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Looking Critically at Reintegration of Post-9/11 Era Veterans



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White Paper

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Abstract

Despite its best intentions and a significant commitment of resources, the U.S. Army is not effectively fulfilling its institutional responsibility to adequately prepare its departing veterans to enter into productive civilian life and employment at the conclusion of their time in uniform.

The combination of an ineffectual understanding of the complex dynamics of adult transition, a reliance on flawed assumptions regarding the nature of private sector employment, and a misplaced faith in the viability of historical models has resulted in the estimated 2.6 million veterans of the “Gulf War-II era” being insufficiently prepared to reintegrate into a civil society that is less familiar with the culture and experiences of military service than at any time in history.

These shortfalls are contributing to staggering (and ever-accelerating) human, economic and social costs. The long-term consequences of these costs will likely erode the nation’s relationship with its Army, negatively influence the next generation of eligible citizens’ propensity to join the service, and gravely threaten the existence of the All-Volunteer Force. The challenge is daunting. To understand and ultimately overcome it will require the Army to introspectively evaluate its assumptions and practices, and to collaborate with external partners in new ways.

The goals of this theoretical paper are to 1) define, clarify and better understand the contemporary factors contributing to, and the consequences of, this generation of veterans’ collective struggles to transition effectively by forming and applying an empirical framework; and 2) to stimulate and enable further inquiry by analyzing, describing, and documenting the findings from my inter-disciplinary scientific and practical literature inquiry. Recommended

solutions are noticeably absent – I limit the scope of this paper to explanation, not suggestion. Also, although behavioral health issues and the challenges of effectively caring for the unseen wounds of battle are clearly interwoven throughout the transition process, they are intentionally omitted to maintain focus on the paper's goals. As a result of my academic emphasis and decade of practical work assisting soldiers in transition, I focus on the experience of the U.S. Army in particular.

Looking Critically at Reintegration of Post 9/11 Era Military Veterans

Forward

“It’s in our shared interest – you and I, in and out of uniform – that we allow this generation of veterans to contribute, to bring the strengths that they bring, to bring the passionate curiosity that I’ve described, notwithstanding the pressures that they felt – to the extent that we should agree that we all want a stronger America, then we ought to find a way to make sure that these veterans are part of it. And we ought to work together with them – not for them: with them.”

General Martin Dempsey
Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff
As stated in his Landon Lecture Address
Kansas State University, October 1st, 2012

I have spent the better part of the past 14 months struggling to understand the challenges contemporary military veterans face in their transition to civilian life. Despite living through this transition myself and helping others in their journeys, I find this one of the most daunting issues in contemporary military affairs. To gain a new understanding of this problem I searched for a new method of inquiry. By turning towards a human science approach and away from my institutional military decision-making mindset, a new path of discovery was found. The following pages articulate, to the best of my ability, the result of my inquiry aimed at describing the essence of this enormous challenge. While my words may appear critical, my motive in sharing my findings is based solely upon my life-long commitment of serving the American soldier. With the soldier’s interest in mind, I hope you examine this work objectively.

Lastly, I am indebted to my editor and contributing author Richard Crowley, a former Army officer as well, for his insights and intellect needed to bring the bulk of findings to this paper. We have tried to simplify the presentation of this information to a highly readable form

despite the complexity and diversity of factors describing and qualifying this phenomenon. We feel more assured of what we are saying than how well it is written, but decided to offer it in its current form and not wait any longer. For once we can leave the process of defining the problem space, we can enter the solution space. It is here we wish to join forces for change.

Thank You-

Art De Groat, Lieutenant Colonel (Retired), U.S. Army

Introduction to the Contemporary Challenge of Veterans in Transition

Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, approximately 2.6 million men and women have voluntarily served in our nation's Armed Forces. As these service members complete their time in uniform and attempt to re-enter civil society and find gainful employment, too many are not succeeding. A Pew Research Center study in December, 2011 indicates that post-9/11 veterans are reporting more difficulties returning to civilian life than those who served during the Vietnam or Korea/World War II eras. Most find themselves unequipped to successfully navigate the enormous psychological implications of such a dramatic change in self-identity and the unfamiliar challenges of finding gainful employment in the competitive, profit-oriented private-sector work force. As a result, our veterans are experiencing unprecedented levels of unemployment, low GI Bill utilization rates and, most discouraging, a growing reliance on entitlement benefits in lieu of self-sufficiency.

Failing to effectively transition this generation of veterans from military service to productive private citizens will yield consequences that are strategic in nature and national in scope. Severe damage will be done to the American civil-military relationship, the viability of our Armed Forces, the Post-9/11 Era veteran population, and society at large for decades to come.

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To investigate this phenomenon, I analyzed the relevant internal dynamics and relationships between the three entities involved: the U.S. Army as an institution, Post 9/11-era veterans as a group, and our society at large.

The U.S. Army, as the largest employer in the Nation according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), bears an enduring institutional obligation to its departing veterans to prepare them to re-integrate into society at the conclusion of their military service. The Army has committed significant resources to well-intentioned efforts to meet this responsibility. Unfortunately, a preponderance of empirical data and anecdotal evidence indicates that its current models and programs of transition assistance, Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and educational advisement, and job placement efforts are proving inadequate.

Additionally, an improved understanding and treatment of departing veterans' human capacity and willingness to take the necessary steps to make these major life changes must be obtained. Without the willingness and commitment from individual veterans to be successful in transition, even the best designed institutional program will fail.

The final party is civil-society at large. Both the Army and departing veterans must better understand the expectations and requirements of private-sector employers and human resource professionals to improve transition outcomes. In today's economy, uncertainty about pending legislation and regulations lead employers to be reluctant to hire full-time employees, and large numbers of non-veteran individuals with several years of private-sector work experience find themselves unemployed or underemployed. Understanding and effectively responding to these contemporary circumstances is critical to successfully assisting veterans to find gainful civilian employment.

This white paper summarizes the initial findings of my investigation, which consisted of numerous first hand discussions with currently transitioning veterans in an effort to understand their perspectives and "lived experience" (Van Manen, 1997), a thorough inquiry into scholarly

and practical literature, and extensive personal reflection upon my decade of professional practice helping veterans in transition.

An Indicator of Ineffectiveness

For the purposes of this paper, I primarily utilize unemployment levels as an indicator of the Army's effectiveness in preparing veterans to depart the institution. My inquiry revealed two findings – first, although the Army does not define a specific percentage as a goal, veterans' current unemployment rates can only be reasonably interpreted as a sign that transition efforts are not sufficiently effective; and second, this phenomenon appears to be more significant for this generation of veterans than any other.

As evidence, I offer the following facts and statistics. Military veterans represent one of the largest unemployed sectors of American society today. According to the 2012 U.S. Department of Labor "Employment Situation of Veterans Report," the overall unemployment rate for all Gulf War-II era veterans (Iraq and Afghanistan) was 9.9% compared to all other veterans of 7.0 % and the civilian population of 7.9%. This equates to over 205,000 unemployed veterans. (Note that the unemployment rate for non-Gulf War-II era veterans is actually *lower* than the general population, indicating that the struggle of this generation of veterans is unique.)

