media, such as field notes, journals, stories, and interview transcripts (Joyce, 2015). Kaufman (2014) asserted that narratives are an important means for researchers to both acquire data and extrapolate knowledge or meaning. Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin (2013) defined a narrative research design as an intimate study of an individual's experience over time on a particular topic, as implicitly or explicitly told by that individual. Because the intent of this study was to provide firsthand information and experiences from Fortune 500 business leaders and not to research personal stories, employing a narrative design would not have been useful for addressing the purpose of my study.

### **Population and Sampling**

The focus of this research study was seeking successful strategies for veteran recruitment and hiring used by some businesses. To align with the central research

question of this study, the targeted population was Fortune 500 business leaders affiliated with their organizations' strategies for recruitment and hiring of veterans. Determining the correct population and sample size for a research study is important to ensure both reliability and validity (Button et al., 2013). Most qualitative research studies focus on a specific phenomenon in a population, and sampling uses a representative portion of that population to determine the characteristics of the population as a whole (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbin, 2015; Leung, 2015).

The targeted population of this research study was made up of Fortune 500 companies within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area that had successful programs for the recruitment and hiring of veterans. The population sample for this study consisted of Fortune 500 business leaders who met the following requirements: (a) were decision makers in the veteran recruitment and hiring process, (b) had recruited and hired at least two veterans within the last year, and (c) had a deep knowledge of veterans' talent capacity. The Fortune 500 business leaders who participated in this study did so voluntarily.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the recruitment and hiring strategies that business leaders use to attract qualified veterans to fill organizational job vacancies. A multiple case study design is appropriate when participants are representatives of the same demographic (Yin, 2014). I used purposeful sampling to select the participants who best matched the characteristics of the targeted population. Researchers use purposeful sampling in qualitative research when resources are limited but information about the topic is relatively abundant (Palinkas et al., 2015).



According to Palinkas et al. (2015), using purposeful sampling allows researchers to identify and ultimately select participants who are deeply knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of study. The participants' availability and willingness to contribute and their capacity to articulate experiences and opinions in an eloquent, expressive, and reflective manner are important aspects of purposeful sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposeful sampling provides a deep understanding of each participant's lived experiences and assists in ensuring that there is data saturation (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2013; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), there is no set sample size associated with data saturation, but researchers achieve data saturation once there is enough information to replicate the study and no new additional information is available (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). When and how a researcher achieves data saturation vary across researchers and studies, but according to Fusch and Ness (2015), interviews are a good means to reach data saturation.

To ensure the study achieves data saturation, I interviewed a sample size of three Fortune 500 business leaders, but depending on the quality and quantity of the data received, I ensured I had contingencies in place to have business leaders queued in the event the study required additional data. Furthermore, I reviewed all available open-source and proffered information from the businesses, such as proprietary documents, web content, and qualifying brochures related to the study to triangulate data and ensure data saturation.

The intent of this study was to offer a relaxed, comfortable, and non-threatening interview setting to foster participant candor and transparency throughout the interview process to elicit data about their personal lived experiences (Mellor, Ingram, Abrahams, & Beedell, 2014). I conducted both face-to-face and telephonic interviews based upon requirements and time constraints of the participants. The interviews were scheduled at the time, place, and convenience of the participants, at which time I obtained permission to record the interview.

### **Ethical Research**

To protect the rights of participants and adhere to human rights laws, this study complied with Walden University's IRB ethical standards and Belmont Report to ensure beneficence, justice, and respect for persons (Brakewood & Poldrack, 2013; Walden University, 2015b). The completion of National Institute of Health's web-based training course, *Protecting Human Research Participant*, shows my compliance with ethical and moral standards. The issued certificate number is 2108634, with a completion date of July 07, 2016 and is located in the Appendix portion of this study upon completion.

Once I receive IRB approval for this research study, I selected a primary and secondary list of businesses and participants. I provided all participants a consent form with detailed information on the purpose of the study, interview expectations, and the requested deliverables from each participant. At that time, the participants willingly choose to participate in the study and willingly provided unrestricted information about the research topic and questions. If at any time during the process, the participant asked for the interview to be stopped for any reason, I would have complied with the request

without hesitation to avoid any distortion of the research in the data analysis stage, and destroy any responses already received.

During the interview and data collection process, the onus of responsibility is on the researcher to maintain the confidentiality of the study and the prevention of personal data from getting into the wrong hands (Helgesson, 2015; Morse & Coulehan, 2014). Maintaining confidentiality is an essential part of the data collection process, and the researcher's ability to proffer their discretion will elicit candid responses to interview questions (Helgesson, 2015). I provided all consenting participants with the informed consent form that ensured their confidentiality. After discussing the consent form, the participants signed the document before I initiated the interview protocols. I protected participant identities by using an alphanumeric coding system to partition the information accordingly. To ensure I maintained an open means of communication, I provided all participants with my contact information for any questions or follow-up requests. There was no monetary, gift, or compensation of any kind for participating in this research study. All participant information and data garnered during this research study will be stored in a safe and secure location accessible only by me for 5-years. At the end of the 5-years, I will destroy all participant information. Data collection did not commence until I obtained approval from Walden University's IRB. Walden University's IRB approval number for this study is **08-04-17-0635227**.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

In qualitative research, the data collection instrument is the researcher and cannot be separated from their research (Fusch & Ness, 2015). It is imperative the researcher's

interpretation of phenomena, according to Fusch and Ness (2015), represents that of the participant and not the researcher so they may achieve data saturation. For this research study, I conducted interviews, detailed observations, and obtained amplifying information from each participant or through open-source web searches during the data collection process. I conducted open-ended interviews as the method of data collection. Open-ended interviews afford researchers the opportunity for an authentic look into a person's understanding of a topic and offer greater opportunity for accessibility to personal views, interpretations, experiences, and opinions (Silverman, 2017).

To maintain equitability amongst participants and to manage the study's transparency, each participant was asked the same interview questions and in the same order sequence. Additionally, I ensured not to interject during the elucidation, offer personal opinions, or make superfluous comments based on participant responses. However, to elicit comprehensive responses from participants, I asked for amplification on some of their responses using probing questions such as "can you tell me more about this?" or "can you expound on that?" All interviews were audio-recorded for transcription purposes, and there was no set time for the length of the interviews. Not establishing time limits allows participants the opportunity to respond to the questions completely and give them time to process, reflect, and provide a more thoughtful response (Al-HadiHasan, Callaghan, & Lynn, 2017).

