

VETERAN TRANSITION TO THE WORKPLACE

by

Jameson Gordon

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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March 24, 2023

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## ABSTRACT

Military veterans' skillsets and experience are multi-faceted, giving veterans the capability of adaptation, leadership, and decision-making as a general foundation on which they have built many other focused skills (Albertson, 2019; Carpenter & Silberman, 2020; Davis & Minnis, 2017). The use of a directed training intervention to educate and enlighten hiring teams within the human resources field is essential to changing perspectives and giving decision-makers the tools necessary to properly screen candidates for hire. This qualitative study's purpose was to do just that. The overall purpose was to decrease transitioning veteran unemployment rates by educating Human Resource Departments (HRDs) and Talent Acquisition (TA) teams on veteran skillsets, bridging the gap and lack of understanding and translation of veteran multi-faceted experience. As intervention dissemination was completed, feedback requests were disseminated to determine the practicality and effectiveness of the intervention (Li & Rainville, 2021; Maclean, 2017; Manniste et al., 2019). The most impactful portion of the training was to highlight benefits, allowances for housing and food, skillsets that are derived from military-specific jobs, professional military education, and professional development (Minnis, 2017; Opengart, 2021; Schulker, 2017). The integration of an intervention may change the way veterans are screened for careers in the future, aiding in greater success (Shepherd et al., 2017; Stone, 2015). This is supported by the positive responses issued by the study participants; specifically, how important the training is for those in a recruiting role, with the structure of the training being the main critique.

*Keywords:* Skillsets, intervention, military, veteran, human resource department

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### **Introduction**

The veteran population is that of vast experience, talent, and unique skillsets, specifically those who have spent many years serving (Li & Rainville, 2021). The wealth of knowledge and experience that comes from serving is vast and encompasses numerous sectors of expertise and training (Dirani, 2017). With such a wellspring of knowledge and experience, it is worrisome that separating veterans are more than twice as likely to remain unemployed than their civilian counterparts (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Of those who obtain employment upon separation, 44% of them will leave that first job before a year has passed and another 21% will leave before the two-year mark (Opengart, 2021). There is a consistent disconnect between veteran skillsets and civilian hiring departments when it comes to transferability and time for time experience compared to civilian candidates. There is a lack of proper training, education, recognition, and translation of those important skills into civilian-style positions that hiring teams are accustomed to vetting (Ford, 2017).

### **Background**

There is a split between enlisted members and commissioned officers in the armed forces, as most officers have a minimum of a bachelor's degree, but only about 7% of enlisted members have a formal education degree (Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021). Both tiers have important qualities that can be transferred into the civilian workplace if they are properly translated and utilized. The military carries a standard hierarchical structure, while many civilian organizations utilize newer methodologies of Agile and Waterfall, emphasizing smaller teams and horizontal communication compared to vertical

(Bjornstad & Ulleberg, 2021). Both styles are effective depending on the employment structure, workload, structure, and capability of leadership to implement such methodologies (Bjornstad & Ulleberg, 2021). This is where training and education of the highest caliber could come into play, specifically how leaders implement the style of leadership and process deliverance.

### **Education & Training**

Between the civilian world and military life, there are some commonalities in the necessity of some form of training, education, or certification to qualify for the position in question. Whether it is formal education prerequisites, a specified time of previously performing the foundational duties, or a certification that supports the claim of capability, there are multiple avenues of self-improvement in both structures (Dirani, 2017).

#### ***Military Training/Education***

Due to their level of experience, skills, expectations, and work ethic expected and given by these members, they expect to be employed and compensated in a parallel fashion (Albertson, 2019). Adaptability, flexibility, work ethic, drive, mission success, and many other avenues are fueled by the core values ingrained into their rebirth into the military (Turner & Moran, 2021). Regardless of these obvious characteristics and skills that make them marketable, there is still a major disconnect between hiring teams in different organizations that do not understand how to compare and translate skills into palpable and usable data (Dexter, 2020). Making intense decisions in stressful situations makes service members prime candidates for higher stress-level civilian work, reducing the chances of stagnation or indecisiveness. Through rank-specified, position-based, and



formal education methods, military members are shaped into the leaders of today with the skills to face tomorrow (Dirani, 2017).

### ***Civilian Training/Education***

Civilian training and education have similar formal and positional aspects in completing tasks, developing strategies, and becoming knowledgeable in specified areas of work (Stevenson, 2020). Utilization in unison highlights vital parts of theory and application (Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021). Many requirements drift across both work structures such as cyber security, sexual assault and prevention training, and suicide awareness. Most of these prerequisites and annual training checklist items correlate greatly. Civilian leadership and the essence of teamwork lack a foundational pillar due to the lack of life and limb, specifically the service aspect of the business structure. By design the work that the civilian structure is built upon focuses on bringing motivated, like-minded professionals together to complete tasks for profitability and job satisfaction (Beier, 2022). Civilian education and training are usually in a formal, controlled environment through colleges, universities, and training seminars, which can leave civilian leaders without the experience of real-life stress factors when decisions need to be made (Caamal, 2019). As most of the training focuses on hypothetical scenarios and theory, the real-world application can create vastly differing results.

### **Core Values & Compensation**

Various factors create the foundation of success for veterans, specifically their beliefs whether it be spirituality or virtues that propel them forward (Grimell, 2020). Core values are an extension of belief, leading to motivation, determination, and mission success. Whether civilian or military in nature, a set of core values can set a team and

environment in the direction of success (Oh et al., 2018). Tailoring efforts and motivation toward areas that closely align with the company's or organization's goals and mission is an important balance necessary for organizational development (Stevenson, 2020).

Through training, education opportunities, and mission execution, the core values are the concrete foundation on that every member is molded (Tully, 2010).

Civilian core values are aimed more at areas of motivation, efficiency, leadership, and items that create unification, synergistic work culture, and profitability. Military core values are similar on a foundational level but are more tailored toward combat, wartime efforts, and the sustainment of peace when possible (Oh et al., 2018). Experience is the most influential aspect of hiring and determination of salary and benefits packages, leaving a gap for service members whose experience is not derived from easily understood career fields. The compensation differential is split between tangible and transferable skills from the military to civilian life, specifically the feasible application by Human Resource Departments (HRDs) and Talent Acquisition (TA) teams (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

### **Transition & Human Resources**

Many stressors and worries accompany transitioning from active duty to the civilian workplace, but there are various opportunities for existing resources and programs to aid in transitional pitfalls. Although, there are many gaps and missing pieces to the foundation set for separating veterans, proper education, and the development of unified fronts for transition could fill in those gaps and minimize the number of veterans falling through the cracks of mismatched and misunderstood skillsets. Human Resource Departments (HRDs) and Talent Acquisition (TA) teams are the

foundational piece and forefront of any organization, leaving room for error without proper training and education (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Open communication, transparency, and honesty all work together to ensure viable candidates remain interested. TA teams, once educated on transferrable skills, can locate important details in candidates' experience and dig to ensure proper elaboration, turning the tide in the battle of veteran skillsets' confusion. With such confusion, the clearer, more concise, and transparent TA teams are with veteran candidates, the more likely the candidate will see the hiring process through.

### **Biblical Foundation**

It is important to utilize the experiences and the victories throughout the struggle to give credit to God, specifically through trusting Him when all others succumb to the worry and fear of the unknown. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Philippians 4:6). Overall, resilience, steadfastness, and several other characteristics taught and delivered during military service can be solidified and intensified by the deep and rooted foundation in a relationship with God.

### ***Civilian/Military***

For Christian veterans, it is essential to utilize a spiritual foundation to drive forward and overcome obstacles and stumbling blocks along the path of transition. This is especially true for Christians in the armed forces who are in transition into the civilian workplace because of the immense toll taken on their mental health, financial security, and various avenues during that timeframe (Oh et al., 2021). "No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits since he aims to please the one who enlisted him" (*English Standard*

*Version*, 2001, 2 Timothy 2:4). As the struggles and difficulties that transitioning veterans begin to surface, there is solace and peace within the relationship and commitment of service for God's will. "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Colossians 3:23). This is a consistent reminder that regardless of the issues that arise related to work that the effort is not for the employer, but the glory of God.

### ***Diversity/Similarity***

Civilian Christians are responsible for the implementation of welcoming environments for diverse cultures and people. The mission and purpose of veterans and Christians are to utilize the skills and gifts given to them to better themselves and their neighbors, the intertwining of such foundational and spiritual avenues can give veterans the strength to persevere. Diversity and hospitality to foreigners and strangers alike are addressed in the Bible, specifically on how to treat others as local or natives through respect and love comparing Christians to foreigners as well. "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Leviticus 19:33-34). God instructs Christians to treat diverse cultures, foreigners, and strangers as natives and familiars, following His example to love all regardless of background, race, or creed. Diversity and acceptance are essential to bridge divides and separation between veterans and civilian workers.

If veterans and civilians are treated as equals and seen as peers, the capability to incorporate various skills and perspectives and solidify a well-rounded work culture. "If

you fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well” (*English Standard Version*, 2001, James 2:8). Although it may be the hardest for some, loving others as oneself can aid in the elimination of bias, prejudice, or preconceived notions that have no factual basis.