The sub-populations most affected are younger veterans aged 18 to 24, with a 20% unemployment rate compared to 25-34 year old veterans experiencing a 10.4% rate. Women veterans of this era also struggle more than their male counterparts with a 12.5% unemployment rate compared to 9.5% for males. Additionally, 28% of these Gulf War-II era veterans reported possessing service-related disabilities. That is double the 14% rate of veterans from all other

eras. The data further suggests that race and ethnicity are not significant factors when comparing Gulf War-II era veteran unemployment to non-veterans.

Interestingly, veterans' elevated unemployment rates exist despite a generally higher educational attainment level than their non-veteran peers. I found this statistic to be both compelling and puzzling; despite the combination of educational requirements for enlistment and major institutional expenditures on education by Federal tuition assistance programs, the secondary and post-secondary educational attainment of this veteran population does not appear to be strengthening employability as expected.

I offer these data as evidence that recent veterans are struggling to obtain post-service employment in the private sector and as the primary basis for my premise that their collective transition effort is not going well. If this is true, a better understanding of the challenge of transition is needed.

The Nature of the Challenge

Understanding the challenges of transitioning from soldier to civilian requires an appreciation of the full course of an individual's uniformed service, beginning with initial entry training. When young men and women volunteer to become members of the Armed Forces, they submit their personal and professional development to a human resource model that has three goals: transform their identity from individuals to members of a team, develop them into expert professional soldiers, and retain their services for as long as desirable. The Army accomplishes these goals by putting its members through shared experiences that gradually impart the specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities required to build professional competence, fostering institutional loyalty, and offering significant retention incentives (both financial and otherwise).

While this model has successfully built the world's greatest military, it has come at a cost. In striving to meet their professional obligations, soldiers (and their family members) tend to immerse themselves in the military culture and disassociate themselves, both geographically and in their self-identity, from civil society's experiences, expectations, and norms. Soldiers dedicate themselves to developing expertise and human capital in military skills – skills that often have marginal transferability to the contemporary civilian workplace. Paradoxically, the Army's world-class human resource development model of training and institutionalizing its members is a significant contributor to the profoundly unique and difficult psychological and employment challenges its veterans face when leaving the uniform. This model is extremely proficient and creates immense value to the uniformed service, but creates a liability in that departing veterans lack bona fide transferable value to other commercial institutions or private organizations at the time of transition. This posed a difficult realization to me: committing oneself to

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becoming an outstanding professional soldier results in becoming less valuable in the civilian work force. As a result of this realization I formed an alternative theory: military expertise is *not* directly transferable to civilian life without significant transition and re-socialization efforts. I then undertook a focused inquiry to further investigate the validity and implications of my hypothesis.

If my theory that the occupational skills of recent veterans have little transferable value to the contemporary work force is correct, then current transition efforts aimed at simply *translating* descriptions of soldiers' professional experiences and admirable personal attributes

into civilian equivalencies for prospective employers is fundamentally flawed and will fail with strategic-level consequences.

The Costs of Not Getting This Right

"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation."

George Washington

The stresses placed on service members and their families during the last decade of continuous war have been well documented. Despite the enormous challenges of multiple deployments and separation from loved ones, I submit that poor transition preparation may be a more significant threat to the long term well-being of these veterans, the effectiveness of the military institution itself, and the continued existence of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF).

Human Costs. The global war on terrorism is the first large-scale military engagement for which the United States has not recruited service members using a draft (MacLean & Elder, 2007). For soldiers and family members who voluntarily spend years deeply committed to serving their country sacrificially and with excellence, the uniform represents the lynchpin of their personal and professional identity. The process of leaving this behind can be gut-wrenching, and the inability to quickly find new employment amplifies the void of social respect, sense of purpose, and self-worth. The self-identity of veterans changes virtually overnight – one day they are a valued member of a prestigious institution, and the next they are an outsider. In past generations, organizations like the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the American Legion helped facilitate this shift, but for a number of reasons the veterans of this generation are not joining these groups and are finding themselves left to their own devices as they seek a new identity after military service.

A significant element of this process of re-identifying oneself is finding productive and fulfilling work. In many cases, the Army's transition assistance programs lead soldiers to expect this to occur quickly and easily, but when it does not, many veterans grow convinced that rewarding jobs are out of reach and become "discouraged workers," an appropriate term used by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. I have personally witnessed transitioning veterans experience this dissonance as a harsh reality and a spirit-crushing and detrimental blow to their overall re-socialization process into civilian life. These individuals joined many of their peers when they allowed this discouragement to combine with the enticement of unemployment insurance and service-related disability benefits to draw them down an "entitlement" pathway in lieu of self-sufficiency.* I believe we are witnessing this group's futility to gain gratifying employment result in a collective "learned helplessness" (Seligman, 1975) whose human costs will manifest themselves for years to come.

Economic Costs. These costs will include a staggering financial expense: Harvard Professor Linda Bilmes (2011) estimates that the arc of current disability claims and medical usage by Post-9/11 veterans "will cost the American taxpayer \$600 billion to \$1 trillion dollars over the next forty years."

In addition to these health-related expenses, the Department of Defense is required by statute to fund the unemployment insurance for its recent out of work veterans. A senior Pentagon official recently shared with me that the military services pay this expense for roughly 250,000 people at an approximate cost of 750 million dollars per year, with the Army bearing the

* While I fully support veterans using disability payments to supplement earning potential legitimately reduced due to injuries incurred during military service to the nation, I believe this dynamic partially explains the finding of the Department of Veterans Affairs that "Post-9/11 veterans are filing for disability benefits at a higher rate than any generation before" (GAO, 2012) - more and more veterans find it too tempting to accept this generous compensation as a replacement for earnings from contributive employment their injuries allow them to perform.

largest burden. While legitimate disability costs are unavoidable, unemployment is something that can be mitigated.

A third major economic cost to bear is that incurred by educating our veterans in transition. Despite a 42.2 million dollar social investment, current statistics indicate that the Post-9/11 GI Bill is not fulfilling its political and social promise to infuse our stagnant economy with 2.3 million productive veteran workers, entrepreneurs and small business creators.

The sum of these costs is unsustainable, and their impact is amplified given current reductions in military spending. Failing to address the causes and reduce the growth of these costs will result in the Army being forced to divert vital resources away from mission and personnel priorities, thus reducing both combat readiness and the ability to meet existing commitments of support to veterans.

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Social Costs. Although the Armed Forces has ranked at or near the top of our nation's most respected institutions in Gallup polls for the last several decades, I agree with a recent Syracuse University report stating that "while veterans are honored in American society today, this social distinction is neither a historical constant, nor is it assured for future generations" (Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2012). I see two ways in which the failure to adequately re-socialize our current veterans into productive civil life threatens to strain the civil-military relationship and erode the social bond crucial to a volunteer military.

First, in today's economic and political landscape where many families continue to struggle to make ends meet, a résumé of military service may no longer suffice for public support of substantial expenditures on veterans' entitlement. The current drawdown of combat

operations and overseas deployments makes this more likely to come to pass; the public is unlikely to continue to perceive military service as the hardship it was during the last decade of high operational tempo. As the economic costs of providing sustainment benefits to a growing number of non-contributing veterans continue to grow, a sense of resentment could easily replace the public's "sea of goodwill" (Mullen, 2008) and esteem toward soldiers as civil society begins to view them as a public-supported entitlement class. The tone of discussion about military service will degrade, and many talented young people will begin to view military service not as a social elevator or badge of honor, but as a setback in their ability to achieve their full professional potential. Further, these perceptions exist in the presence of a widening gap and lack of shared experiences between those who have served and those who have not – today only approximately 0.4% of citizens volunteer to serve their country in uniformed service. While the contemporary *"Thank you for your service"* sentiment by the majority of civil society is understandable during times of war and conflict, this sentiment may perish in peace, and with it the willingness to sustain enduring funding of the costs promised to this population years after their service.