Throughout the entire data collection process, I collected and reviewed all documents related to the study to provide additional support for in-depth questioning during the interview process (Owen, 2014). The focus of any supporting documentation

will consist of the recruitment and hiring strategies of Fortune 500 businesses that have successful programs, and which target the veteran demographic. Remaining unbiased during the document review is important, according to Owen (2014), to apply critical thought to increase the researcher's understanding of the review process.

Reliability pertains to the research consistency, dependability, and replicability of the collected data (Zohrabi, 2013). The reliability of a research study is vital for acceptance into academia and to be received as appropriate for use in various means and ways (Loh, 2013). Ensuring the data is reliable, according to Zohrabi (2013), the purpose is not to come to the same conclusion, but rather agree the data collection process and results are reliable, consistent, and dependable. The validity of a research study is dependent on the trustworthiness, utility, and dependability the researchers and stakeholders place onto the results (Loh, 2013; Zohrabi, 2013). The onus is on both research and research participants who attempt to shape the validity throughout the entire process, from data collection to data analysis and interpretation, but ultimately, according to Zohrabi (2013), validity pertains to whether the research is credible and accurate, and whether it evaluates what it claims to evaluate. Loh (2013) asserted that validity standards or criteria need to consider the perspectives from the researcher, the subjects, and the audience.

To enhance the study's reliability and validity, I used member checking. Qualitative researchers frequently use member checking to assure credibility by affording participants the opportunity to correct inaccuracies, challenge interpretations and assess the final results (Reilly, 2013). Member checking is a quality assurance measure used to

expand the accuracy and validity of the collected data during the interview process (Fisher, Herbert, & Douglas, 2016). The use of member checking allows participants to provide voluntary, ancillary, or clarifying information, which according to Reilly (2013), may stimulate further comment during the review process. Additions to the original data collection may deepen and extend the researcher's contextual understanding and analysis of the interview (Reilly, 2013). Use of member checking will recognize and support the plausibility and truthfulness of the information garnered through the discourse (Zohrabi, 2013). This is also an occasion for participants to either confirm or deny that the summations reflect their views, opinions, and experiences, thus either supporting or challenging the researcher's position (Thomas, 2017).

I used data triangulation to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Carter et al. (2014) stated that data triangulation tests the validity through the convergence of data from multiple sources. Use of data triangulation enhances the reliability of results and is a method to attain data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data triangulation is a means to explore different levels and perspectives of the same phenomenon and a method by which the validity of the findings is guaranteed.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The data collection techniques for the study were face-to-face and telephonic interviews. The interview questions for the research study were open-ended to facilitate the participants relating their veteran recruitment and hiring strategies in their own words (Nandi & Platt, 2017). Face-to-face interviews have an advantage over methods

regarding data quality due to the ease of establishing a rapport with the participant (Nandi & Platt, 2017). Nandi and Platt (2017) posit establishing rapport increases the probability of socially desirable answers to sensitive questions. A key component in face-to-face interviews is the researcher's ability to observe the participant's nonverbal communication (Nguyen, Frauendorfer, Mast, & Gatica-Perez, 2014). Nguyen et al. (2014) stated nonverbal communication can be observed both aurally through voice tone or intonations and visually through body gestures and facial expressions. Advantages of face-to-face interviews include the ability to establish instant rapport with the participant to promote trust and transparency, and the ability to observe the participant's nonverbal cues related to a particular question (Vogl, 2013). Disadvantages include, according to Vogl (2013), lack of anonymity and privacy, location distractions, and the added logistics required of coordination and traveling. The interview protocol is included as Appendix A.

When interviewing participants, I observed and took copious notes on the participant's nonverbal communications and demeanor as participants respond to questions. I also used secondary sources as a source of data collection, such as ancillary documentation, archival data, prior research, and studies. Organizational open-source and historical data, such as employee recruitment, evaluations, turnover, and demographic information served as a metric to compare, contrast, and measure the data collected. During the semistructured interviews, I asked each participant the same questions and in the same sequence to ensure equitability. According to Nelson, Onwuegbuzie, Wines, & Frels (2013), interviews represent one of the most effective means of data collection in qualitative research because it provides the researcher with opportunities to acquire rich

data. Successful interviews require thoughtful planning that centers around the central research question (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Developing an appropriate interview protocol, according to Doody and Noonan (2013), will assist a comfortable exchange of information with the participant. Interview protocols facilitate the participant's ability to provide a detailed account of their experience (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The interview protocol is presented in Appendix A.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Data organization is vital for understanding and representing data, and researchers should provide the attention it deserves (Garcia-Mila, Marti, Gilabert, & Castells, 2014). Qualitative research data can be voluminous, where a single hour of an interview can produce 15-30 pages of transcript; so managing and summarizing data is an important part of the analysis process (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). I used an audio-recording device to record the interview and transcribed the results verbatim using recording software, and then coded the data using low inference descriptors (Palmer, Dixon, & Archer, 2015). I ensured the participant's confidentiality by using alphanumeric coding to ensure confidentiality, for example, P1, P2, and P3. The coding sheet of participant identities, information, and data will be stored in a safe and secure location accessible only by me for 5-years. At the end of the 5-years, I will destroy all participant information (Gibson, Benson, & Brand, 2013).

The script for the interview process was derived from the open-ended interview questions. My objective was to identify pertinent aspects to the research question garnered from the data collection process. Each interview was viewed as a separate



interaction and analyzed separately. The central research question that guided my study was: what successful strategies do Fortune 500 business leaders use to recruit and hire qualified veterans? After the interview and during the data analysis phase, I removed superfluous conversations not relevant to the study and conversations that breached participant confidentiality. I transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim and participant responses categorized into patterns and themes using NVivo software (Castleberry, 2014; Zamawe, 2015). The interview protocol is presented in Appendix A.