### **Problem Statement**

Military veteran skills mismatch is a consistent issue that occurs during servicemembers’ transition to civilian life after the active-duty obligation has been fulfilled (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Except for civilian career fields that are directly related to the civilian profession being applied for, veteran skill sets are often misunderstood, mismatched, and misaligned with their foundational effectiveness and usefulness in the civilian workforce (Davis & Minnis, 2017). The mismatch issues that are within HRDs, hiring managers, and decision-makers for TA teams and employment can be addressed by examining the efficacy of those teams and programs (Ford, 2017; Keeling et al., 2019). As general military skills are efficient enough to gain employment in an entry-level position, many separating veterans have leadership and other important skills that are complementary to their job-specific experience, making them much more marketable to those who understand the military experience. As the military transition to civilian work life is one of the most difficult and stressful experiences many veterans will face, the inability to locate parallel and equal compensation in the civilian world can increase that stress (Shepherd et al., 2017; Stone, 2015). Training and educating those in charge of hiring about the unique and applicable skills that veterans offer is essential to increase productivity, diversity and decrease the negative impacts of veteran transition into the civilian workforce.

The most direct problems come from being passed over for civilian candidates that have resumes that are more relatable to hiring teams, misunderstanding veteran capability, and the undervaluing of compensation for veteran applicants. Many veterans follow civilian careers that are directly tied to their military careers upon separation from military service, but why is it that the issue of equivalent pay and benefits are only present in careers with direct ties to their military service (Davis & Minnis, 2017)? Many jobs in the military do not directly translate into the civilian workforce, so understanding all the potential skills and attributes veterans carry because of their training is essential for civilian employers. The identified gap in knowledge and education on the transitioning of the military population in HRDs and TA teams is obvious (Shepherd et al., 2017; Stone, 2015). The creation of informational and educational charts, compensation comparisons, military experience, and skillset specifics could help to increase marketability. This could broaden the acceptance of military veterans into the mid and upper tiers of the civilian workplace structure and diminish the transitioning veteran unemployment rate. This research study aimed to prove the alleged holes in current transition programs.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This qualitative study and phenomenological design aimed to examine the impact of educational training integration based on military veteran skillsets towards HRDs and TA teams as well as their decision-making steps when considering veteran candidates for hire.

### **Research Questions**

#### **Research Questions**

RQ1: Will the integration of a veteran skills training intervention effectively translate veteran work experience to HRDs and TA teams?

RQ 2: What aspects of the intervention are most impactful?

RQ 3: What aspects of the intervention are least helpful?

RQ 4: Will the information presented, and knowledge obtained from this training regarding the parallels between military and civilian workplace constructs impact hiring decisions?

### **Assumptions and Limitations of the Study**

Any research study will be subjected to a set of limitations and assumptions, tailored to the type of study, participants, data collection methods, finite details associated with the topic, and the level of detail that was necessary for the completion of the study. Throughout the history of research, assumptions and limitations have been a supporting piece of a well-rounded understanding of the topic at hand (Sebele-Mpofu, 2020).

This study is no different in its necessity for such a section. This study has various assumptions, specifically aimed at the qualitative design, data collection via survey, and target audience. For this qualitative research design, an intervention will be created and disseminated to various members of HRDs and TA teams. Assumptions that follow for this section are that of survey issuance, specifically the integrity and honesty of survey participants, and their willingness to utilize professional criticism (Sebele-Mpofu, 2020). The utilization of anonymous results should help to keep integrity intact and derive the most useful and honest data from the survey. Another assumption for this study was that the target audience would have some experience with talent acquisition and interviewing,

solidifying the need for them to receive the training intervention focusing on veteran candidates.

Limitations are another inevitable portion of research studies, leading to the necessity of an outline of such limitations for this study. There are consistent limitations within the use of qualitative methods, such as the lack of visualization of cause-and-effect correlations, a vast amount of data to sift through, and the generalizability of the data. As the intervention was directed at HRDs and TA teams and is finite and tangible, some generalizations bleed through, specifically aimed at the experience and multi-faceted nature of HRDs and TA Teams in an organizational structure (Davis & Minnis, 2017). The limitations are grounded in the types of employees needed to fill roles, work culture, and the prevalence of HRDs and TA teams in the organization (Dexter, 2020). The amount of time that must be dedicated to a qualitative study design, results in verification due to participant data flow control, investigation of causality, and lack of statistical representation are all consistent limitations in the realm of qualitative design (Sebele-Mpofu, 2020). The major limitation of this study revolved around the diversity and multi-faceted nature of HRDs and TA teams in various organizational structures, leaving much room for rejection of such an intervention due to perceived unimportance (Ford, 2017).

### **Theoretical Foundations of the Study**

The foundational aspect of this research is grounded in Skills Leadership Theory (SLT) and how those skills are defined, separated, and categorized for interpretation and translation (Liggans et al., 2019). As technical, human, and conceptual skills are necessary for all types of jobs, the balance and percentage of each in every category is utilized to determine fit for the tier and type of position to be filled. Middle management



would need a balance of all three evenly to bridge the gap between lower and senior leadership. All three categories need strong human skills, but lower management would thrive with greater technical skills and senior leadership with higher conceptual skills (Liggans et al.,2019). The importance of this foundational theory when looking at the veteran community is the integration, development, and execution of all three categories of skills, making them proficient at adaptability. The SLT is a mirror reflection of the leadership structure within the military service, specifically the commonalities of the junior-enlisted, non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and senior non-commissioned officers (SNCOs) tiers (Mattila et al., 2017).

As the focus of management skills changes similarly to the ranking tier, it is important to understand those comparisons between military and civilian workplace structures to streamline the transition process and accurately place candidates in the workplace (Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021). Diversity and uniqueness play a pivotal role in the unification and solidification of common goals, missions, and drive for success. The three tiers mentioned in the civilian workplace and the three tiers mentioned in the military's structure call for similar skill type cross-reference. As civilian workforce management skill necessities become more easily understood, the ability to transfer military skill necessities into those roles becomes more easily attainable as well (Mattila et al., 2017). Junior-enlisted/low-level management tiers, NCOs/mid-level management, and SNCOs/senior leadership roles are all compatible and transferrable (Mattila et al., 2017). Although the SLT creates a concrete foundation, Biblical foundations and principles solidify even further the importance and necessity of this study.

### **Biblical Foundation**

The Bible speaks of unification and coming together to build and improve, which is a valuable lesson for diverse groups and cultures who need to find common ground. “What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up” (*English Standard Version*, 2001, 1 Corinthians 14:26). The command to welcome others as God has welcomed His children is a unique and powerful perspective, leading to the mentality and change of heart needed for the integration and transition of veterans into the civilian workplace. “Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God” (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Romans 15:7). This creates separated groups that form in a work environment, breeding segregation rather than inclusion.

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and says, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? (*English Standard Version*, 2001, James 2:1-5)

There is a significant breakthrough when looking into this verse because it utilizes the differences between rich and poor, but this does not necessarily reflect monetarily rich individuals. This can be utilized as a foundational aspect of diversity, difference, and

cultural exchange. Why should any man pay more attention to any group over another? Instead, it is His decree to look at them as equals, because in God's sight all men are equally unworthy.

### **Perspective Unification**

The unification of diversity and similarity through a God-shaped lens creates a trifecta of inclusion and motivation to succeed in areas of conflict resolution and change. Diversity ensures the decrease of groupthink and team stagnation, but similarity is a foundational aspect of growth through common goals, interests, and motivation (Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021). Overall, common ground between the two must be found to push teams forward most effectively through essential bumps and pitfalls, specifically due to the gaps that are filled in weaknesses and the solidification of each other's strengths.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following is a list of definitions of terms that are used in this study.

**Department of Defense (DOD)** - Term one is defined as the federal department responsible for safeguarding the national security of the United States; created in 1947 (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

**Enlisted** – Term two is defined as those individuals who have enlisted in the military and who have not been commissioned as officers (Mattila et al., 2017)

**Human Resource Departments (HRDs)** – Term three is defined as a department that manages the employee life cycle. This includes recruiting, hiring, onboarding, training, performance management, administering benefits, compensation, and firing (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

**Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO)** – Term four is defined as a military officer who has not pursued a commission. Non-commissioned officers usually earn their position of authority by promotion through the enlisted ranks. This tier of enlisted rank is comparable to middle-management (Mattila et al., 2017).

**Officer** – Term five is defined as a member of an armed force or uniformed service who holds a position of authority. Commissioned officers derive authority directly from a sovereign power and, as such, hold a commission charging them with the duties and responsibilities of a specific office or position (Mattila et al., 2017).

**Skillbridge** – Term six is defined as a Department of Defense (DOD) program for transitioning service members. It offers employment training, internship, and apprenticeship opportunities at more than 1,000 public and private organizations across the country. VA has Skillbridge opportunities for civilian careers at different offices and programs (Opengart, 2021).

**Talent Acquisition (TA)** – Term seven is defined as the process of identifying and acquiring skilled workers to meet your organizational needs. The talent acquisition team is responsible for identifying, acquiring, assessing, and hiring candidates to fill open positions within a company (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study intervention is grounded in filling the gaps of knowledge and training in HRDs and TA teams as well as the potential difference in retention and attrition values, impacted by separating military members (Ford, 2017). If the intervention is successfully integrated into HRD's hiring standards, the implications and potential impact could be monumental for the veteran community, but even more so

for organizational structure and development practices in need of fierce leaders (Stevenson, 2020). As the leading cause of veteran homelessness is unemployment and nearly half of separating veterans' length of first post-military employment is less than a year and nearly 65% less than 2 years, the potential is extreme (Thomas et al., 2018). The business integration of well-shaped members of a minority that has much to offer in leadership and management capability could improve productivity, and community and reduce high turnover in positions that are well suited for those with such experience. The various positive outcomes for the veteran population and businesses that utilize the untapped potential are great, leaving much room to expand on the impact of increased employment of separating veterans on the number of homeless veterans. The research on veteran integration into the workplace can be built upon to bleed into areas of mental health, physical disability, and various areas that military veterans fall into post-military service, leaving the sky as the limit for potential (Dexter, 2020).