Second, statistics demonstrate the extent to which our volunteer military has grown into a "family business." Young men and women who follow in the footsteps of a parent or relative to serve in uniform have greatly strengthened our professional military, yet they have also created a strategic vulnerability. Our nation's reliance on this "professional military elite class," (Jolly, 1996) consisting largely of multi-generational, service-oriented families is tenuous; in a family business, dysfunction within one generation greatly precludes the participation of the next. As impressionable young adults see their parents struggle after the

In a family business, dysfunction among one generation greatly precludes the participation of the next.

military, many may come to view military service as a hindrance to success in the civilian world and choose not to continue the family tradition.

I view maintaining civil-military cooperation as the greatest potential challenge to solving the transition problem. If this problem of transition festers for too long, I envision great friction caused by the cross-currents of a small professional military that does not understand civil society and a civil society that increasingly does not understand the uniqueness of military service. This dynamic would make substantive change difficult.

Given these factors, it is clear that our Nation cannot afford to create a *lost generation* whose post-service life status dissuades future generations from serving in our All Volunteer Force.*

An Emerging Premise

During the course of this inquiry, it became apparent that one very significant reason the Army struggles in this area is its problem-solving methodology. Soldiers possess an admirable ethos of taking ownership of problems; seizing the initiative in combat requires accepting calculated risks and employing the assets on hand to take prompt action in the midst of incomplete information. These first principles of military science serve well in kinetic operations, but tend to break down when applied to the exponentially more complex social problems of human beings, such as the overhaul of identity changes during transition. By adopting a more nuanced approach that incorporated constructs from several academic

* The societal and generation dynamics we face today can be understood better when examined through the lens of relevant social theory. I increasingly base my understanding and practice of mentoring military veterans on sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's work and theories regarding cultural capital and social reproduction theory (1993).

disciplines, it was illuminating to me to realize that solving this challenge will require drawing solutions from the social and human science realm, not from conventional military institutional management.

As a result of my qualitative investigation, I offer four major factors that I believe are actively limiting the success of the Army's sincere and well-resourced efforts to prepare this generation of military veterans to transition. I find these factors to be:

- 1) The Army's limited and ineffective application of relevant empirical knowledge about adults' major life changes to its transition assistance process;
- 2) A lack of knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of the contemporary private-sector workforce environment;
- 3) The psychological-social unpreparedness of departing service members to make this major life transition; and,
- 4) Powerful institutional biases relative to transition issues.

There may well be other factors involved in this transition that I have not stated here. Also, the interconnected nature of these four factors caused great difficulty in differentiating them – a complexity that was to be expected while examining a human and social phenomenon. My hope is that the process of organizing them with some level of separateness will facilitate further analysis.

Factors Affecting Transition Success

“The military is a tightly bound environment wholly detached from civilian life.”

Dr. Charles C. Moskos

Factor 1 ***Limited and Ineffective Application of Relevant Empirical Knowledge***

In a search for actionable knowledge I could apply to my work of mentoring veterans at the critical time of their institutional departure, I quickly confirmed British public policy scholar Paul Higate’s (2001) assessment that “there is a paucity of literature exploring the possible long-term influence of military service” upon its members. Upon this discovery, I broadened the scope of my informal literature review to include the non-military science disciplines of sociology, psychology and economics. It became clear that although limited research has been conducted specifically analyzing the transition efforts of veterans, an abundance of scholarly work has been compiled that identifies the most effective processes and practices for assisting adults through major life changes. Of particular value were insights from the fields of human capital, adult development and social research. Having gained a new intellectual and practical perspective on the complex structures and processes of human and occupational transition, I re-examined the military institutional approach and found little evidence of a sound empirical basis reflected in its current programs. I offer the following findings from existing knowledge sources to re-frame contemporary practices:

An abundance of scholarly work has been compiled that identifies the most effective processes and practices for assisting adults through major life changes.

- **Finding: Human Capital is Sector-Specific**

Providing departing military veterans with an accurate and candid evaluation of their professional competencies' true economic value is essential to their transition to the civilian workforce. However, my work finds that this task is inadequately performed today, contributing to poor re-employment outcomes. The Army continues to operate under the belief that “a great soldier will be a great worker” upon returning to civil society, resulting in the institution continuing to address this process as one of *translation* and striving to communicate military skills in civilian terms, when it is in fact a matter of major human capital and social *transition*. It makes great sense to me to examine our departing veterans from a “human capital” (Becker, 1964) perspective in order to evaluate their “individual stock of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAO) that can be leveraged for organizational benefit” (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011).

Perhaps the most compelling finding from contemporary human capital literature is the extent to which a soldier's KSAO rely on the very unique and specific *context* of the military institution. Military “tacit knowledge (Gourly, 2002), workflow structures, contextual influences and unit behavioral processes” differ greatly from a civilian small business or corporation (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011). The significance of this finding can hardly be overstated – it suggests that soldiers' professional capabilities are of little value to other organizations without re-training and development. Consequently, coordinated efforts by transitioning soldiers and their advisors to translate military skill and experience into civilian résumés, despite tireless and creative effort, is an invalid method of persuading private sector employers to hire veterans.

*Perhaps the most compelling finding from contemporary human capital literature is the extent to which a soldier's capabilities rely on the very unique and specific context of the military institution. The significance of this finding can hardly be overstated – it suggests that **a soldier's professional capabilities are of little value to other organizations without re-training and development.***

Simply stated, what a soldier did in the Army is not a basis for what they can do in the civilian world because the differences in organizational context overwhelm the similarities in vocational tasks. This corroborates Mann's (2012) finding that "the civilian sector places a high premium on civilian sector experience over military experience" and calls for a more appropriate method to value a veteran's ability to meet civilian employment needs. I offer Figure 1 to illustrate some comparative differences between the military and civilian sector human capital constructs.



Note. Adapted from Mann, David R. (2012). Understanding Military Participation Over the Life Cycle.