### **Data Analysis**

Gale et al. (2013) stated that qualitative analysis is not solely a technical process, but rather influenced by the proclivities of the researcher and their disciplinary models. Throughout the research process, critical analysis is paramount to the design of the study, the collection of data, and its analysis (Gale et al., 2013). Having a separate notebook or computer file to take impromptu ideas, reflexive notes and impressions, and early interpretations of the data is useful for researchers over the entire research effort (Gale et al., 2013). The key components of data analysis are (a) organization, (b) familiarization, (c) classifying, (d) coding and interpretation, and (e) writing up and presenting the data (Rowley, 2014). Analyzing the data collection and transitioning between the types of data analysis methods assist the data triangulation process (Gibson, 2017). I developed the central research question of this study to better address the recruitment and hiring strategies of veterans.

Researchers use data triangulation to cross-verify the same topic from different perspectives (Myers, 2013). For this study, I used data triangulation by seeking

information from different sources of information, such as the interview process and the review of archival and current documentation to develop categories in the study. I used an audio-recording device to record the interview and transcribe the results verbatim using recording software. Data triangulation will assist in developing themes for the research study (Gale et al., 2013). Once themes were established, I organized the data into major and minor themes and offered a summary of the findings.

During transcript review, I used horizontalization to evaluate all questions and responses from the same vantage point. To elucidate the meaning of horizontalization, Dubose (2015) used the analogy of a young child who loses a cherished stuffed animal in the same fire that took a parent or sibling and subsequently is mourning the losses equally. In this vignette, horizontalization means not imposing a rank-order of what matters more and what weight the child should place on the parent or sibling over the cherished toy. Losing the stuffed animal and the parent or sibling are both meaningful, but each has a different significance in reality. According to Dubose (2015), the difference does not make the child's perspective deficient or exclusive, but rather it is the researcher's role to annotate any and all meaning lived by each participant and their particular vantage point. After horizontalization, I removed any superfluous data and left only the relevant data about the research question. To assist with the data analysis, I used the XMind software to mind map the information. Mind mapping is useful for problem-solving, brainstorming, taking notes, and preparing the findings, and if the data is rich enough, the results can go from describing a case to offering an explanation of the phenomena (Buran & Filyukov, 2015; Gale et al., 2013).

I aligned the data collection and the data analysis with the conceptual framework areas of the study to ensure the proper orientation. The conceptual framework of a research study represents theories, definitions, and models to form a basis for the research (English & Pengelly, 2016). I used the person-organization fit theory for this study. Chatman (1989) proposed the person-organization fit theory to measure the congruence between the norms and values of organizations to those of the values of the applicant. Researchers use the person-organization fit theory, according to Teimouri et al. (2015), to determine whether the characteristics of an employee have the possibility to converge with the patterns and behaviors of the organization and that the employees' attitudes may affect the level of similarity among the organization's and the employees' behaviors. The overall attitudes of the workforce are then affected by the degree of congruence between the behavior and characteristics of both the organization and its employee (Teimouri et al., 2015).

### **Reliability and Validity**

According to Zohrabi (2013), qualitative researchers use reliability and validity to strengthen the trustworthiness and dependability of the results. The purpose of ensuring both reliability and validity is not to replicate the results, but rather agree that based upon the data collection procedures, the findings are consistent and trustworthy (Zohrabi, 2013). This section expounds on how best to establish the reliability and validity of the research study.

**Reliability**

A primary requirement of any research study is the reliability of the data and findings (Zohrabi, 2013). Reliability, according to Zohrabi (2013), pertains to the consistency, dependability, and transferability of the results. Reliability pertains to the research consistency, dependability, and transferability of the collected data (Zohrabi, 2013). The reliability of a research study is vital for acceptance into academia and to be received as appropriate for use in various means and ways (Loh, 2013). When ensuring the data is reliable, according to Zohrabi (2013), the purpose is not to come to the same conclusion, but rather agree the data collection process and results are reliable, consistent, and dependable. To enhance the study's reliability, I used member checking. Member checking is a quality assurance measure used to expand the accuracy and validity of the collected data during the interview process (Fisher et al., 2016). Member checking allows participants to provide voluntary ancillary or clarifying information, which according to Reilly (2013), may stimulate further comment during the review process.

**Validity**

The validity of a research study is dependent on the trustworthiness, confirmability, dependability, and transferability the researchers and stakeholders place onto the results (Cope, 2014; Loh, 2013; Zohrabi, 2013). The onus is on both the researcher and research participants who attempt to shape the validity throughout the entire process, from data collection to data analysis and interpretation, but ultimately Zohrabi (2013) states that validity is concerned with whether research is credible and accurate and whether it is evaluating what it claims to evaluate. Loh (2013) asserted that

researchers need to consider validity standards or criteria from the perspectives of the researcher, the subjects, and the audience. It is vital researchers examine the trustworthiness of their study at each section of their analytical process to ensure the validity is conveyed to their audience (Elo et al., 2014). Zohrabi (2013) points out that researchers should focus on the trustworthiness and dependability of their study to ensure their findings are consistent and reliable, rather than trying to achieve the same results previously identified.

To establish a study's confirmability, researchers must validate the data represented in the study is that of the participants' responses, and not of their personal biases or viewpoints (Cope, 2014). The responsibility is on the researcher to demonstrate confirmability by identifying how they established their findings and interpretations, and demonstrating the results were garnered directly from the data (Cope, 2014). This is accomplished, according to Cope (2014), by offering rich data collected from the participants that portray each emerging theme. Confirmability is an audit trail that provides a transparent account of each research step taken to establish, develop, and ultimately report the results (Amankwaa, 2016).

The transferability of a research study refers to results that may apply to multiple groups or situations (Cope, 2014). According to Cope (2014), transferability is met if the findings have specific significance to individuals not involved in the research and if the readers can personalize the results with their own experiences. Similar to a study's confirmability, the responsibility is on the researcher to offer rich data about the phenomenon of study to empower the reader in making their own decision on

transferability (Amankwaa, 2016). According to Morley, Briggs, & Chumbley (2015), transferability is allowing an impartial person to make a judgment as to whether the results are transferable and provide a personal connection.

I used data triangulation to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Carter et al., 2014). Carter et al. (2014) stated that data triangulation tests the validity through the convergence of data from multiple sources. Data triangulation enhances the reliability of results and is a method to attain data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Achieving successful triangulation requires data from multiple sources (Amankwaa, 2016). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data triangulation is a means to explore different levels and perspectives of the same phenomenon and a method by which the validity of the findings is guaranteed.