### **Culture Value**

Integration of successful candidates that feel appreciated and valued may lead to higher levels of job satisfaction, which correlates to higher performance and a higher likelihood of success (Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021). Communication and transparency are vital foundational aspects of a diverse culture that is looking for like-minded individuals that want growth and development. The empowering of employees to create their path while following the leadership guidelines from organizational leadership increases the chance of success for the candidate and the organization as well. When employees are

empowered and given the tools to forge their career path, the likelihood of motivation and mission success increases.

### **Further Study**

Even if the intervention is effective and HRDs can properly translate veteran skillsets, it still takes equal effort from the veteran candidate to transcribe that information as close to civilian standards as possible. The conversion of classified information within the veteran's experience can cause an issue of poor translation (even with the successful integration of the training intervention). The nature of the most influential and impressive military skillsets can (by design) be the most difficult to translate by the veteran candidate due to the shelf life of classified information (Vanderschuere & Birdsmall, 2019). Even after separation, military members with impressive skillsets derived from classified environments must not disclose vital aspects of how they obtained such skills which leads to the watering down of key components of translatable information (Hur, 2019). As this intervention targeted HRDs and TA teams about veteran candidates, the study and findings will pave the way for further research and intervention of HRDs and TA teams for other important cultures and diverse groups across the business world.

### **Summary**

This chapter has given a detailed foundation for veterans transitioning into the civilian workplace by outlining the structures of both military and civilian workplaces, cultures, training, education, and core values. A summary of transitioning struggles, transition programs, and the hiring processes of HRDs and TA teams helps to locate the lack of coverage or gap in research and knowledge. Explaining comparisons and

likenesses between the two, shining a light on the need for further education of HRDs and TA teams to decrease the unemployment rate of transitioning veterans comes next (Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021). This chapter has also outlined the necessity of studying through a God-shaped lens to reveal the most important gaps in knowledge and uncover the most effective means to accomplish decreased numbers of veteran unemployment.

The next chapter will begin with a thorough and detailed review of recent and current research in the areas of military skill sets, civilian workplaces, military workplaces, and the commonalities between the two. This will be accomplished by reviewing many aspects of civilian work structures, military work structures, employment, diversity, and transferable skill sets, and locating the gaps in knowledge to effectively implement this study to fill the gaps that have been located. Overall, the literature review will give most of the answers to the questions asked, but for the few questions that will not be answered, a foundation for an impactful and effective study can begin.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview

Military members are part of a diverse, focused, determined, and resilient culture, created and developed in the most difficult and stressful environments. Their ability to adapt and overcome struggle and hardship makes them valiant leaders, courageous professionals, and resilient members of society (Dexter, 2020). There is a major disconnect between civilian compensation, benefits, and skillsets, linked to the misunderstanding of veteran skillsets, evidenced by veteran unemployment and turnover rates. Human Resource Departments (HRDs) and Talent Acquisition (TA) teams are the faces of civilian organizations and initial decision-makers in the hiring process, meaning they were the ones most in need of veteran skillset training (Keeling et al., 2019). The misunderstanding of veteran worth, specifically salary breakdown, allotments, benefits, and non-taxable income has been a breeding ground for unhappiness and lack of job satisfaction, leading to high veteran turnover (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Veterans have had their resumes passed over due to the misunderstanding of capability or those who have found employment are mismatched and placed in positions they are overqualified for because of HRDs and TA's lack of training/education on veteran candidates.

The key areas of HRDs, TA, veteran skillsets, civilian compensation and benefits, veteran leadership and training, military allotments, and non-taxable income as well as various comparisons between civilians and veterans have helped to close the knowledge gap (Davis & Minnis, 2017). A strong Biblical foundation focused on the similarities and differences in civilian work environments and military work structures was researched through the scope of diversity, principles, and the understanding of God's



commandments for Christians. Understanding what the veteran population has to offer, the needs of civilian organizations, insight of HRDs and TA teams, and the differences between both groups through a God-shaped lens magnified the gaps and missing data. The research areas highlighted the gap in understanding about the military veteran's transition into the civilian workplace, specifically the disadvantage and struggles experienced, justified the need for this study. This chapter consists of various details and procedures used to approach the study, the search strategy utilized, a distinct and vast review of current literature about military veteran's transition into the civilian workplace, Biblical foundation, reasoning, and ends with a summary that ties all aspects previously mentioned into a single and cohesive knot. Overall, each area helped to magnify and clarify the finite details needed to locate and expand upon the gap of knowledge that was present about the veteran transition into the civilian workplace, which was intended to decrease transitioning veteran unemployment rates by educating HRDs and TA teams on veteran experience and skillsets (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

### **Description of Search Strategy**

The most influential and effective terminology and verbiage utilized to find credible and impactful resources were conducted with key terms. The Jerry Falwell Library (JFL) within the Liberty University research resources, Veterans Affairs resources, and Biblical foundation were the main locations of research data, journal articles, and developmental research on the topic of veterans and transition into the civilian workplace. The key terms were "veteran skillsets", "veteran transition", "veteran leadership" and various Boolean conjunctions of "HRD & Veteran", "Talent Acquisition & Veteran", and "Veteran & organizational culture". The biblical aspects of research that

were conducted through various searches focused on key terms of “military”, “culture”, “transition”, “neighbor”, “leadership”, “diversity”, “group dynamics”, and “core values”. Locating the most influential aspects of the research was accomplished by highlighting the key aspects of what the research was trying to prove.

Biblical foundation through diversity comparisons and other Biblical standpoints were utilized alongside Christian-based searches and scripture. The research focus was comprised of magnified scope factors such as scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles, articles published within the last five years, and research engines within the JFL (EBSCOhost, ProQuest, and ScienceDirect). The JFL is comprised of various scientific search engines, advanced search capability, and reduction of delineating factors through magnified criteria, granting access to various research products through Liberty University’s contractual agreements. Other parameters that were incorporated are that of full-text availability online and discipline terms of “psychology”, “social sciences”, “government” & “business”.

### **Review of Literature**

Throughout the length of the study of current literature, six themes continuously arose and reiterated the need for further investigation. Detailed comparisons derived from military and civilian workplaces consisted of six continuous themes of structure, education, training & skills, core values, compensation, and human resources & transition.

#### **Military Structure**

Every branch of the military is rooted in a deep focus on discipline, structure, dedication, and the desire to be a part of something more. Although the definition of

“something more” varies from service member to service member, the overall foundation remains the same, specifically the protection of their country and the freedoms that parallel it. Regardless of nation or branch, discipline and structure of leadership are key to how rank and position impact daily operations (Oh et al., 2021). Within the ranking systems, two main tiers split the managerial type and the working class within the military, the enlisted and the officer tiers (Derefinko et al., 2019).

### ***Enlisted***

The enlisted tier consists of three sub-tiers: the junior-enlisted, non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and senior non-commissioned officers (SNCOs). The junior-enlisted tier consists of technical experts that are trained to be the subject matter experts within their specified career field, working on the mission directly with a hands-on approach (Derefinko et al., 2019). The NCO tier has the same foundational aspect of technical proficiency, while also incorporating areas of leadership and mentorship for the junior-enlisted tier (Albertson, 2019). They are the operations and shift managers of the enlisted tier, guiding mission success with a hands-on and hands-off approach. The SNCO tier is made up of upper management that oversees the strategic portions of mission success, mentoring non-commissioned officers, and oversees the administration and back-office styles of work integration (Mattila et al., 2017). They are hands-off and are present for any needs that may arise within the flight personnel and are like human resources in their focus on the well-being and benefit of the unit’s people, while also overseeing mission success (Dexter, 2020).

The ranking system for enlisted is ranked from E1-E9, with junior enlisted consisting of E1-E4, NCOs consisting of E5-E6 & SNCOs consisting of E7-E9 (Mattila

et al., 2017). Each increasing rank is considered superior to all ranks below, but positional authority can outrank a senior member when focused on tasks that are directly related to that position (Mattila et al., 2017).

### ***Officer***

The officer ranking system is also broken up into three tiers: company-grade officers, field-grade officers, and general officers. Like the enlisted structure, officers' ranks range from O1-O9, with a positional O10 rank (only one O10 at a time). There is a similarity between officer tier separations and enlisted tier separations, but on a much greater scale (Mattila et al., 2017). Every officer, regardless of rank, is superior to every enlisted member. An O1 is superior to an E9, but an O1 would rarely push that fact in any official capacity (Mattila et al., 2017). The officer tier is made up of highly educated, managerial, and strategic-level professionals that oversee wide arrays of mission capabilities and future growth and development within the military (Mattila et al., 2017). Unlike the enlisted tier, officers are not the working hands and are not known for being mission-capable subject matter experts (Mattila et al., 2017).

Although general knowledge of the skills necessary for the junior-enlisted workers is needed, in-depth explanation and repetition are a rarity. O1s & O2s are usually in a secretary-style position as they are grown into valiant professionals and leaders. Shortly after promotion to O3, the responsibility and expectation multiply greatly (Mattila et al., 2017). The higher the officer rank, the greater number of personnel, missions, and assets that are under their direct supervision and control (Albertson, 2019).