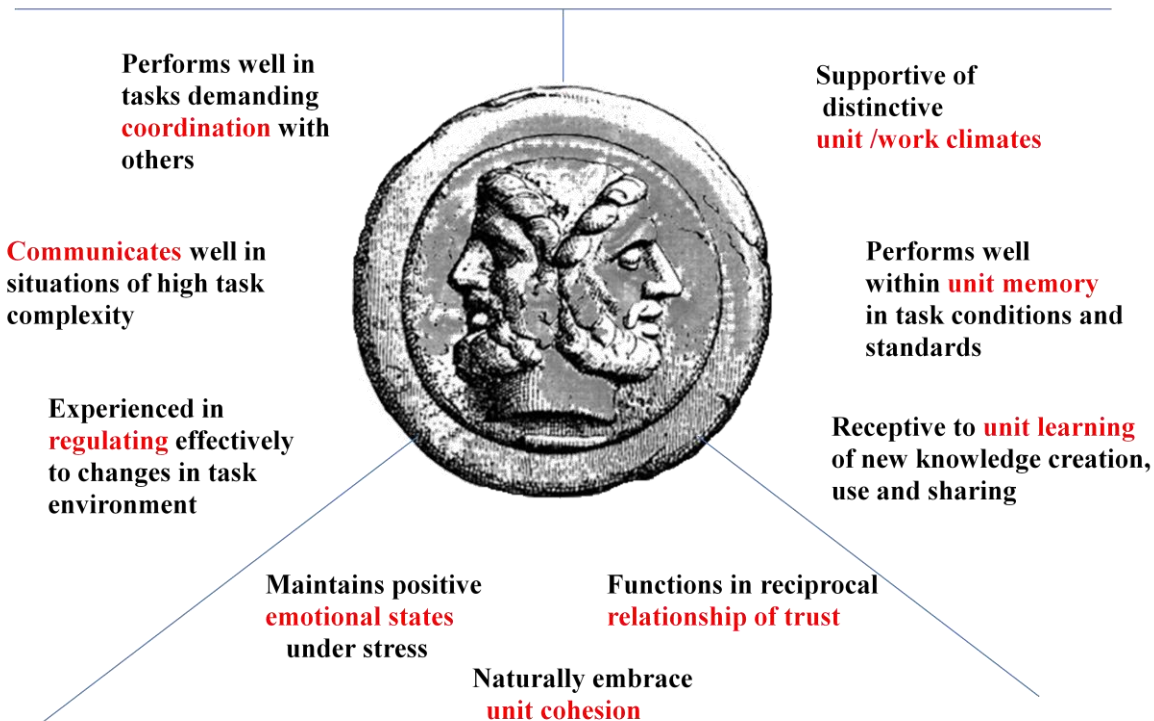
Figure 1. Human Capital is Sector-Specific

- **Finding: Method of Assessing Veterans' Competitiveness for Employment is Flawed**

Mann (2012) accurately observes that ‘human capital valuation in the military departs dramatically from valuation in the civilian sector.’ While the Army’s human capital valuation process has enabled the building and sustainment of the best professional land power force in history, my assessment is that the institution is inappropriately applying this model in determining veterans’ value and ability to compete successfully for employment in the civilian work force.

While an assumption of a one-to-one overlay of military skill to civilian value is clearly incomplete, soldiers obviously gain some level of benefit from the personal growth and development they experience while serving. Applying Mann’s model of human capital valuation may be helpful, as it more rigorously evaluates the transitory and nuanced nature of five factors of human capital: individual skill endowment; educational attainment; civilian work experience; market-specific human capital rental rate; and skill shock. Figure 2 offers a conceptual model of some potential “crossover” competencies from military to civilian sector workplaces.

Military Experience Brings Desired Human Capital Assets (KSAO) to the Civilian Workforce



Note: Adapted from Ployhart & Moliterno. (2011). Emergence of the Human Capital Resource: A Multilevel Model.

Figure 2. Potential “Crossover” Competencies

The one area of human capital development with the most potential for “crossover” value is higher education. Research indicates that private sector employers are willing to overlook a shortage of directly applicable, sector-specific work experience in favor of a relevant, high-quality educational background from an institution of higher learning respected for its academic rigor. This pathway offers soldiers what may be their best opportunity to close the gap in qualifications between themselves and their civilian peers, but it requires a commitment to successfully completing a demanding program of study.

Along with what a soldier is *capable* of doing in productive civilian occupation, another important aspect of the human capital valuation construct is what jobs a soldier is *willing* to

perform (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011). I offer Figure 3 below to highlight how the elements of human capital interplay with the *can do* and *will do* aspects of individual work force transition.

Using A Human Capital Perspective to Develop Civilian Employment Pathways for Veterans

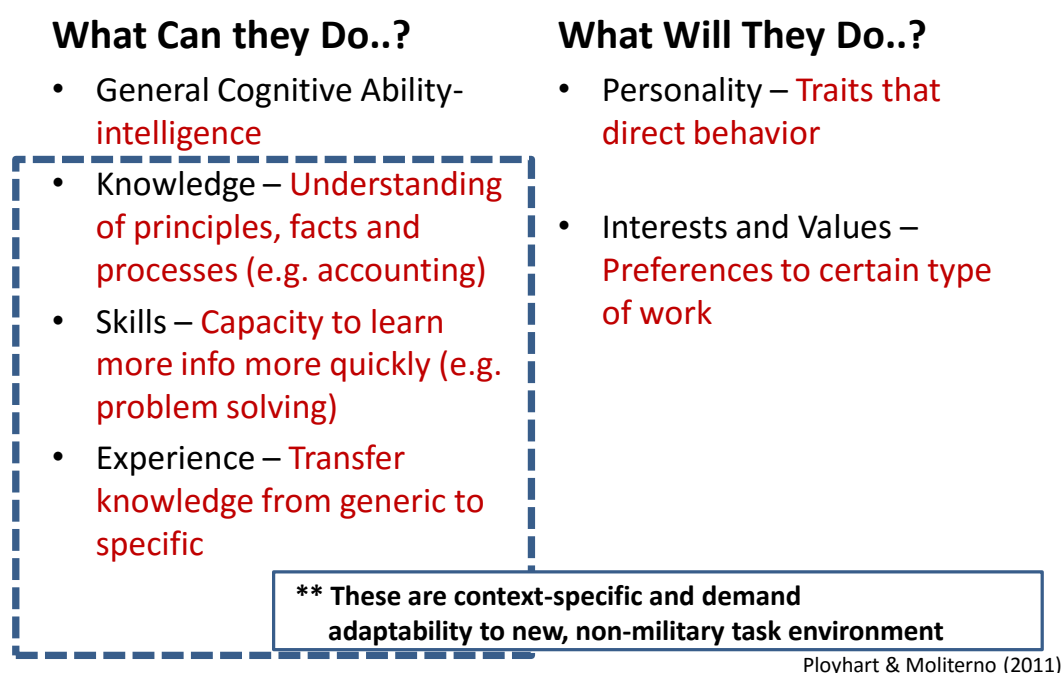


Figure 3. The “Can Do / Will Do” Construct of Human Capital

Observations during my practice in advising recent veterans generally reflect the findings of Jolly’s 1996 quantitative case study research of 62 transitioning veterans from the British military. She identifies three dynamics regarding the “narrowness of the range of occupations which leavers enter considering the range they come from and the range they could choose from.”

First, she found that 70% of “leavers” aim to take a small step into the civilian work world by seeking employment with “military-like institutions” such as railroads and corrections, instead of small businesses or other organizations that differ greatly from military institutions.

She attributes this to the lingering effects of being comfortable in large institutional settings, as well as being conditioned to operate comfortably within a masculine-gender ideological culture. These findings are consistent with the preferences and goals expressed to me by recent veterans that I have helped transition.

Secondly, Jolly found a “narrowness of desire in choice of occupation” among 40% of the “leavers” she studied who preferred to perform the same vocation in civilian life as they performed in the military. She found this odd as many of the veterans in her study indicated that they had little to no input into their military specialty upon entering the service. This may be another indicator of the pervasive strength of their desire to not deviate their lives too far beyond the military culture with which they are comfortable.