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 2 of the study provided an overview of the purpose statement, a description of the role of the researcher, and the data collection process, techniques, and procedures. I explored the appropriateness and justification of the research methodology, research design, and data analysis, and discussed the various reliability and validity concerns in the study along with methods of mitigation to ensure trustworthiness, legitimacy, and credibility. In the study, I explored the successful veteran recruitment and hiring strategies of Fortune 500 businesses. In-depth, qualitative open-ended interviews will be the primary means of data collection for the research study. I analyzed the interviews transcripts to identify any themes and patterns of the lived experiences of each participant. I selected purposeful sampling to use when I initiated the coordination and

interview process with Fortune 500 businesses within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area as participants for the research study. I audio-recorded the interviews, transcribed and coded the data using NVivo software and mind map using XMind software.

Section 3 begins with an introduction including a truncated purpose statement and a summary of the findings. I present the results of the analysis of the data and present the findings accordingly. Section 3 includes (a) application to professional practice, (b) implications for social change, (c) recommendations for action, (d) recommendations for further research, (e) reflections, and (f) the conclusion.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the recruitment and hiring strategies that business leaders use to attract qualified veterans to fill organizational job vacancies. I conducted semistructured interviews with Fortune 500 business leaders within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area to acquire data and to answer the following question: What successful strategies do Fortune 500 business leaders use to recruit and hire qualified veterans? The interviews were conducted in the setting most convenient to the interviewee, and the atmosphere was quiet, comfortable, and relaxed.

The participants were asked the same nine semistructured interview questions (Appendix A) in the same sequence, and each proffered responses that indicated the strategies that participant used to recruit and hire veterans. Each interview garnered a comprehensive and thoughtful response from the participant. In addition to the interview questions, I researched all available topic-related company open-source information, as well as all documents collected from participants at the time of the interview.

Based on the information provided within Section 2, using the qualitative multiple case study design was appropriate for this study. This approach provided a basis for analyzing the data collected during the entire research process (Longfield et al., 2016; Yin, 2014). Once the interviews had been conducted and transcribed and all available open-source information and documents collected from participants had been reviewed, the data were imported into NVivo software for coding.



After all data collected had been analyzed, three core themes were identified using NVivo software. Within each theme, I systematically outlined the strategies that were identified during the collection process. I used all data collected to answer the central research question of my study.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

I used semistructured interviews to answer the central research question concerning what successful strategies Fortune 500 business leaders use to recruit and hire qualified veterans. In addition, I reviewed company open-source information garnered from company websites, as well as participant-provided proprietary company information further expounding the company's recruitment and hiring strategies. The semistructured interviews were conducted at places and times convenient to each of the three participants, with my only interviewer requirement being that of a private location to conduct a quiet interview.

To gain an in-depth perspective, I selected three Fortune 500 organizations in three eclectic industries: hospitality, pharmaceutical, and communications. My premise was to see if the strategies differed among the three operationally diverse industries. After the data collection and analysis phases involving both interviews and documents, three themes were identified. The first theme related to veteran awareness and edification. The second theme related to business leader awareness and edification. The third theme related to working with strategic partners.

Person-organization fit theory was the conceptual framework used for this research study. The responses from the participants reinforced the person-organization fit

theory framework. Person-organization fit theory measures the congruence between the norms and values of organizations and those of applicants (Chatman, 1989). Additionally, person-organization fit theory defines the compatibility between the employee and the organization that occurs when either one side provides something the other needs or when both parties share similar characteristics (Kristof, 1996). According to Kristof (1996), the best outcome occurs when both employee and organization share something the other needs.

For this doctoral study, I analyzed the conceptual framework and found a connection with my findings, and I offered a better understanding of the successful strategies that Fortune 500 business leaders use to recruit and hire qualified veterans. Actively seeking qualified veterans for employment is good business (Harrell & Berglass, 2012), and all participants echoed that sentiment. The most effective method to explore the research question in an operational setting (Yin, 2014) was a case study design.

### **Theme 1: Veteran Awareness and Edification**

Data for Theme 1 revealed that some veterans were unaware of their skills marketability and needed to do a better job of preparing themselves for the transition from military service to the civilian job market. One of the first actions that veterans must take when seeking gainful civilian employment is determining how their military education and skills translate to the civilian job market. P1 was in the hospitality industry and noted that “veterans are coming out of the military and looking for security, and they might have never thought about the hospitality industry as a career, so it is about educating them.”

P2, who was in the pharmaceutical industry, provided similar feedback and noted that “veterans do not know how their military skills translate into the civilian world.” P3 was in the communications industry and expressed comparable concerns, stating, “I don't know if veterans are doing enough research or have enough research under their belt that they truly understand how they fit within an organization.” To assist veterans and help translate their skills accordingly, each of the participating organizations offered online tools to better match a veteran’s military skills to a civilian sector equivalency.

A government study in 2015 found that employers were challenged when trying to understand how best to translate military skills in a way that could be both applicable and contributory to their organization (Davis & Minnis, 2016). According to Davis and Minnis (2016), companies acknowledged this gap of translating military skills to post military service careers as a major concern for veterans achieving an effective career transition. Veterans also have been challenged when trying to articulate their learned military skills while seeking civilian employment. According to Davis and Minnis, some veterans had little knowledge of how to translate the skills from their military careers and often focused on their technical skills, which translated poorly in the civilian job market.

P1 stated that once veterans had been educated and properly informed of their skills applicability within the hospitality industry, they quickly became encouraged about their employment prospects.

Once you get that across, their eyes light up because they realize that it is really a city under one roof and there is a lot of different opportunities. So, it is all about

veterans expressing their interest, and our ability to educate them about the hospitality industry.

P2 offered a vignette about a highly sought-after skillset within the pharmaceutical industry: electrical engineering. P2 reflected that while overseeing a recruitment for a particular manufacturing plant in the south, his organization had a need to diversify its workforce and find qualified female engineers.

In general, electrical engineers have a specialty skillset that is rare, certainly in the civilian world. Often times, military electrical engineers do not know what their value is, because in the military they are called something different. At our recruitment career fairs, I frequently felt like a football coach trying to talk to a star athlete and explain to veterans just how good they are and marketable their skills were within my organization.