### ***Foundation***

Both Enlisted and Officer tiers are rooted in resiliency, leadership, teamwork, and attention to detail. This foundation makes military members effective leaders and hard workers, but the tier in which they belong is a more focused indicator of their transferrable skills into civilian work (Edelmann, 2018). A better understanding of what each branch, tier, and rank is responsible for and proficient at will aid in the vetting and selection process of veteran candidates (Mattila et al., 2017). As there are various forms of military education, training, and certification, the vast capability of military resumes to parallel civilian candidates is ever-present, but underutilized (Edelmann, 2018). A misunderstanding of these transferrable skills, combined with comparisons to civilian counterparts on limited criteria is a disservice and unfair handicap to the men and women of the armed forces (Mattila et al., 2017).

### **Civilian Structure**

Focus on individuality and working alone mostly is a foreign concept to most of the military workforce (Dirani, 2017). Civilian workplaces are bound by different rules and regulations, specific to the field and career area they are working in. The type of work environment will differ depending on the career field and core values that the company uses as its foundational basis (Oh et al., 2021). There is a difference in hierarchy and leadership schemes in the civilian workplace which is specific to the business model and leadership integration utilized (Dirani, 2017). Agile and Waterfall models of leadership are just two examples of the varying leadership models which differ from stereotypical hierarchical designs. Rather than having direct lines of leadership, superiority, and seniority over everyone who is less ranking, responsibility and focus are split into varying regions (Edelmann, 2018).

### ***Agile***

The Agile method of leadership is focused on team distribution with a cross-functional method, moving through a cyclical flow of the process (Opengart, 2021). This leads to variable project scope, distribution of team environments, and working as equals rather than a cascade of bosses and subordinates (Dirani, 2017). Responsibility is placed on individual teams, which consist of multiple titles and job descriptions, working in unison to achieve company goals. Companies that utilize Agile methods are more focused on cultural fit and synergy versus the profit margin and expected numbers (Oprins et al., 2018). Although this method of hiring may take longer to locate culture fits, the decrease in turnover and increase in employee job satisfaction is an expectation of this style of leadership (Dirani, 2017).

### ***Waterfall***

Different from the Agile leadership method, the Waterfall method is focused on organizational departments rather than teams, specifically focused on specialists and subject matter experts in the proper placement for increased workflow potential (Oprins et al., 2018). The process flow is linear and leads to fixed project scope, creating an assembly line of efficiency and is intended to create a Waterfall effect of success and motivation. Rather than team-initiated tasks and development strategies that circle through repeatedly, there is a steady flow in one direction and is effective with small and unwavering projects (Edelmann, 2018). The Waterfall method is a focused and concrete area of leadership that works efficiently on fixed timelines, and unwavering expectations and moves forward only after the previous step is complete (Ford, 2017). The budgeting

for Waterfall projects is determined in advance and is held to a fixed numerical value, opposite of Agile, which allows for flexibility (Albertson, 2019).

The Agile and Waterfall methods of leadership and work distribution are quite different from the military's hierarchical style on the surface, particularly communication between the lowest ranking members and the highest ranking. Although civilian structure lacks the chain of command aspect when utilizing Agile and Waterfall methodology, there are direct comparisons between smaller units within the military and the groups and teams utilized in those methodologies. Responsibility, communication, and mission success are left in the hands of smaller teams, working in numerous roles, but within a peer system where rank or superior status is less important. This comparison illuminates the key differences and similarities between civilian and military structures when looking at the veteran's experience with smaller or larger units. The military structure is comprised of multi-faceted experience and leads to great flexibility when transitioning into a civilian workplace or influencing the civilian work structure.

### **Military Education**

Military education is broken up into career-specific, rank-specific, position-specific, and formal styles of education. All these areas are utilized in various ways to determine position, rank capability, and projected path in the military. All four areas of military education can be transferred into the civilian workplace when properly translated, leaving adaptability, flexibility, and capability at the forefront of every veteran's resume.

#### ***Career Specific***

The military has a unique set of educational opportunities, stemming from basic military training, advanced job-specific training, leadership courses, resiliency, and various technical certifications that make service members qualified for various civilian positions (Ford, 2017). The military provides the necessary training for members to be proficient at their jobs at a mission-critical level, leaving little room for error and mistakes. Advanced training following boot camp can last a span of a few weeks to over a year of full-time training (Ford, 2017). After the completion of advanced training, on-the-job training is conducted by the members unit and additional computer-based training is implemented alongside hands-on training. Once the individual has completed hands-on training and computer-based education, they are tested on their knowledge and capability (Ford, 2017). Once they can pass the exam as well as provide hands-on proficiency proof, they are granted the ability to work without direct supervision. There are varying levels of job proficiency that are required at certain ranks. These additional levels can be utilized as criteria for deployment and exercise selection, attaching skills-based proficiency to the correlated deployment opportunity (Park et al., 2021).

As the wide variety of opportunities, capabilities, and mission parameters is ever-changing and expansive, the same career field could have various qualifications varying from a newly certified member to a service member who has many years of experience in the career field (Park et al., 2021). The military has integrated college credit hours into their job-specific programs, allowing for many advanced training programs to reward most college credits needed to obtain an associate degree in the specified field (Ford, 2017).

### ***Rank Specific***



Throughout the military construct, there are training and education prerequisites that must be met to promote to the next rank (Carpenter, & Silberman, 2020). These educational opportunities are focused on areas of leadership and strategic vision, management, and the development of those that report to them. Many of these courses and leadership opportunities are aligned with branch-specific educational institutions which grant educational credits to be applied to requirements, leading to varying degrees (Ford, 2017). Varying levels of rank-specific education range from basic leadership schools to the military's War College, sculpting and molding service members into masters of their trades and leaders in every scenario (Schulker, 2017). Although these leadership schools are required for promotion to the upcoming rank, the time of course attendance can be before sewing on the next rank or after, but when the promotion has occurred before the course completion timelines become strict. The focus of education benefits from rank helps to mold and create the leaders that the military needs to carry on mission success continuously and without pause, leaving little room for a mistake (Ford, 2017).

### ***Position Specific***

Positional education can come from various areas of study and career fields, specifically positions of developmental importance for younger members, people-focused positions, and special duties (Schulker, 2017). Positional education is obtained through applying for special duty and needing to complete some form of training before taking on the new role. Special courses, seminars, and developmental processes are required before taking the role and are in place to help the individual grow in that position while giving them the tools necessary to best impact service members of lower and higher ranks

(Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021). In these positions, the authority of a situation in the unit can be different from the basic hierarchical structure the military is built (Schulker, 2017). That special duty gives positional authority because they are a subject matter expert in that role, leaving others in higher ranks outside of the necessary qualifications.

### ***Formal***

Like rank and career education, formal education is another foundational aspect of the military's focus on betterment, self-improvement, and professional development. This is also another way rank and tier (especially officers) are determined, as a bachelor's degree at minimum is a prerequisite to being an officer (Shepherd et al., 2021). Although some branches still utilize the third tier between enlisted and officer, warrant officers have been removed from the Air & Space Forces (Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021). The prerequisite for this position is an Associate's and, in some cases, serving enough years as an enlisted can make the individual eligible. The importance of continuous education, development, and striving for knowledge is a cornerstone of the military's fit-to-fight mentality. As the military utilizes benefits such as tuition assistance during service and GI Bill after service, there is an encouragement to turn service members and veterans into intellectual and determined members of society upon reintegration into the civilian world (Shepherd et al., 2021).

### **Civilian Education**

Civilian education is like the formal and positional aspects of military education in the importance of building strong foundations of knowledge and application. This is important because it teaches the individual how to complete tasks, develop strategies and become knowledgeable in various areas of their desired career field (Stevenson, 2020).

Although experience and formal education are not directly comparable, they are best utilized in unison as they both handle different aspects of theory, application, and development (Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021). These two areas are the main overlaps of military and civilian education, with the military's other areas being focused mostly on leadership and the development of others. As formal and positional education opportunities differ from military to civilian life, the commonalities and likeness can create a baseline for military experience translation into the civilian workplace (Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021). This unified with a greater understanding of the rank category of education in the military can give TA teams the tools necessary to properly vet and sort candidates with military experience (Carpenter, & Silberman, 2020).

### **Training & Skills**

There are similarities and differences between civilian and military skills and training, but there are various areas that overlap, giving veterans more avenues for transition into the civilian workforce.

#### ***Military Training***

The most common training that comes to mind when thinking of the military is that of basic military training or boot camp which tests and creates the best versions of those who attend (Stevenson, 2020). The objective is to sharpen recruits' minds, bodies, and spirits by incorporating various areas of stress-inducing scenarios, education on leadership tactics, survival theory, and most notably, the health of the body through rigorous exercise and nutrition regimen (Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021). Not all that enter boot camp in the various branches will graduate, but for those that complete all requirements (depending on the branch), the outcome is intended for a re-imagined and

re-constructed member of the armed services that can lead in every aspect of life (Keeling, et al., 2019). Throughout the rest of their career, every set of training requirements has a form of leadership and development that is placed in its development to nurture them into the warrior/leader needed for present-day service (Stone, 2015). The physical aspect of training is also important to ensure they are mission capable and can withstand harsh environments of war if need be.

**Physical.** Every branch of the military is different in the annual physical requirements needed to remain in service, but the expectations and requirements are instilled in boot camp, creating a steppingstone for health and wellness throughout their career (Stone, 2015). Although the service members are closely monitored, pushed, and incentivized to be physically active and healthy during the early stages of their career, as they move into their careers that push is removed. Instead, a desire for meeting the minimum standards and passing their physical training tests takes over in the place of wanting the best and to be the best version of themselves (Keeling, et al., 2019). Many will settle into the role of their career field and get lost in the day-to-day of their shiftwork or repetitive careers, leaving little time for physical fitness and development. The integration of physical fitness is tethered within all aspects of leadership and career development courses and schools to help reignite motivation (Tao & Campbell, 2020). This is essential for those who plan to retire because failing physical fitness tests can lead to separation from service if not corrected (Keeling, et al., 2019).