Finally, Jolly found veterans tending to restrict their search for employment to positions with similar compensation levels as they received in the military – without accurately estimating civilian employment realities. My work assisting departing junior soldiers, NCOs and officers alike validates that most veterans hold unrealistic expectations as to what their economic value is to prospective civilian employers; they subscribe to the flawed valuation model of applying their value to the Army as a benchmark of their worth to civilian employers. 100% of the 22 people I recently assisted expected to earn as much or more in the civilian workforce as they did while in the military. Clearly, we need to instill in departing veterans’ more realistic expectations of their economic value if they are to compete effectively for jobs.

Towards this effort I offer several characteristics frequently desired by the civilian workforce below as Figure 4. I believe that these characteristics may provide a more relevant framework for determining a veteran’s economic value than other models being used today by military transition programs.

Demonstrating Desirable Characteristics

Military veteran job applicants need to convey *contemporary* desired workforce traits of...



- Extraversion – Seeks new experiences
- Conscientious – Persists towards goals
- Openness – Tolerant of new ways/ideas
- Adaptability – Able to change behavior to meet new demands
- Tolerance to ambiguity – Recognizes contradictions
- Intrinsic Career Motivation – Self-starter
- Resilience – Letting go of obsolete
- Risk Tolerance – Takes calculated risks

Note. Referenced from Crant (2000); Thompson (2005); Parker (2008)

Figure 4. Contemporary Desired Workforce Traits

- **Finding: Reentering Civilian Employment Requires Paying a Reentry Cost**

To overcome the challenges posed by a shortage of sector-specific human capital, transitioning veterans must be prepared for and willing to face the reality that “if a man has not worked in the civilian sector, he must pay an entry/reentry cost” to the civilian workforce (Mann, 2012). Civilian employers tend to hire and promote on proven performance in relevant tasks, not on potential. Soldiers may generally have a well-deserved reputation as loyal, hard-working, and reliable, but the hard truth is that to a private-

Soldiers may generally have a well-deserved reputation as loyal, hard-working, and reliable, but the hard truth is that to a private-sector employer their lack of directly relevant experience essentially categorizes them as entry-level employees.

sector employer, their lack of *directly relevant* experience essentially categorizes them as unskilled, entry-level employees. Mann explains that “as the man works over time, he accumulates sector-specific human capital that influences future wage offers, and can also accumulate human capital by acquiring education” (2012). After gaining human capital relevant to the specific assigned tasks, veterans’ other positive attributes, better categorized as “psychological capital” (Luthans, 2006), may increase their value to an employer. Properly assessing and communicating the unique strengths of psychological capital to a prospective employer may help bridge the inherent or perceived disadvantage that the veteran worker possesses. In doing so, this may augment the veteran’s real value to his future employer.

Unfortunately, the reality of the significant entry or re-entry costs of transition into productive civilian life is not adequately understood, communicated, or resourced within the Army’s current environmental condition. From both a scientific and practitioner perspective, I believe that underestimating and underemphasizing this truth may be the most damaging shortfall in the military institution’s current transition assistance model.

In Their Own Words...

“What I have found is that many soldiers getting out of the Army expect that they will find a job that provides the same benefits as the Army solely because they are veterans and they do absolutely nothing to make themselves marketable in the private sector. Guess what, you are not the only person out there that is a veteran looking for a job. I compete with veterans that fought in the Vietnam War. You will not find a job just because you are a veteran. You need to do some work to find a job and don't expect to get the same benefits and pay as you did in the Army. You have been very well compensated in the Army, you will not find the same level of benefits in the private sector so quit holding out for a job that does.”

*U.S. Army Veteran, Vietnam era, Blog entry,
Stars & Stripes.Com (June 23rd, 2013)*

Factor 2
A Lack of Accommodation to Contemporary Private-Sector Dynamics

One result of the 1973 transition from a conscript to an all-volunteer military has been a widening gap between the experiences and perspectives of the members of the Armed Forces and the society they defend. The nature and challenges of private-sector employment are vastly different from those of military service, and when soldiers and their family members can live, work, learn, worship, and play almost exclusively on their assigned military installation for an entire career of twenty to thirty years, the institution's lack of knowledge of the environment it is attempting to prepare veterans to enter is understandable. As a result, the institution's transition programs are staffed inappropriately, consist of a flawed curriculum, and include ineffective outreach mechanisms. Correcting these deficiencies must begin with a better understanding of current economic conditions.

- **Finding: Opportunities in Allied Career Fields Have Diminished**

The curtailment of wartime missions and drastic reductions in defense budgets have greatly reduced the availability of "allied (military) career fields" (Jolly, 1996) as a source of post-uniform employment. Historically, defense contractors, Department of Defense civilian employment, and defense-related industry employers have absorbed a large percentage of transitioning veterans (this circumstance had the added benefit of minimizing the Army's burden for entry cost re-training as the human capital value of uniformed service members was, in large part, directly transferable to their new positions). The reduction of these opportunities has resulted in more veterans than ever requiring sophisticated, relevant transition assistance that meets their need to "convert soldiering into a dissimilar civilian profession (Levy, 2007)" in the Post 9/11 knowledge-enabled economy.

- **Finding: Damaging Myths Continue to Be Perpetuated**

A powerful contributor to veterans' transition difficulties is the Army's perpetuation of outdated historical assumptions. Examining contemporary sociological literature reveals that veterans hold several false expectations regarding transition, many of which are advocated by Army transition assistance programs. I have come to realize that many of these inaccuracies originate in the recruitment and retention narratives that are socialized into service members during active service. While these beliefs effectively encourage military enlistment and retention, they become dysfunctional and damaging to the institution when they prove invalid at the time of transition. While I attribute some of these myths to hegemonic motives, others are simply antiquated concepts in which the military institution, being farther apart from society than perhaps ever in history, continues to place its faith. The myths that I find most counterproductive to the contemporary process of transition are the following:

Examining contemporary sociological literature reveals that veterans hold several false expectations regarding transition, many of which are perpetuated by Army transition assistance programs.

- Veterans will quickly and easily secure civilian work within the same/similar field, and at similar levels of compensation as their military occupational specialty (MOS)
- The key to obtaining civilian employment is translating military skills into civilian language on a résumé
- Being drug-free and having security clearance are highly valuable attributes to civilian employers
- Post-secondary education acquired during military service is of equal value to that possessed by traditional workers
- Employers have a social obligation to hire veterans, making veterans' job fairs very lucrative
- Veterans are uniquely suited for entrepreneurial training and business ventures and should start their own businesses enabled by government backed loans
- Government or non-profit based incentivized veterans' hiring programs are effective corporate human resource vehicles

Contrary to these enduring myths, an examination of those Gulf War-II era veterans who are currently employed suggests a different narrative ought to exist. Most notable is the fact that 71.2% of these individuals work in the knowledge-enabled sectors of “management, professional service and sales” (BLS, 2013), and not in the skills similar to military occupational specialties as propounded. Additionally, despite national-level efforts encouraging large corporations to hire veterans and programs, projections indicate that the largest employment opportunity for veterans will not be corporations, but currently existing small businesses.

Two other observations are relevant. This generation of veterans is three times *less likely* to be self-employed than their non-veteran peers, despite national-level programs assisting and incentivizing them to start their own businesses. This puts to debate the efficacy of promoting an entrepreneurial pathway to our departing veterans. Also noteworthy, my analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data from 2012 illuminates that while veterans are twice as likely to find employment in the public sector as their non-veteran peers, these opportunities are rapidly decreasing in the current fiscal environment. These facts as well as others clearly indicate that false myths about employability exist and frustrate both the process and the people involved.