P3 noted that his organization developed a web-based skills matcher to assist veterans. “It is easy for veterans to navigate our website and use the skills matcher to provide an intuitive tool to find the right fit for the veteran within our company.”

P2 stated that some veterans take longer than others to make the transition to civilian life, most remarkably in their interaction with others. “Some veterans do not make the switch from military to civilian life smoothly, often because they came from such a very structured environment in the military and with a very direct form of communication.” P2 noted that the civilian workforce at his organization did not react too kindly to direct interactions, relying upon mutual conversations or debates rather than

one-sided lectures. P3 also shared an ancillary quality that some veterans exude that is dissimilar to nonveterans at his organization:

Veterans are not used to bragging about what they have done. They do what they are told, they get the job done, and they do it really well. But some veterans are not the aggressor in going after a job, so we have to assist them along the way.

P3 stated that his organization conducts many outreach programs and spends a lot of time assisting veterans with resume writing. P1 also mentioned that her organization has a very aggressive outreach program that targets veterans around the globe who may not have the same job search opportunities as stateside veterans. She explained, “we try to give that same level of exposure to overseas transitioning folks because they don’t get all the exposure that U.S. based people do.” P1 stated that the organization’s success was directly related to its ability to connect with each applicant by offering the best organizational fit: “When we are talking about somebody’s personality and an actual position, if that person is introverted and does not want to deal with people, then we focus on something that does not require a guest interface, like house-keeping.”

Person-organization fit theory was relevant to this theme concerning veterans’ awareness when considering an organization for employment. According to Ardiç et al. (2016), person-organization fit and ensuring mutual compatibility were important for the success of the organization. P1 stated that it is critically important within her organization to educate veteran applicants about the hospitality industry, because “veterans may not know what the business is all about.” Without such education, a veteran may not understand or fully “appreciate that there are a lot of different opportunities, so it is about

them expressing their interests and how they fit within the organization.” P2 acknowledged that some veterans left his organization not because they were not prepared for the transition from “military to civilian life”; rather, their incompatibility was due more to a lifestyle switch than to a person-organization fit mismatch. To solidify a better fit within his organization, P3 amplified the point that his organization used web-based tools to allow veterans to “navigate our website to find the right jobs that they may be a fit for.”

Researching the websites and ancillary information provided by each participant amplified their collective interest in ensuring that veterans are better prepared for their transition to the civilian job sector. P1 expressed her organization’s commitment to veterans and showcased how proactive and successful its efforts had been over the past decade. P1 provided information detailing how her organization was sending additional resources to better prepare and educate veterans on the prospects of working in the hospitality industry. P1 offered that her organization tailored its core organizational values around the values normally associated with the military. The correlation was not arbitrary, but rather a reflection of its military-friendly corporate culture, and it amplified how much the organization valued the skills that veterans brought to it. Similarly, P2 expressed his organization’s interest in ensuring that veterans understand how much value they would bring to the organization. His organization routinely used third-party agencies to better educate potential veteran hires on their possible fit within his organization and to promote “brand awareness” within the veteran community. P3 offered that his organization provided web-based tools to better prepare veterans for their

transition and, more importantly, to educate them on the translation of their skills to the civilian job sector.

### **Theme 2: Business Leader Awareness and Edification**

Theme 2 data revealed that some business leaders were unaware of the marketable skills of veterans and whether those skills would translate cleanly to their organizations. Though transitioning veterans may lack civilian work experience, employers often do not always understand how military skills and experience translate within their organizations (Stone & Stone, 2015). Stone and Stone (2015) stated that compared to nonveterans, veterans are more likely to (a) have advanced technological training, (b) be prone to quicker skills transfer across contexts and tasks, (c) display positive team skills, (d) display cultural sensitivity and be more accepting of diversity, and (e) possess high levels of honesty, integrity, and loyalty. P2 noted,

Veteran hiring is a different entity and unique, where on one hand non-veterans apply for a position and we look at their skills, qualifications, and their history, and say go/no-go. However, the military applicants are very different obviously, and having our recruiters really have to think outside of the box when recruiting from that population of candidates.

P3 offered a similar vantage point by stating, “one of the biggest challenges for hiring qualified veterans is not so much on the veterans’ part, but on the hiring manager side.” P3 said that he spent a considerable amount of time with his recruiters and hiring managers to educate them on how best to engage the veteran population of applicants, noting, “The more visibility and face-to-face interaction my hiring managers have with

veterans, the higher the success rate is to get that veteran onboard.” P1 amplified that notion by stating, “informing our hiring managers, general managers, and all the people on our side of the value of a veteran is important, because we all know the veterans know a lot, have trained for a living, and have a lot of leadership skills.” P1 further mentioned how she had her hiring manager look at potential veteran candidates coming out of the military and compared them to nonveterans with experience within the hospitality industry.

Somebody who comes from another hotel chain who has much more direct experience compared to a military candidate. It is about educating my hiring managers that the military candidate comes with all this added value that would take 20 years to garner if you had a civilian career.

P1 also stated she trained her hiring managers regarding the value of veterans and how best to look at a veteran’s resume that “might look like alphabet soup to some.” P1 offered that educating her hiring managers on resume translation was important so that they would be more “open to the military candidates.” Within her organization, P1 educated her staff through webinars and education programs; she stated, “the tide has turned because we have already hired thousands of veterans and military spouses as a result.” Organizations should educate managers on the value of veteran employees and select their recruitment activities strategically (Hall et al., 2014). P3 mentioned that he trained his hiring managers on “what good looks like and what a qualified veteran looks like.” P3 offered that some of his hiring managers, because they had no affiliation or experience with the military, were not accustomed to the skills that a veteran possesses;



therefore P3 had them “go out and spend time with veteran applicants to actually do some research and find out what each skill level possesses, whether a staff sergeant or a lieutenant colonel.”

P3 showcased a vignette to further explain a past skills mismatch between his hiring managers and potential veteran applicants. P3 was asked to recruit military talent capable of working a specific communications capability, and P3 presented 50 potential veteran applicants to a field of hiring managers. The day before the face-to-face interviews, P3 had his hiring managers complete a “resume-scrub” of all applicants and rate them related to their abilities on the resumes. Of the 50 resumes, only five resumes made the “resume-scrub” as qualified applicants. P3 made the hiring managers interview all 50 veteran applicants the next day and again conclude the day with a new qualified applicant list. According to P3, the hiring managers “were blown away” by the level of qualifications and professionalism shown by the veteran applicants and concluded the day by hiring 46 of the 50 applicants. P3 stated that until his hiring managers saw and understood “the caliber of those service members,” they were doing those service members an injustice. “If you have never served in the military, it is hard to see or understand the caliber of these service members until you sit down and have a conversation.”