**Leadership.** Leadership training comes in various forms and at varying levels throughout a service member's career. This is also determined by rank, tier, and branch of service, leaving wide areas for development according to the service members' passion

and desire in the professional world. Leadership schools (a part of the rank-specific education piece) help members develop the communication, language, conflict resolution, and forward-facing leadership aspects of taking on new roles (Carpenter, & Silberman, 2020). As many individuals join the military at 18 years old, their experience in the working world is limited, leaving many gaps in key areas of professional development (Li & Rainville, 2021). Training in the first few years can seem redundant, but it ensures that regardless of previous experience, every service member is held to the same standard and is sharpened accordingly. Service members are also pushed to be leaders in their communities, showing that leadership in organizations of outreach can help those in the area (Teclaw et al., 2016).

Leadership is the staple of military service, education, and training, meaning it is versatile and flexible in where it is mostly utilized. Adaptability, flexibility, and the ability to make intense decisions in the heat of stressful situations are what make service members prime candidates for higher stress-level civilian work (Thomas et al., 2018). Repetition, continuous interjection of key concepts, and leadership skills aid in the ability of these leaders to lack hesitation and quickly respond to the most crucial scenarios (Teclaw et al., 2016). Overall, it is important to understand that although military-specific skills may not always translate easily into the civilian workforce, their ability to quickly adapt, overcome and assimilate is the key piece of effectiveness and a major selling point for them (Thomas et al., 2018). Although there are numerous overlaps and comparisons between civilian and military leadership skills, there is a definite difference in the structure of leadership and the number of those an individual supervises or is superior to in the chain of command. Every rank is senior to every member that is below them in

military service, meaning they are responsible for them at all times and should be focused on their betterment and development (Li & Rainville, 2021).

### ***Civilian Training***

Civilian training has a few similarities to the military skills section, especially areas of formal skills training, leadership seminars, and certifications, but the lack of physical training is an interesting point that is easily overlooked (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Although it may be more obvious for physically demanding work in the civilian world, it is also important to maintain physical health in non-physically demanding positions, especially those that require more sitting and less physical activity (Ford, 2017). Physical health directly impacts mental and emotional health, leaving those without consistent physical activity at a disadvantage as compared to those who incorporate physical training into their daily regimen (Keeling, et al., 2019). Many of the same training requirements bleed across military and civilian work structures such as information awareness training, sexual assault and prevention training, suicide awareness, etc. Most of these prerequisites and annual training checklist items correlate greatly except for the physical requirement (unless in a physically demanding role) (Tully, 2010). Sharper minds, healthier lifestyles, clearer thinking capability, and overall, more satisfaction can be attached to healthy physical activity, giving advantages to those who cling to such a lifestyle (Dexter, 2020).

### ***Skills & Employment***

The top skills most utilized for resumes in veterans consist of communication-based skills, problem-solving, leadership, organization, strategic values, motivation, dedication, and flexibility (Liggans et al., 2019). These skills are simple and easy to

understand, but when expanded, the depth of impact that each skill carries in a tangible and applied manner speaks volumes to an integral part of training in the military (Carpenter, & Silberman, 2020). Each skill builds on the previous, to create a foundation for the next, escalating team capability and effectiveness for every mission assigned. The military also hires various civilian workers as contractors and government employees, aiding in the ability of communication and collaboration between military members and civilian counterparts (Liggans et al., 2019). Technical, social, cognitive, and various other skills are built into curriculum and training schedules to verify the capability and effectiveness of source material. The ability of military skill sets to properly translate into the civilian workforce is essential for separating veterans to integrate into a completely different lifestyle more easily (Cooper et al., 2018).

**Skills Mismatch.** Veteran skill sets are broken into two main categories: broad skillsets across the military community and the specialized skill sets that come with specialized career fields and Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) (Davis & Minnis, 2017). The transferability of both sets of skills is usually a smooth process (except for certain combat-related careers). On a broad foundational aspect of military skill sets, leadership, attention to detail, resiliency, motivation, and teamwork are common aspects to focus on, but specialized skills are also capable of transferability if understanding varying military career fields is possible (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Although a career such as finance, weather, personnel, logistics, and supply may have direct transferability into the civilian world, jobs such as infantryman, cavalry, special operations, armor, and other skills rooted in combat do not have surface-level adaptability in the civilian workforce (Davis & Minnis, 2017). The importance is to understand the commonalities between all

servicemembers, based on tier and years of service, deciphering training, credentials, and professional military education to even the playing field.

**Turnover.** Veterans are more likely to leave their first post-military career than their civilian counterparts, but after that first post-military employment, 57% of veterans stay longer than 2.5 years in their current position as compared to 42.5% of non-veteran employees (Veteran Affairs, 2021). As veterans have a 44% chance of leaving their first job post-military within one year and another 21% within two years, the average turnover timeline increases with subsequent employment (Veteran Affairs, 2021). The abrupt and intense lifestyle changes experienced during the military to civilian transition can lead to desperation and the need of any employment, meaning many veterans may take the employment that is available to them rather than a career that is suited and matched for their cultural intricacies and skillsets. Numerical salary and health benefits are major driving factors for separating veterans because their healthcare is no longer provided for them. Veterans are accustomed to constant development, tasking, and focus on future achievement, promotion, and leadership opportunities. A company that can properly utilize veterans in matching positions that challenge, inspire and drive them for success, has a higher likelihood of retention versus turnover (Veteran Affairs, 2021).

The rate of veteran candidate turnover when seeking employment within the federal workforce is not as positively leaning, as veterans leave federal workforce employment at 1.6 times the rate of non-veterans (Veteran Affairs, 2021). The environment, support, and culture that are presented are important factors to longevity, retention, and the ability to spread programs for disabled and non-disabled veterans. These differences could come from candidates being placed into positions that are not



suited for them or a good fit, and retention becomes possible when that can be identified (Veteran Affairs, 2021). Organizations that focus more on cultural fit than experience alone, have higher rates of retention and less percentage of turnover as compared to organizations that focus solely on filling positions. Organizations that create their principles and foundation on a set of core values have the tools to pass along during the hiring process to ensure that candidates fit the cultural dynamic, focused on the same core values that motivate both the candidate and the business.

**Unemployment Rates.** Although veteran unemployment rates have decreased in the last few years, and currently sit at 3.3%, the turnover rate for recently separating veterans is increasing within their first jobs after military separation (Veteran Affairs, 2021). Just because separating veterans can obtain some form of employment does not mean they are in positions and businesses that are helping them to flourish and grow. Employment for employment's sake is a definite decline into stagnation and a lack of job satisfaction, leading to higher turnover rates and time, effort, and cost waste (Veteran Affairs, 2021). Throughout 2020 the veteran unemployment rate ranged from as low as 2.7% in Nebraska to 11.3% in Michigan, and although those numbers are better, the percentage across the country is too high to ignore (Veteran Affairs, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic played a major role in the varying and high percentages, but the focus on transition programs, internships, and apprenticeships for members separating can help them to locate areas of interest, skill match, and get their foot in the door with local companies rather than submitting hundreds of applications (Veteran Affairs, 2021).

As nearly 44% of veterans will leave their first post-military job within a year, correctly matching, understanding, and deciphering these skill sets in conjunction with

organizational needs can save time, money, and effort (Stone, 2015). Rather than assumptions and misguided preconceived notions, heightened efforts for HRD education and training could diminish this percentage by accurately placing candidates in good cultural and positional fits (Davis & Minnis, 2017). As a common reason for veteran separation before retirement is a lack of job satisfaction, locating the correct place for them could expand potential, increase productivity, and form long-term solutions to various needs known and unknown (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

### **Core Values**

Core values are a foundational piece of motivation, determination, and the completion of work, leading to mission success. Whether civilian or military in nature, a set of core values can set a team and environment in the direction of success (Oh et al., 2018). As there are numerous core values, many organizations will select the most meaningful and well-known core values or create a version of them to share across an organization (Oh et al., 2021). These focuses can help to tailor effort, direction, and motivation toward areas that closely align with the goals and mission of the company or organization (Stevenson, 2020). As the mission of the military and civilian organizations are vast and many times aimed in separate directions, there are common core values, but varying as well (Manniste et al., 2019). Core values are the fundamental beliefs that help the selection, retention, utilization, and expectation of employees, service members, and all other areas of people in a workplace (Oprins et al., 2018). Examining the overlaps and the separations in core values can help to locate the differences in scope, but their comparisons can help to locate a fundamental common ground to help with relatability and interest. (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

### *Military Core Values*

Core values are an essential pillar of the military, and every branch of service has its focus and mission that incorporates those core values in the daily application (Park et al., 2021). The Air Force's core values of integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all things done are symbolized in their symbol and are important values to live by daily, tailored to the capability of air superiority (Tully, 2010). The Army's core values of loyalty, duty, respect, and selfless service are essential aspects of value that are integrated into the capability of ground mobilizations as well as aerial assets (Tully, 2010). The Navy's core values of honor, courage, and commitment are shared with the Marine Corps, due to the relationship between the Navy and Marines (Tully, 2010). Finally, the Space Force's core values are agility, innovation, and boldness, focusing on the strengths that space, cyberspace, and technological advancement allow (Mohr et al., 2021). Regardless of branch of service, each focuses on its strengths and builds core value execution from its capability, focusing on how each can benefit the other, working as a cohesive unit for the defense of the country and freedom (Tully, 2010).