- **Finding: Use of Under-qualified Counselors and Lack of Transition Mentors**

The Army’s limited understanding of the implications of the complexity of adult life transitions extends to the counselors responsible for offering departing veterans actionable information regarding the realities of life and work transition. Unfortunately and almost without exception, the transition counselors with whom I have interacted in the past seven years are ill-equipped to do so, lacking employment experience in today’s knowledge-driven, “volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous” (VUCA) private sector. As such, they cannot effectively prepare veterans for gainful employment in a civil workforce where “protean, boundary-less, and

portfolio” careers are becoming the norm (Schafer & Zalewski, 2011) or the “new contract” described by Arthur & Rousseau (1996). My inquiry and anecdotal evidence indicates that the Army staffs the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) and other transition assistance programs under the assumption that previous military training adequately meets these skill and experience requirements. Counselors tend to be either former military personnel who transitioned into this “allied” military workforce immediately upon completing uniformed service or the spouses of service members. Programs and counselors lacking contemporary experience and knowledge demanded by the civilian work force cannot offer the proper role-dependent mentorship veterans need to succeed in this struggle. Transitioning veterans need well-qualified counselors with first-hand practical experience in moving beyond military service and wisdom in navigating the process of reshaping one’s identity from service member to private citizen. Without them, each of our departing veterans is left to face the challenge of securing and holding employment in the competitive, profit-oriented private sector virtually alone. To this eventuality I agree that “where an individual is finding his own way without mentors, re-socialization will be hard.” (Middleton, 1977).

To this day, I have never heard anyone validate ACAP as useful or effective in their struggle to re-socialize and find civil work, including the six recent veterans I am currently coaching, as well as myself when I retired in 2006. To be fair, everything discovered by this inquiry to date indicates that the entire transition effort may be too under-resourced to ever be as effective as desired. I offer my life cycle model as Figure 5 to portray the limited effort applied towards transition out of the military compared to the process of integration.

Life Course Model of Post 9-11 Military Veteran

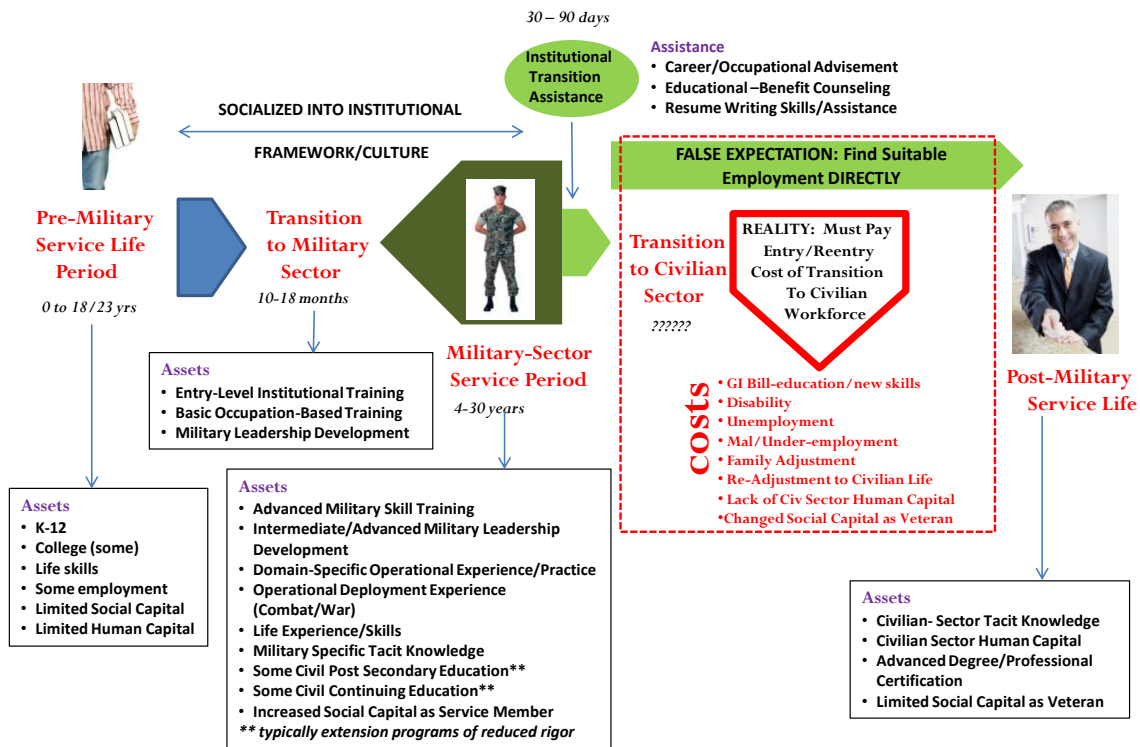


Figure 5. Life Cycle Model of Post 9/11 Military Veteran

Factor 3 ***Soldiers' Psychological-Sociological Unpreparedness to Transition***

At this point, my focus shifts from the Army as an institution to the departing veterans themselves. The psychological and social impacts on adults going through major life changes are complex, significant, and unique to each individual. While the Army bears responsibility for assisting its veterans, success also requires an individual to understand and fully commit to changing deeply ingrained attitudes and behaviors, as well as to draw on a resiliency to endure through inevitable setbacks.

In Their Own Words...

"Whenever I hear a former soldier whine and complain that they can't find a job, I just would like to slap them. First of all, it takes about 6 to 8 months for people in the private sector to find a job. Second, of all, I see the majority of soldiers not taking advantage of the hundreds of thousands of dollars of free help that is available to them."

*Anonymous Civilian Blogger,
Stars & Stripes.Com (June 23rd, 2013)*

- **Finding: Magnitude of Change During Transition is Unappreciated**

"Seldom does a life-change occur which is so radical as to propel an individual towards a conscious reshaping of his or her self-image – military transition is a radical life-changing transition" (Jolly, 1996). I believe that contemporary U.S. Army programs over-simplistically address this complex life transition, focusing almost exclusively on the single facet of employment change. The institution fails to appreciate that to the departing veteran this transition is as profoundly intense and transforming at the psychological and social level as what they experienced upon transition from civilian to professional soldier. Scholarly consensus exists to suggest that the human resource development process used by the military to nurture professional soldiers causes

To the departing veteran this transition is as profoundly intense and transforming at the psychological and social level as what they experienced upon transition from civilian to professional soldier.

intense personal identity transformation, changes to self-worth valuation and new ethical orientations towards institutional values.

If this is so, it bears to reason that the institution's effort to promote a departing veteran's transition back to civil society must address these psychological and social factors as well. It is necessary to help departing veterans recognize and process the extent to which they have internalized the military ethos, and to equip them with the tools to reshape their identity. It is not a matter of "undoing" the process of institutionalization, but of reframing their perspective regarding the many positive aspects of military service to fit in the new context of civilian life and work. An in-depth analysis of this material is beyond the scope of this paper; however, it is helpful to introduce several relevant concepts addressing the complex issue of adults' identity and self worth.

- **Finding: Lack of Personal Readiness to Accept a Post-Military Identity**

Several compelling findings from Higate's seminal work *Theorizing Continuity: From Military to Civilian* (2001) were helpful to me in understanding the tendency of current veterans to be psychologically and socially unprepared to adopt and accept post-military identities.