P1 offered that her organization was pushing its program down and activating its franchise properties to circulate its veteran initiative within the properties it managed at a regional level. “We will teach each franchisee how to fish and show them how to stand up their own veterans programs.” P1 stated that the veteran initiative was so successful

that the organization was expanding it to its other management companies, and “in turn will probably spread it to other brands and other portfolios.” P1 stated that her organization would

Teach them how to do this as we do it, because this is a best practice. I am sure just by the nature of that franchise owner having all those other hotels, he/she will put this initiative in their other hotels. We are excited to expand outside of our realm. We have always been open with how we do it, but this is us giving them the tools, resources, support, and a website to make it a success.

Similarly, P3 stated his organization also applied a regional approach to better inform the hiring managers on veterans, but also to promulgate his organization’s “brand awareness” to potential veteran applicants.

We built military recruiting teams that reflect each branch of service: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine, and Coast Guard. They are regionally aligned and their role is to help the transitioning service members. Our organization is interested in hiring veterans and we are here to be an advocate for the veterans and to really help them through their transition process.

P3 stated their second objective is to manage a community outreach to rally veterans together and spread the “brand awareness” of their organization. P2 showcased a similar capability and considered it one of his organization’s greatest assets. P2 stated his organization developed an intra-organizational group that has a military affinity where “anybody who had been in the military or loosely affiliated” can join. This group is also used for community outreach for military-centric events, e.g., Memorial Day, 9/11

observance, etc., but also as an education and recruitment tool. P3 offered that his hiring managers routinely call upon this group to canvass their military networks when a specific specialty is needed within their organization. This group is also used as organizational cheerleaders at times, and attend career fairs to promote a veteran-friendly organization.

P2 stated he uses the Korn Ferry 4 Dimension (KF4D) tool to assist his hiring managers better understand their veteran applicants and to more efficiently place their skills within the organization. “KF4D is a web-based tool that requires applicants to respond to a series of questions, and their responses are then analyzed to establish individual applicant metrics.” P2 indicated that KF4D identifies “what things motivate this person, or if their competencies showcase a really strong customer focus or maybe if they are weak at it.” KF4D is used from a recruitment standpoint to quantify the “quality of the candidates we are bringing into the organization.” P2 also stated they use third-party agencies, such as Lucas Group and Cameron Brooks, to target a specific military talent when required. Specifically, P2 mentioned that when his organization is not meeting its targeted veteran recruitment numbers, they routinely solicit Lucas Group and Cameron Brooks to source the discrepancy. P3 similarly stated his organization uses a third-party vendor to perform a veterans’ hiring campaign. P3 offered that these vendors provide metrics for analytical purposes, and that they are increasing their “brand awareness within the veteran space.” P3 also mentioned his organization targets specific military demographics based upon the need of his organization. If they require a certain skill specialty, they do research on what region or military base they need to target to

solicit the appropriate talent or military service. If they need assistance with locating talent, they use third-party agencies to source their talent pool. According to Harrell and Berglass (2012), research consistently shows that an employees' military service was directly related to their positive performance at their civilian employment.

Similar to the first theme, the person-organization fit theory was displayed in this theme concerning the business leaders' awareness when considering veterans for employment. All participants acknowledged the importance of trying to determine the mutual compatibility between the veteran and their organization during the recruitment phase of the hiring process (Ardıç et al., 2016). P3 stated his organization spends significant time to assist the veteran "find the right jobs that they are a best fit for." P2 acknowledged he spends additional time working with the hiring managers to properly align the veterans' skills to the organizational needs of his company. P3 offered that without first educating and ensuring mutual compatibility, because sometimes "it is not something that is a natural fit," you run the risk of misalignment.

Researching the websites and ancillary information provided by each participant did not formally amplify this theme; however, P1 did provide a magazine article where it mentioned their continued pursuit to educate their collective workforce on the value and benefits of veterans.

### **Theme 3: Working With Strategic Partners**

Theme 3 data revealed business leaders have had great success with their recruitment and hiring efforts after allying themselves with strategic partners, and mutually leveraging capabilities amongst the cohort. Strategic partnerships require the

participating organization to properly maintain strategic alignment and allocation of resources to be relevant (Lemke, 2015). P1 stated that her strategic partnership with the military's Transition Assistance Program, or TAPS, garnered them access to "trend-setting servicemen and women" and allowed them to reach veteran applicants "upstream" before they transition from military service. "It is about building those relationships on military bases and getting them upstream before they get out, so that you can help them with the transition." P1 likens the military transition to that of a recent college graduate, whereas they want a job upon graduation, so "partnering with them beforehand to create this awareness earlier is important." P1 offered,

As far as TAPS and preparing veterans for transitioning, we know the DoD is working really hard and revamping TAPS, so the public-private partnership has been really remarkable to see evolve all over the last couple of years, as companies are trying to access these military service men and women earlier and upstream in this process.

P2 stated his organization worked closely with TAPS and local base transition offices during their recruitment process. "Just working on building that relationship with them, so that in the future when something comes up we have a seat at the table." Similarly, P3 offered his organization leverages a similar strategic partner, Hire Our Heroes, to further develop their veteran portfolio. "Hire Our Heroes has done a really good job of building network events to connect veterans and corporate America." P3 stated that Hire Our Heroes offers a "different platform" for engagement that allows veterans and companies to have "more of an intellectual conversation and a networking

environment, rather than your traditional career fairs.” The Hire Our Heroes program is sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

P1 stated her organization also strategically partnered with the Hiring Our Heroes program and have an active seat on their advisory board. According to P1, “having a seat at the table and being part of national dialogue, allows us to share our mutual challenges and best practices with our counterparts.” P1 offered,

There are a lot of veterans’ organizations out there, some large and some small, but by aligning ourselves with others involved in the same national dialogue, we are willing to share challenges and best practices because we know everybody wants what is best for the veteran.