These values are more than motivational blurbs and slogans hanging on a wall. Their very essence is injected into the daily activities and training methods that are executed. Through every form of training, professional military education opportunity, and mission execution, the core values are the concrete foundation that every member is molded from (Tully, 2010). There is much cross-over between civilian and military core values because the military has an organizational aspect to its operations with a tailored focus on global reach, mobilization, and protection of freedom, incorporating a combat aspect necessary (Turner & Moran, 2021). These core values can be adjusted to fit quite

comfortably into a global-reach style for production and business expansion (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

### ***Civilian Core Values***

Civilian core values may differ to the extent of the overall mission impact, but their values such as integrity, excellence, and service can cross the threshold of both areas of interest (Oh et al., 2018). Civilian core values are aimed more at areas of motivation, efficiency, leadership, and items that create unification, synergistic work culture, and profitability. These military core values are similar on a foundational level but are more tailored towards combat, wartime efforts, and sustainment of peace when possible. The underlying values between both sides are quite similar, focusing specifically on the importance of unification, motivation, resilience, and the desire to succeed through means of hard work and development (Oh et al., 2018).

### **Compensation**

Although core values are an underlying intrinsic motivator, there are extrinsic motivators that are prevalent and necessary for a comfortable lifestyle (Shepherd et al., 2021). Compensation, salary, and benefits are all extrinsic motivators that every individual in the working class must consider when searching for and accepting employment opportunities (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Healthcare and benefits packages are a major driving force for employment standards, especially for those who have families to provide for. Premium expenses for families are increasing considerably and for military members, the cost of healthcare is virtually nothing as a major benefit of military service. Another important section of the overall compensation of military members is that of free healthcare through Tricare (Vogt et al., 2018). As veterans are used to having

their healthcare needs cared for without deduction from their paychecks, members transitioning from the military will take a larger hit in net pay due to the introduction of healthcare deductions (Vogt et al., 2018).

Hiring teams must consider these details when interviewing and debating salary negotiations before they assume the veteran is attempting to take more than they deserve (Shepherd et al., 2021). As military members are separating (not retiring) they are attempting to learn the details of an entirely different world while ensuring their standard of life can be maintained, specifically not falling under the ability to provide for themselves and family (Vogt et al., 2018). Human resource teams can benefit by preparing for such candidates and increasing their knowledge of the most common needs of veteran candidates when they are applying for a job. Some candidates may value higher salaries, while others may require health benefits and paid time off. Treating civilian and veteran candidate resumes as equal in a direct year for year comparison (excluding military service) is a major handicap and must be addressed to eliminate such mismatch (Davis & Minnis, 2017). The easiest way to address the issue is to educate hiring teams on what exactly military jobs, years of service, and various educational opportunities mean in direct comparison to civilian counterparts (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

### ***Military Compensation***

Military compensation is broken up into various sections consisting of taxable and non-taxable monetary value, dependent status, orders, location, and duty (MacLean, 2017). Basic military pay is taxable and considered most when looking at a comparable salary between civilian and military candidates (Cooper et al., 2018). The problem with this assessment is that basic military pay may only account for 45-60% of the complete

salary and compensation military members receive. Allotments may consist of basic compensation for sustenance, basic compensation for housing, and various other allotments dependent on where they are stationed and what position they are currently in. This is an alarming reality when negotiating salary standards in the search for appropriate compensation (Sokol et al., 2021). After many years of military service, the annual salary of military members appears much smaller than reality and can harm rather than help negotiation without the proper education of HRDs and TA teams (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

The issue arises when looking at years of experience within a military setting without any civilian experience (those who joined the military at 18 years of age). Although they may have over a decade of impactful, efficient, and impressive experience, if the hiring team is unable to translate that experience, the candidate is severely handicapped compared to those with a couple of years in the field they are applying to (MacLean, 2017). Another factor was a limited understanding of military experience and understanding, specifically the assumption of skill capability, leading to a mismatch of skills and misplacement in an organization. Hiring managers may make assumptions about candidates that lead to work and positions that the candidate is overqualified for just because they need someone who will work hard for them, usually at a compensation rate much lower than the equivalent in the military world (Manniste et al., 2019). There is also a major split between enlisted members and officers when it comes to translating those skills into civilian environments, specifically officers who have been in positions of power. All other members without that type of impact and impression in the local

community may struggle with getting the compensation they have earned and deserve, leading to a higher likelihood of turnover or unemployment (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

### ***Civilian Compensation***

Civilian compensation is rooted in years of direct and relatable experience as well as formal education and certifications (Manniste et al., 2019). Hiring teams are trained in the manner of business and various areas of compensation, leaving a firm understanding of wage equality. The more formal education and relatable experience, the greater chance of employment and higher wages due to the understanding of civilian skillsets (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Civilian compensation is not comparable to military compensation for veterans unless the civilian job is rooted in a technical specialty that is a direct translation in either environment. Relatable and soft skills tend to become lost in translation or do not have an equal numerical translation in the civilian workplace (Manniste et al., 2019).

### **Transition & Human Resources**

HRDs and separating veterans are both sides to the coin that must work in unison to effectively locate, exploit, and determine the most influential areas of employment and skill translation. This section focuses on the stress of transition, transition programs, HRDs, TA teams, and the communication necessary to bridge all gaps when selecting, placing, and ensuring the best fits for employment when comes to the transitioning veteran.

### ***Transition***

During the transition process, various issues may arise such as adaptation, integration, and understanding of direction, which play a part in their effectiveness and ability to perform the tasks they were hired for. Even for those who move beyond the

struggle of receiving interviews and finding employment in places they prefer, their adaptability may take longer than most due to the cultural aspect change (Yanchus et al., 2018). Technical skills should come much easier due to service members' ability to adapt and overcome task shortfalls, but cultural change may take time (Derefinko et al., 2019). The civilian and military workplaces are completely different and will take time to transition into.

**Transition Stress.** The stress of transitioning out of active-duty service can directly impact the types of jobs and employers that are sought after dependent on the veteran's planning during pre-separation (Edelmann, 2018). For those who do not retire and voluntarily separate from active service, healthcare is no longer provided after their date of separation, leaving many families vulnerable. The increase in compensation requirements, benefits, and foundational monetary needs to balance lifestyles with health benefits, increases the chances of a less-than-perfect fit for the candidate and employer (Fitzwater et al., 2018). Nearly half of the military compensation is non-taxable meaning that salaries from the military are not equal to the same dollar value in the civilian world. There is a need for compromise, understanding, and flexibility in separating military families to ensure the standard of living is continued. One of the most common issues upon separation is that of acceptance into a completely different lifestyle, specifically a less structured and less hierarchical chain of command (Edelmann, 2018).

**Transition Program.** Various military-directed transition programs aid in the ability of military members to experience a taste of civilian life during their last 6 months of active service. The Skillbridge program is an essential tool that takes those veterans and pays them their normal military salary while working in a partnered company either



in the local area or somewhere else in the country (with special approval). This is a great tool combined with the education of local HRDs and TA teams due to the probationary period (Lafferty et al., 2008). During the 180 days (or less) the service member is not allowed to receive compensation from the company but is allowed to follow internship, apprenticeship, and other training plans to teach them important skills for the civilian workforce. If the civilian organization that utilizes the Skillbridge program is impressed with their veteran intern they may offer them full-time employment at the end of the internship. On the opposite side, if the veteran is not a good fit, there is no obligation to hire.

Although Skillbridge is a great program to help to separate veterans build their skills in areas of interest, it is a government-funded program which means it may not last, depending on the priority of importance decided by current leadership (Park et al., 2021). There are various privatized programs in the works to help guide and mentor separating veterans in the path of transition and professional adaptation, specifically the importance of skill development and translation (Stone, 2015). The issue with the privatized programs is funding provided by various contributors who need a concrete reason to participate (Vanderschuere & Birdsall, 2019). The utilization of Chambers of Commerce and other regional and community-based organizations is an important avenue to explore when looking for funding for such programs. In return for a contribution to such a program, organizational participants are receiving a direct line to skilled veteran candidates, specifically matched to their career field, and requested position. Where Skillbridge may fade due to financial priority and budget from a militarized standpoint, privatized community-based programs can form mutually beneficial relationships with

veteran candidates, saving time, money, and effort from turnover and replacement of employees that lack the necessary skills to accel (Stone, 2015).