Foremost is that for some, forming new post-military identities can be extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible. Upon entry to the military, "service members undergo a transformative socialization process that forms new and 'tenacious' identities that have long-term influence after military service that hinder or prevent the creation of post-military identities" (Higate, 2001). In fact, some researchers believe that many veterans possess little to no capacity to re-socialize into civilian identities after a period of military service, regardless of the duration or intensity of service (wartime or peacetime). This is compelling in that it suggests

we do not have a psychometric evaluation method to truly determine the individual's psychological aptitude for making such a second major change as an adult.

Anecdotal evidence from my work with assisting veterans in transition suggests that the retention of "*soldier*" as the predominant aspect of oneself becomes a major barrier to accepting and adopting new competencies and roles demanded of civilian life. With time and deliberate effort, coupled with mentorship from those who have made successful adaptations, transitioning soldiers can appropriately determine where their "soldieriness" fits into an expanded self-image of themselves as civilians. I believe that a successful and mature transition is marked by retaining selected aspects of the soldier identity as a facet of a larger self, but not the central element. This suggests the need for the institution to respect and encourage the genuine and useful process of becoming something *other* than a soldier. Veterans in transition often are found retaining the current ethos that one self-identifies primarily to the professional soldier archetype, even when this is counter-productive to their transition process and long-term well-being.

Another dimension of readiness to transition relates to timing. Military transition typically occurs during the period that Daniel Levinson in his seminal work on adult development psychology describes as the "most dramatic era of a man's life – the years between ages 22 and 40" (1978). The fact that the preponderance of soldiers making this difficult transition are doing so during a dramatic season of their life appears to exacerbate this challenge. All of this suggests that a general lack of psychological readiness exists among departing veterans to take on such a life altering change. I find little institutional effort taken to recognize and mediate this aspect of transition.

- **Finding: Lack of Social Readiness to Transition to Civilian Life**

Implicit in career change is the demand to become re-socialized into the civilian world. For most, this new civilian world is dramatically less defined, structured, and institutionally-mediated than military life. This poses a formidable challenge to soldiers in transition, especially when they lack knowledge, experience, and skills needed to make life choices independent of the professional institution's assistance. Research on military veterans indicates that the tacit skills needed in civilian life tend to be under-developed in soldiers (and their family members) as a result of their being institutionalized into the military "sociocultural world" (Levinson, 1978). Additionally, the transformative process of being socialized into the military culture has been found to "embed service members into an unspoken reliance on a unique military social structure that creates a high degree of dependence on the institution (and interdependence upon senior service members) that causes under-development of tacit skills needed (later) in civilian life" (Higate, 2001). The breadth of major, independent life decisions needed to be made by soldiers in transition is daunting when they have never before had to make them for themselves. Military "change of station" in-processing and unit sponsorship routinely help shape these decisions for the soldier to a degree that they do not learn how to do so when alone – as when transitioning to civilian life.

Not only do soldiers often lack the skills to make independent life choices, they lack experience doing so in alternative cultural worlds. Probably no factor is more profound and unfamiliar than that of the more diverse roles of women in the private sector. Service members live and work within a professional culture dominated by men and a professional culture of a "hegemonic military-masculine gender ideology and a rugged warrior ideal" (Higate, 2001). Forming professional and interpersonal characteristics in a male-centric institution tends to

limit soldiers' adaptability to alternative work and social environments. Today, the world of civilian employment is increasingly diverse by gender, age, and many other factors that are in many cases dissimilar to that of the military. A recent Kronos (2013) report indicates that women make up roughly half of private-sector workers. My work assisting recent veterans with job applications and interviews validates their unfamiliarity with being interviewed by women, finding use of chivalry-based expressions and courtesies a liability and a general awkwardness to communicate and perform in an alternative social setting than that of military. Interestingly, all of the military career counselors with whom I have interacted were male.

In Their Own Words...

"We often need some support navigating the tricky transition to civilian life. That doesn't make us broken. It doesn't make us weak. It simply makes us human."

*Jeff Hensley, Navy Veteran
Blog entry Stars & Stripes.Com (June 23rd, 2013)*

Factor 4 Powerful Institutional Biases Regarding Leaving

The final factor that I offer is the presence and pervasiveness of current institutional biases that negatively influence the human and organizational aspects of transition. In particular, I find three areas of the service culture that interfere with effective transition: (1) the psychological significance of leaving the team; (2) attitudes towards civil education; and (3) the perceived level of social debt owed to this population of departing veterans. I believe these elements combine to weaken the emotional foundation upon which departing veterans rely as they undergo transition's complex human process and changes.

Bias 1: The Professional Culture of Leaving the Team. For many valid reasons, contemporary military service culture honors the *joiners* and *stayers* and is at best lukewarm to

the *leavers*. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most successful Army retirees prefer to not participate in a retirement or departure ceremony and wish to simply fade away as a result of the socialized value placed on retention. Jolly (1996) noted that from a sociological perspective, formal military ceremonies that celebrate enlistment, graduation of basic and advanced training, and joining a unit resemble birth-related rituals. Conversely, departure events such as farewells and retirement ceremonies are practiced in similar fashion to death where people come to pay their respects and listen to career accomplishments as eulogy – before wishing them the best in their new and “lesser significant” life.

Anyone serving in the Army in the past two decades is aware of soldiers’ reticence to publicly announce a decision to voluntarily depart the team to pursue other life ambitions. They worry that in doing so they may be reassigned to less desirable work, receive lower performance evaluations to save room for the *stayers*, and receive downgraded departure awards as a result of violating the unwritten code of retention. Whether this phenomenon is perception or reality is inconsequential – its mere appearance indicates a stigma exists for those who leave. This powerful bias of placing premium value upon *retention-only* has become so powerful it is currently inhibiting our soldiers from embracing and thriving in the transformative process needed to transition back to civilian life and work.

Bias 2: Professional Attitudes Toward Civil Education. As a result of spending the last 8 years in higher education administration for military students, I have come to perceive another professional service bias regarding education that inhibits the current transition effort. While I believe that the Army does support the pursuit of civil education for its soldiers, perhaps the motives and methods in doing so have grown obsolete. Offering soldiers opportunities to pursue civil education in exchange for recruitment and retention benefits is at cross purposes with a goal

of developing their long-term human capital – especially in time of transition. Programs like USAREC’s ConAP, Federal Tuition Assistance for Voluntary Education and even our new Post-9/11 GI Bill are designed to trade education’s human capital value for soldiers’ continued military service, and do so with limited effectiveness at preparing the soldier for post-service success. The institution tends to treat post-secondary civil education as a mass-market commodity where the motivation for obtaining credit hours is to accumulate promotion points, not to experience intellectual growth and obtain the critical thinking skills so highly valued by private-sector employers. Today, we are missing an opportunity to meet the institution’s near-term needs for well-educated professional soldiers while preparing those soldiers for their eventual departure from service. A new paradigm is needed that accommodates a “learn to earn” aspect in addition to our current “learn to retain” approach if we expect to obtain the proper return on our investment in advanced civil education. This is especially critical given that as a result of our economic and workforce conditions, military-sector human capital possesses less transferable value than ever before. I believe that by doing so, the Army will better prepare its soldiers for post-service education as offered by the GI Bill.