P1 also mentioned her organization partners with the George W. Bush Institute and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation on veteran initiatives. P1 stated “this is really looking at your company and trying to find all the ways you can help the military community.” P2 and P3 briefly explained their exposure and collaboration with similar strategic partners in the name of “brand awareness” and ultimately “connecting with the veteran” at start of their transition process. Additionally, P1 offered her organizations efforts with community outreach. In particular, they use community development projects to spread their commitment to veterans. In one example, P1 mentioned the high veteran homeless rate within particular major metropolitan city, and how her organization worked with the Department of Veteran Affairs to alleviate some of the concerns associated with being homeless. After renovating their large collection of hotels, they donated gently used furniture to these homeless shelters within this city and by virtue of offering assistance

within this high veteran homeless populace, they showcased their commitment to assist. Though neither P2 nor P3 offered any similar stories, they both restated their commitment to community outreach within the veteran communities, all in the name of assisting veterans and having their company's name be synonymous with a military-friendly organization.

Researching the websites and ancillary information provided by each participant amplified the importance of allying themselves with the right strategic partners. All participating organizations work with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Hire Our Heroes program, and each participant expressed the shared and collective goals of all organizations within this effort. P3 offered that the Hire Our Heroes initiative was a dynamic networking tool where it "brings hiring managers face-to-face with veterans, and their recruitment numbers consistently skyrocket shortly after these events." P3 further amplified his comment by stating "if we do not have the interest of the veterans in mind, why would a veteran want to be an employee in my organization. Our goal is to get veterans hired." Both P1 and P3 shared the sentiment of "distributing their best practices within the cohort" and being "OK, with handing off a veteran to a competitor" because there are "enough veterans to go around and everybody wants what is in the best interest of the veteran."

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

During the data analysis phase, three themes clearly emerged and each business leader interviewed clearly used as strategies to recruit and hire veterans. At the conclusion of my research, it was apparent that the strategies the business leaders used to

recruit and hire veterans was successful for their organization. The findings of this research were significant to professional business practices in many ways. Targeting a specific demographic for employment requires the appropriate strategies to be successful and to be able to effectively reach the specific group. For this study business leaders involved with the recruitment and hiring of veterans were the targeted demographic.

Business leaders have a need for skilled workers and many find themselves trying to keep up with both the demands of business globalization and the technological advances needed for a business to remain competitive (Robertson & Aquino, 2016). To ensure they target a specific skill or background, business leaders develop strategies to locate the best possible fit for a vacant position or talent. Since business leaders are inclined to recruit and ultimately hire employees based on the collective knowledge, education, and experience of the employee, the targeting of veterans assists organizations to achieve their goal of hiring qualified talent. The findings of this study may provide business leaders who lack veteran recruitment and hiring strategies, a basis to exploit their organization's organic strategies and grant them access to skilled veterans seeking employment.

The findings of this study amplified the views and opinions of business leaders in three Fortune 500 organizations within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. All three business leaders openly discussed their strategies used to target the veteran population and the best practices they achieved along the way that ultimately provided veterans the opportunity for gainful employment. The collective response from all three participating



business leaders amplified their baseline goal of finding jobs for qualified veterans within their organization.

Though the level of priority differed between the three participants, all three clearly articulated the need for veterans' to better prepare themselves for their career transition as a major challenge. Harrell and Berglass (2012) stated that President Obama made preparing our men and women service members a business priority in 2011, but all three participants acknowledged the challenge remains today. Additionally, Hall et al. acknowledged that veterans are often challenged to translate their unique military skills into needed employer skillsets, coupled with their required assimilation into the civilian workforce and organizational culture that is considerably different from the military. Assisting veterans with the transition was a cornerstone objective within all of the strategies researched for this study. Developing strategies for potential employees to better prepare themselves for employment is a successful tactic for business leaders to emulate, and as stated by P1, "it is really good for our business and a win-win situation." Creating this opportunity within an organization allows business leaders to manage the content and control the influx of talent coming into the organization. According to P1, "our veterans' initiative brought in great talent and great leaders, and that is what you want in your company."

Developing strategies to better prepare hiring managers to successfully target veterans is an important step for organizations to understand the capabilities and skills associated with the military demographic. As the workforce within the United States increasingly becomes more diverse, there continues to be a lack of understanding and

empathy about veterans and their associated experiences within their military service (Davis & Minnis, 2016). Though veteran job seekers continue to be a source of talent, according to Davis and Minnis (2016), many hiring managers are not aware of the vast array of skills, training, and knowledge that veterans bring to the civilian workforce. All three participants acknowledged the organic need within their organization to better prepare their recruiters and hiring managers to understand and empathize with veterans. Better preparing the business leaders' understanding of veterans was also a cornerstone objective within all of the strategies researched for this study. Harnessing the distinctive capabilities and valuable skills that many veterans developed through real-world and often high-pressure situations will benefit the organization. Developing a strategy that focuses on the recruiter's and hiring manager's understanding of veterans will make them better recruiters or hiring managers within their organization. According to P2, "veteran hiring is a focal point in our talent acquisition, so having teams that are focused on finding that talent is a big thing."

All participant data presented for this study on the successful recruitment and hiring strategies of veterans could assist business leaders in many ways. The findings within this study were created and associated with the literature review. This study and its findings may provide business leaders who lack veteran recruitment and hiring strategies, a basis to exploit their organization's organic strategies and grant them access to a skilled and highly qualified veterans workforce.

To achieve the strategies detailed within this study, business leaders must develop new strategies to recruit and hire veterans. To do this, organizations should (a) assist

veterans with the transition and their skills translation, (b) educate and inform business leaders on the value of veterans, and (c) develop strategic partnerships with similar organizations seeking veteran talent. According to Hall et al. (2014), hiring veterans enhances the organizational culture and increases the opportunity for gaining the competitive advantage.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The social change implications for this study revolve around the potential enhancements to a business leaders' understanding of what highly skilled veterans may bring to their organizations' operational portfolio. Additionally, the findings from this study may improve the veteran job seekers awareness on the importance of preparing themselves for the career transition between military service and the civilian workforce. The findings of this study will (a) assist veterans with the transition and their skills translation, (b) educate and inform business leaders on the value of veterans, and (c) develop strategic partnerships with similar organizations seeking veteran talent.