### ***Human Resources***

HRDs and TA teams have an important role in the sourcing, screening, interviewing, and onboarding of veteran candidates, specifically creating the foundation for management and leadership to tap into vital skill sets (Davis & Minnis, 2017). As organizations have various customers, HRDs' main customer is the employee, focusing on their needs, placement, and development. This starts with the onboarding and initial probationary period that new hires face. First impressions and the impact that the face of the company has on the new hire is a great representation of the likelihood of employee retention and a decrease in turnover (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Proper onboarding processes increase the likelihood of retention by 50%, leading to organizational savings and a smoother process for candidates learning the companies' guidelines and core values. As many companies promote military friendliness, devotion, and hiring practices, a lack of HRD support leaves most of those statements empty and fruitless (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

Education of all members of HRDs is a beneficial choice to ensure that veteran candidates' needs are met from the first conversation with a TA specialist to the integration of core values, scheduling, training, and more with the HRDs manager and director (Davis & Minnis, 2017). As separating veterans are in a season of change, the more foundational and constant a scenario with consistent support, the more likely the mutually beneficial relationship between the veteran and the company will flourish (Davis & Minnis, 2017). HRDs are unable to create that support and beneficial

onboarding process if they are unaware of the cultural changes that the candidate will be facing. Research, development, training, education, and continuing study of military/veteran trends can give HRDs the leg up needed to acquire the best and most skilled individuals the military has to offer (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

**Talent Acquisition.** As HRDs have their roles to play once candidates have been selected, offers have been extended and accepted, none of that matters unless the team who oversees sourcing, interviewing, and screening has the same knowledge base and understanding of skillsets and beneficial characteristics of separating veterans (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Although it is improbable for TA teams to educate themselves fully on the variety of military occupational skillsets, general knowledge of broad skills, leadership integration training, and other important variables that impact most military members can help to level the playing field for veteran candidates (Davis & Minnis, 2017). As most military members will post their service somewhere on their resume the TA teams must do their research, specifically researching specific branches and career fields to determine their eligibility and goodness of fit for the position (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Cultural fit is a must, but many positions require focused and pinpointed experience to accomplish the tasks assigned to the opening. Cultural fit is considered more valuable than experience in entry-level and mid-tier job openings due to the likelihood of on-the-job training equating to the gap in necessary experience to complete all necessary tasks (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

**Hiring process.** The constant balance between cultural fit and relevant experience can be frustrating and lengthens the hiring process, but the result of diminished turnover, higher retention, and overall, more satisfied employees due to the positive work

environment more than justifies the effort (Davis & Minnis, 2017). There is also a saving of finances and budget cap through fewer training hours wasted, specifically due to the costs of onboarding, orientation, background checks, etc. The goodness of fit begins with TA teams and ends with HRDs capability of selling the company culture and dynamic to candidates who seek support, guidance, and employment in a company that treats them as a human instead of a number (Davis & Minnis, 2017). The target for veteran unemployment will always be zero, but reality must come into the equation, leaving the future of separating service members and veterans in the hands of those who see the value in mutually beneficial relationships which can be created by bridging cultural gaps between military and local communities and businesses (Veteran Affairs, 2021).

### **Biblical Foundations of the Study**

As service members are transitioned from active-duty military service to veteran status and civilian employment, there is a need for cultural acceptance and unification of varying ideologies. Romans 12:2 states “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (*English Standard Version*, 2001). Christians must realize that regardless of differences and cultural beliefs, Christians are one in Christ, meaning that they do not belong to this world or the categories of culture and sub-culture it has created. Everyone is to be accepted and treated with love because we were all sinners and were accepted and loved by Him. “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (*English Standard Version*, 2001,

Leviticus 19:33-34). These verses focus on fresh faces and can be utilized to invite and welcome new veteran candidates to the civilian workplace.

The integration and utilization of the HRD/TA team intervention could create a fundamental foundation for the cultural acceptance and transition of military veterans into civilian workplaces. With a better understanding of veteran skills and capabilities, HRDS and TA teams are more suited to bridge divides and cultural differences, helping to expand workplace diversity and capability. HRDs and TA teams can advocate for and create opportunities that may not be present without the knowledge gained from the training intervention.

### **Civilian/Military**

Although the comparison between civilians and military members is not directly specified in scripture, there are many examples of varying groups and nations that co-exist and work in unison regardless of differences. 1 Peter 3:8 specifies the command “Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind” (*English Standard Version*, 2001). Even if the similarities and common ground are not obvious and easily seen, it is the mission of Christians to integrate and love others, specifically reaching others for the gospel, opening gateways, and bridging gaps in communication, understanding, and capability as a team.

I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Ephesians 4:1-6)

This is an essential focus due to the similarities in needs for HRDs and TA teams to emulate as advocates for veteran candidates. Without a bridge to connect the transition gap, veteran candidates may never get an opportunity to prove themselves as confident, skilled, and effective leaders with the capability to become cultural-change ambassadors. HRDs and TA teams can become trailblazers for organizational diversity, focused on creating a unified work culture that embraces difference as a strength.

### ***Workplace Diversity***

God speaks on the differences and diversity of people specifically illustrated through rich and poor in many areas, but He speaks of the segregation and separation of diverse and different people.

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and says, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? (*English Standard Version*, 2001, James 2:1-5)

In the realm of bias and diversity, those who would select candidates must understand bias, separation, and belief of what they consider worthiness.

Misunderstanding a member of a different culture, nationality, or group can lead to missed opportunities and sacrificing their skills and experience.

Civilians and military members are comprised of varying parts, different perspectives, skillsets, and experiences. Diversity and diversity management plays a pivotal role in the success and development of mission success. God created all people differently regardless of the similarities between many, the differences are what spark progression, perspective change, and success. Like-minded individuals will come to similar conclusions, leaving larger areas for failure. “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your sight” (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Romans 12:16). There is always something to be learned about one’s self and others, specifically through the differences associated with varying groups that interact with one another. As civilians begin to accept veterans into the workplace, there are various levels and areas of skills that could easily be taught, while veterans have much to learn from civilian employees as well. The importance is that individuals are not all-knowing, and God created them to praise Him, interact with one another, love each other, and work together for His glory and will.

### ***Workplace Similarity***

The key to embracing workplace diversity and the benefits thereof is to locate common ground through similarity. Christians interacting from both civilian and military structures have the most important common ground through love and following God. This common ground is solidified through various verses about the image we were

created in, specifically in God's image so we are to be as close to God as possible while on earth. "So, God created man in his image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Genesis 1:27). The focus of similarity is that of loving people regardless of differences and following His commandments. "If you fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well" (*English Standard Version*, 2001, James 2:8). This is a commandment to follow His will and love others as oneself, bridging diversity through struggle and hardship, mirroring His love for everyone. Christians have the similarity to build upon, but for the situation of Christians and non-believers, it is even more difficult to find commonalities.

### **Summary**

Veterans need support from various entities and areas of their lives to properly transition from military culture to civilian culture, specifically they need to understand that their mission is not over, and they still have a purpose (MacLean, 2017). The lack of education of HRDs and TA teams was evident in the misplacement of skills and positions along with compensation mismatch (Davis & Minnis, 2017). There are varying differences and similarities between military members and military work structure with civilians and their work structure. The unification of different perspectives can help to establish more efficient and effective means of mission success (Gorman et al., 2018). Diversification and diversity management aid in the ability to guide and lead the process of differing mentalities (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

Although military transition programs are present many military members are ineligible for them, leaving them with little help during the transition. HRDs and TA



teams are the first lines of employment meaning without their skills and knowledge increases in the capabilities of the candidates they screen, equality and fairness will be left out of the hiring equation (Edelmann, 2018). Military members must prepare themselves by doing research, and educating themselves on expectations, healthcare costs, and areas of interest in the working class, but after every item is checked on the veteran's to-do list it still comes down to hiring decision-makers (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Transition programs are helpful resources that are tailored to certain criteria, servicemembers, and groups of separating veterans, but they're only a small solution to a much larger problem.

### **Multiple Needs**

Civilian workforces need resilient, determined, and focused leaders that can create change and ensure mission success by utilizing years of experience, skillsets, and training through various scenarios and mission sets (Edelmann, 2018). Separating military members need foundation and support to ensure that one of the largest changes in their lives goes more smoothly and they're able to come out on the other side stronger and more focused than ever to integrate themselves back into civilian life (Davis & Minnis, 2017). As civilian organizations need competent and skilled leaders to take charge, veterans need a place where their skills can be utilized and become difference-makers. Many military service members find purpose in their military service and without it, they may find themselves searching for purpose elsewhere as a reason to push forward and grow (Perkins et al., 2020). Every member will have different expectations, needs, and desires for what their work-life after the military will look like, but those that want to find

their limits and exceed them, are handicapped by poor translation and understanding of what they have to offer (Turner & Moran, 2021).

Civilian organizations need employees that are culturally fit rather than decades of relatable experience, specifically due to the likelihood of turnover if they are not a cultural fit or become toxic to the work environment (Thomas et al., 2018). Military members are engrained in a team environment but are also trusted with high levels of individual work and responsibility for mission success. Their ability to adapt, overcome and utilize what resources are available to complete the mission makes their skillsets, experience, training, and capability priceless in the face of a civilian workforce in desperate need of leadership and direction (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

### **Biblical View**

God has created mankind all in His image, but everyone is very different, leaving much room for growth, unification, and utilization of each other's skills to grow and develop individually. Isaiah 40:17 states clearly how mankind compares to God "All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness" (*English Standard Version*, 2001). Diversity helps develop those of varying mentalities and perspectives and nothing less than an intentional integration of God's will into our lives. The Christian purpose on this earth is to glorify God and by doing so unite as one people for his glory, but humans are beautifully and wonderfully made to be different in various ways. Civilians and veterans are different in the way they are trained, educated, and developed, but the similarities and differences can be utilized for the better of both groups. The key is to put aside bias, preconceived notions, beliefs, and thoughts of superiority or inability to learn from someone so different.

## Research

HRDs and TA teams have the power to turn the tide in the struggle of veteran unemployment and struggle during separation from active military service, which places the target of focus on them. HRDs and TA teams must be educated, informed, and taught the valuable skills and what exactly veterans have to offer to the civilian workforce (Opengart, 2021). Once they learned to decipher, determine, and translate the various veteran skill sets (on a basic level), the likelihood of veteran selection and employment increased (Davis & Minnis, 2017). As military veteran skills become more widely understood and the contribution given to the workforce is more well-known the percentage of unemployed veterans can continue to decrease. Turnover rates and retention issues may also find themselves decreasing as a direct correlation to the employment of veteran leaders and decision-makers. Standardized training interventions help to shine a light on miscommunication, misunderstanding, and lack of knowledge when it comes to veteran skills, compensation, and experience (Liggans et al., 2019). The hiring process begins with HRDs, and TA teams, and, the solution also begins with them, giving veterans fairness and equality (Manniste et al., 2019).