Another aspect of a professional bias I witness today is an over-reliance upon the efficacy of the Post-9/11 GI Bill to be a primary mechanism of transition for this displacing soldier population. I believe firmly that the Post-9/11 GI Bill can and will transform the lives of soldiers that are ready and motivated to use it. I have witnessed this first hand in significant numbers in my current professional work. However, too few soldiers are capable or willing to use this vital tool as evidenced by a rapidly growing trend to transfer this benefit to a family member or simply not use it at all.

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 was enacted to help recent veterans transition to civilian life much as the Post-World War II GI Bill did 60 years ago. While the Post-9/11 GI Bill is the most valuable entitlement of its kind ever offered, veterans' collective readiness and incentive to use it is lower than anticipated. The practice of employing higher education institutions to re-socialize and prepare veterans for civil employment and life is as sound today as it was in the past. As a historic precedent, after World War II higher education was a highly successful method to re-integrate veterans. At one point it was estimated that 51% of all college students in America were veterans. However, we must face the reality that the human capital, economic and social conditions present in the late-1940's vary greatly from those present today. The Post-WWII production economy was in great need of these newly educated workers offering great incentive for veterans to seek formal post-secondary education. Simultaneously, the rapid expansion of the middle-class offered social mobility to these veterans. But perhaps the most significant difference from today is that the military force in World War II was formed by compulsory service from members of both the dominant class as well as from the working class. As such, the WWII military workforce consisted of the majority of college-bound or college-enrolled male students in its ranks. Thus, their general readiness for the rigors of academic work after military service was very high. None of these three enabling conditions exists today. Figure 6 below illustrates some generational differences that are currently affecting transition.



The Post-9/11 GI Bill will not have the same social impact as Post WWII GI Bill



Figure 6. Generational Differences

New recruits consistently state that their motive for joining the military is to obtain funding for college, and many veterans of this era follow through on this goal by choosing to enroll in college through the pathway of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. However, while service members appear to have a latent interest in attending college, many expend little appreciable effort to prepare themselves to do so. The majority of college-bound students today take non-required college courses in high school, yet 82.6% of the 64,019 U.S. Army recruits in 2011 had never taken a college course in high school (USAREC End of Year Talking Points, 2011).

Further, while the total number of enrollees utilizing this educational benefits program has grown from 270,666 enrollees in its first program year of 2009-2010 to over 646,000 enrollees today, (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2011, 2013), “spouses and children of service

members made up almost one-fourth of Post-9/11 GI Bill users last year, and their numbers appear to be growing.” (Altman, 2013). Nearly 73% of these family member enrollees are college-aged children of more senior service members. Thus, enrollment trends indicate that this opportunity is being underutilized by our current population of departing veterans at alarming rates. This means that the Post-9/11 GI Bill will not enable transition as we experienced after World War II, and the task of transitioning the majority of these veterans will remain the responsibility of the military institutions from which they depart, the Department of Veteran Affairs, and society at large.

Bias 3: Inflated Presumption of Social Debt. The third area of service bias that I find negatively impacting transition is the perceived level of debt that society owes our departing veterans. As a result of a heightened sense of this social debt, the military services (and government administrations) and their advocacy groups are attempting to convince large corporate employers to hire veterans based primarily on their sacrifices made in uniform. This is manifesting itself in the expectations of the individual veteran in transition who believes he is entitled to a job simply upon the basis of his military service. I find this to be an unrealistic strategy that employment statistics are proving to be ineffectual, for it is as equally unfair to ask a civilian employer to hire an unqualified or non-competitive veteran as it is to expect the Army to recruit one – both institutions must steward their organization through sound hiring practices. The Army must make their veterans more valuable instead of expecting benevolence from civilian employers.

It is as equally unfair to ask a civilian employer to hire an unqualified or non-competitive veteran as it is to expect the Army to recruit one.

The historic roots of our social debt to provide employment for war veterans go back to the Revolutionary War and are predicated primarily upon the two conditions of service-related

disability and conscription. In both conditions, the employability of the veteran had been degraded by *forced* military service; thus, a great debt was owed. Today, it is questionable to claim that society owes the same debt to veterans who volunteered for service and were highly compensated relative to their civilian peers as it owed to previous generations of conscripted veterans. To assume so is dangerous to our current military-civil construct, given the stress faced by many Americans struggling in our stagnant economy. Effectively developing and documenting the economic value of our transitioning soldiers will prove much more effective than relying on the benevolence of large corporate employers.

The military often misinterprets the public's respect and gratitude toward soldiers, wrongly assuming that employers will hire veterans based solely on this appreciation. Levy (2007) states that the "convertibility of symbolic rewards for military service into the civilian sphere are contextually dependent and mostly for social capital only." Mann's (2012) work in understanding military life cycle participation reveals that "the large non-pecuniary rewards for military service, or "patriotism effect" (Kleykamp, 2006) has little to no impact on valuation of civilian human capital." The critical lesson is that employers, especially small business owners, cannot afford to take the risk of hiring out of benevolence – they must make decisions based on what is best and most profitable for the company, and in the hiring realm, that often requires selecting the applicant with proven performance in the field. Today's reality is that a hiring decision is nearly exclusively an economic, not social one. My observation is that many of those working to facilitate veteran employment do not understand this.

Government-supported and non-profit benevolent "hire a hero" type programs and tax incentives demonstrate this misunderstanding by continuing to overreach upon the noble but infeasible premise that the social capital gained by military service, especially during a time of

war, is redeemable for economic gain. While I see great value in the resultant advocacy that these benevolent programs generate, my personal inquiry has shown that these programs are ineffective in producing positive transition outcomes such as gainful employment. Again, I witness an over-reliance by the federal government, military, and many other leaders on this benevolent pathway to create positive transitioning outcomes for our veterans.

Practically, I endorse the idea of a moral imperative to fulfill a social obligation to help re-integrate these 2.3 million citizens into productive civilian life, but an offer of employment appears to be beyond a reasonable expectation of debt. Simply stated, the most compelling method for our veterans to become valuable workers and productive citizens is to provide them the skill sets demanded by employers – nothing less will succeed.

Conclusion

Solving the complex challenges associated with transitioning veterans to civilian life will not be accomplished by creating new programs that only address the symptoms reflective of a deeply ingrained institutional culture. I expect it will be enormously difficult for the Army to objectively reflect on how its assumptions, human resource model, and traditions contribute to these challenges, and even more difficult to embrace the actions necessary to produce enduring and positive change. However, we as a nation owe our veterans no less. We must train and equip them to retain the admirable lessons, character, and values gained from military service while they grow comfortable with identifying themselves as a *veteran* (one who served in the past) and viewing themselves today as something more than a soldier in a new environment.

“The military is a way of life that for most people ends well before they are contemplating retirement.” (Jolly,1996). If this is true, the military institution can no longer afford the economic and social costs resulting from sub-optimizing its members’ human capital

value for its own workforce needs at the ultimate expense of soldiers' transferable value and ability to reenter civil society upon termination of service. Ultimately, a new "life cycle" human resource management model is needed that incorporates the time, resources and programs needed to build world-class military professionals with the alternative skills and agility demanded to successful transition into civil society and workforce after a period of military service. This will not come overnight or by a major strategic initiative. I believe the Army possesses the institutional strength and leadership to make this paradigm shift, but it should only do so if willing to embrace relevant information where the true expertise on human and civilian work transition knowledge exists. Until then, I will continue to apply the insights I've gained while developing this paper in an effort to assist my veteran brothers and sisters navigate their own transition process.

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