Service members go through many iterations of specialty job training, which continuously affords them unique educational and progressive on-the-job experiences as their careers progress (Beauchesne & O'Hair, 2013). Because some of their cognitive or experienced training within the military educational or operational arenas do not translate well into the civilian sector, business leaders may arbitrarily dismiss veterans as not having the proper education or requisite skills to work in in their organization (Beauchesne & O'Hair, 2013).

The findings of this study may contribute to social change by addressing the challenges faced by business leaders and veterans as one seeks qualified employees and the other pursues gainful employment respectively. Developing hiring strategies that focus on the recruitment and hiring of qualified veterans will enhance the business leader's ability to empathize with and ultimately target the veteran demographic. The unemployment rate for veterans is higher than the proportional and commensurate civilian workforce demographic (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017). Military service affects each service member in uniquely different ways that may later influence their ability to obtain civilian employment after they transition from service (Kleykamp, 2013). Since the veteran unemployment rate is higher than their civilian counterparts, veterans face significant stress during their transition, which may amplify mental health concerns (Elliott, 2015; Kleykamp, 2013). The results of this research could support the knowledge base for the hiring of veterans and help reduce the unemployment rate of U.S. veterans.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to research the recruitment and hiring strategies of Fortune 500 business leaders to hire qualified veterans. According to Hall et al. (2014), hiring veterans enhances the organizational culture and increases the opportunity for gaining competitive advantage. Business leaders and organizations that do not have strategies targeting the recruitment and hiring of veterans should consider this study and all associated findings as the impetus for change.

I encourage business leaders and organizations, small or large, to pay attention to these findings and the successes detailed within this study to consider veterans for employment. Veterans are known for their leadership skills and teamwork, and are considered major assets to businesses based upon the discipline required of them during their military service (Hall et al., 2014). Once these business leaders and organizations embrace the full breadth of the veterans' capabilities and develop strategies to obtain those unique veteran attributes, they may increase profitability. If appropriate and as time permits, I will publish these results using platforms such as seminars, training, and lectures. I will also inform all participants involved if I publish this doctoral study. My final recommendation is for all business leaders to also pay attention to the results and findings.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the recruitment and hiring strategies of Fortune 500 business leaders to attract qualified veterans to fill organizational job vacancies. The population consisted only of businesses with successful recruitment and hiring strategies which targeted veterans. The main limitation of this study was the participant's false assumption that my personal experience in the military and as a veteran reflected bias. Limitations are the research constraints associated with a study that contributed to a finding or discovery (Lewin et al., 2015). The other limitation was the willingness of the participants to provide honest and unfiltered information regarding their techniques, tactics, and procedures. These limitations can be mitigated in

future research by the researcher's adherence to the established research techniques and interview protocols identified in their study.

Recommendations for further studies include looking at the successful recruitment and hiring strategies of veterans from the vantage point of the veteran. A veteran who was the product of a successful recruitment and hiring campaign would have a unique perspective of the true pros and cons of the initiative. This approach may offer a near real-time look at the effectiveness of the techniques, tactics, and procedures Fortune 500 business leaders use to recruit and hire veterans.

### **Reflections**

As a multiple tour combat veteran and retiree of the United States Army, I have experienced many unique and harrowing situations, but admittedly, pursuing the DBA has been the most daunting and rewarding task of my life. Going into my doctoral process I knew there were many programs that targeted and assisted veterans for gainful employment. What I did not know or fully understand at the time was the level of commitment, dedication, and passion these business leaders have for veterans. They truly want to give back to those who sacrificed so much for this great nation. When I started data collection I had no prior experience or personal contact with any of the participants, and I was not made fully aware of their programs until I started my research. I believe my limited exposure to those businesses allowed me to remain open, unbiased, and unfettered throughout the process.

My view of Corporate America has changed since starting my study and interviewing all participants. All participants and their respective organizations firmly

hold a steady footing in business and are leaders on the world stage, but their commitment to both excellence and veterans changed my way of thinking. I have a newly found appreciation for these Fortune 500 organizations. I feel that this study and its findings will make a positive difference within the business community and will open up the aperture for veterans to obtain gainful employment.

### **Conclusion**

Veterans can make a difference within any organization because they possess many unique qualities and attributes. For business leaders to target veterans as a recruitment and hiring strategy, they must fully embrace the findings and successes detailed within this study before developing their plans for action. They must be willing to assist veterans with their transition process. They must be willing to fundamentally change the way their organization understands and empathizes with veterans. They must be willing to work with the right strategic partners in order to make a difference. But before veterans can make a difference within an organization, they must be afforded the opportunity.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Questions

### Interview Protocols

Interview process will begin with introductions and discussion of the scope and expectations of the interview, and further answer any pre-interview questions or concerns of participant(s).

- A. I will extend my appreciation and present consent form for the participant(s) to sign.
- B. I will remind the participant(s) of the audio recording requirement for the interview and affirm the confidentiality of their responses and our conversation.
- C. I will start the audio recording device and introduce the participant(s) with pseudonym and coded identification (e.g., Participant 1), and annotate the date and time.
- D. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes to garner responses to 9 questions, starting with question #1 and proceeding sequentially to question #9.
- E. I will collect any proprietary documents offered as evidence.
- F. I will discuss member checking with participant(s) and ensure they understand that I provide via e-mail a written transcript of the interview and request they verify and validate the accuracy of collected data within 5 business days of e-mail receipt.
- G. After verifying a successful audio recording, I will conclude the interview and thank the participant(s) for their part in the study. End protocol.

### Interview Questions

1. What challenges have you met with the recruitment of qualified veterans?
2. What challenges have you met with the hiring of qualified veterans?
3. What strategies do you use to improve the recruitment of qualified veterans?
4. What strategies do you use to improve the hiring of qualified veterans?
5. How do you assess the effectiveness of the strategies used for the recruitment of qualified veterans?
6. How do you assess the effectiveness of the strategies used for the hiring of qualified veterans?
7. In your experience, how have your recruitment strategies benefitted your organization?
8. Based upon your experience, how have your hiring strategies benefitted your organization?
9. Please provide any additional information on this topic not covered in the interview.

## Appendix B: National Institutes of Health Certificate of Completion