As an extensive dive into what is known and what is not known about the veteran transition into the civilian workplace has been conducted, the following chapter will shift to the methodology and research used to explore the pathway identified to fill the gaps in education and training within HRDs and TA teams. The identified gap in knowledge, training, and education on the transitioning of the military population in HRDs and TA teams, led directly to the necessity of this study and gave a concrete foundation for its prevalence and necessity.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

### Overview

The focus of this chapter is the methodological and research-based standards that were utilized to accomplish the goals of this study. Research questions that have been established, research design, participants, procedures, instrumentation, analysis, assumptions/limitations/delimitations, and a final summary created a concrete foundation of methodological focus for this study. The first foundational aspects of the study are the research questions, both guiding the direction and generating the driving force. Next, the research design determines the detailed scope of focus through a phenomenological lens, illuminating veterans' skillsets and experience in the civilian workplace. The following section highlights the participants for the study, specifically targeting HRDs and TA teams to interact with the disseminated training intervention and give their feedback through survey responses. Next, the study procedure breaks down the step-by-step directions from start to finish, specifically participant selection criteria, disqualifiers, intervention dissemination, feedback retrieval, data collection, and analysis, compensation for participation, and all points of contact with the participants from start to finish.

After the study procedure, the instrumentation and measurement section highlighted the specifics of the instruments and tools that were disseminated to the participants of the study to determine reliability, validity, credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. The data analysis section magnified the scope of focus by determining the appropriate approach to the selected research methodology and research design. The next section lists the various delimitations, assumptions, and

limitations of the research methodology, also illuminating those same details for the participants, including purposely placed roadblocks by the researcher. Finally, the summary section highlights what has been covered in this chapter, while transitioning into the results section of the study.

## **Research Questions**

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: Will the integration of a veteran skills training intervention effectively translate veteran work experience to HRDs and TA teams?

RQ 2: What aspects of the intervention are most impactful?

RQ 3: What aspects of the intervention are least helpful?

RQ 4: Will the information presented, and knowledge obtained from this training regarding the parallels between military and civilian workplace constructs impact hiring decisions?

## **Research Design**

The research is a qualitative study with a phenomenological design intended to examine the impact of educational training integration based on military veteran skillsets towards HRDs and TA teams as well as their decision-making steps when considering veteran candidates for hire. Qualitative methodology is best utilized in areas of study that require expansive data, and specified insight into recollection, experience, and perception of events involving belief and human factors (Denny & Weckesser, 2019).

Phenomenological design is the chosen design due to the unique perspective and plethora of data present in decision-making when it comes to areas of human belief surrounding a phenomenon (Larkin et al., 2019). This gives support for the use of a phenomenological

design due to the HRDs, TA teams, and veterans' perception of veteran transition into the civilian workplace. A qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach gives greater depth into the human experience and a profound understanding of the reasoning and motivation of HRDs and TA teams' cognitive process when examining veteran candidates for hire (Denny & Weckesser, 2019). By researching the processes and detailed reasoning of HRDs and TA teams' hiring strategies, deeper insight into the gaps of knowledge and skills mismatch present may become more defined.

Overall, the use of a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological design is supported by the open-ended research questions, the purpose of the study revolving around participant feedback, and the perspective of hiring decision-makers on veteran candidates entering the civilian workplace (Larkin et al., 2019). Further support and reasoning can be located within the literature review chapter, which expands upon the continuous nature of studying veteran transition into the civilian workplace. The qualitative methodology with a phenomenological design was appropriate to locate common themes, justifying continued study into the veteran transition phenomenon (Denny & Weckesser, 2019).

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited from five social media groups focused on HRD's and TA Teams. A recruiting post was disseminated to all five social media groups asking for those interested in the study to e-mail stating such (A copy of the recruitment post is included in Appendix A). The desired recruiting outcome was to have as many HRD, and TA team representatives accept the participation request for the training intervention and feedback survey. Once the final number of willing participants was determined, the

PowerPoint training intervention was disseminated via email as well, leading to open and closed-ended questions via phone survey to discuss feedback from the PowerPoint training intervention that was scheduled through the application Calendly, allowing participants to schedule those 30-minute blocks of time. The desired participant number was determined once qualitative saturation had been achieved, which produced detailed insight into the effectiveness of the training intervention as well as the location of varying themes and insights from each participant. Qualitative research saturation is when (through interview or observation) there is a noticeable repetition in located themes, specifically, the analysis of the data no longer leads to discoveries, opinions, ideas, or themes (Sebele-Mpofu, 2020).

If saturation had not been met through HRD/TA team participants of the previously mentioned five social media groups, invitations for participation would have been extended to other social media groups with an expansion of Industrial/organizational Psychology focus in the group criteria (ensuring the participants still meet the initial recruiting criteria) until saturation was met.

### **Study Procedures**

Participation invitations were posted to five social media groups, targeting HRDs and TA teams. Those who wished to participate e-mailed their desire to participate and were e-mailed a copy of informed consent. Informed consent was mandatory for this research study, specifically in the best interest of the participants, outlining key components of purpose, survey completion estimates, participation is voluntary, risks, anonymous participation, and the recording of the interviews through recording software via personal computer and storage of recorded data (A copy of the informed consent

statement is included in Appendix B). After implementation of the benefits, skillsets, and compensation training through email dissemination was accomplished, scheduled phone interviews for 30-minute time slots per person were implemented to collect all responses, comments, perspectives, and feedback from HRDs and TA team representatives. A follow-up e-mail with attached informed consent was sent to those who responded with an indication that they were interested. The training intervention PowerPoint and demographic questionnaire were attached and sent in the follow-up e-mail and the final slide of the intervention contained a link to Calendly, a scheduling calendar application that aided in scheduling interviews. There were various openings for 30-minute windows of time from which the participants chose. The participants e-mailed back the demographic questionnaire and scheduled the 30-minute phone interview.

Once the participants chose a timeslot, an email verification was sent to both participant and researcher. Participant responses and other pertinent data were recorded during the phone screen via Microsoft Teams on a personal computer, stored in separate folders for categorization and organization, and locked with password protection. Personally identifiable indicators were not present and only the category of business type was used for identification. All participants were compensated via a \$10 amazon gift card code which was emailed to them upon completion of the training and feedback for their contribution to the study.

## **Instrumentation and Measurement**

### **Training Intervention**

A training intervention with veteran skills, experience, compensation, and benefits compared to their civilian counterparts was disseminated to participants that agreed to



partake in the study. This intervention compared vital data highlighting differences in pay structure, benefits compensations, perceived value/worth, experience, and skills. The training intervention consisted of compensation gaps due to taxable/non-taxable allotments in comparison to civilian salary basics, varying levels of military skill sets that were focused on the veteran's specific military job, their rank, and additional duties that may fall outside of the previous two categories. Benefits such as health, dental & vision come at no monetary cost to the military member, creating more total value and opportunity for inequality of pay/benefits between civilians and veterans. This compensation breakdown equates to annual salary when those benefits, allotments, and allowances are included, which will show more accurate representations of military salary as compared to civilian counterparts. Employment rates, benefits, skillsets, and education for civilians and veterans build a foundation for the inequality and mismatch that is seen with qualified, skilled, and educated veteran candidates.

### **Intervention Survey**

A 12-question phone-based intervention survey (scheduled through Calendly) was disseminated to participants who agreed to take part in the training intervention to assess the impact, effectiveness, and validity of the training intervention. The survey questions aimed to determine what detailed changes would be necessary, specifically what can be altered to ensure that the most impactful training is reaching HRDs and TA teams.

### **Data Analysis**

A thematic approach to qualitative analysis is an approach that identifies themes within data by assigning codes, which are determined by similarities, specifically phrases rather than specified codes (Burns, 2018). The thematic approach aided in the

organization, determination, and understanding of the data collected from the training intervention feedback by outlining the similarities in the themes that arise (Burns, 2018). A thematic approach was chosen due to its ability to aid in human views, perspectives, knowledgebases, and values and correlate appropriate data, giving flexibility to interpretation and can handle large amounts of data from participants (Burns, 2018). An inductive thematic approach allows the data located and transcribed to determine the recurring themes present for analysis. The training intervention was accompanied by a demographic questionnaire and a URL link to Calendly to schedule a 30-minute phone survey which asked specific questions related to veteran candidates, civilian candidates, interpretation of skills, and perspective of what is considered a good candidate to the participants. The demographic data was transcribed from the returned demographic questionnaire as well as the audio-recorded survey responses and coded through color coordination for business size and location that was determined during analysis.

A thematic analysis aided the transition of coded data into qualitative themes, specifically aiding in the determination of relevancy and validity, eliminating unnecessary or assumed themes (Burns, 2018). The review and naming of themes shaped the structure of the data that was transcribed into the appropriate sections of this study.

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

This study has various assumptions, limitations, and delimitations aimed at the qualitative design, data collection, target audience, participants, and processes. For this qualitative research design, phenomenological design, and thematic approach, an intervention was created and disseminated to members of HRDs and TA teams to educate them on the transferrable skills and education of transitioning veterans.

## **Delimitations**

Delimitations are important in capturing the scope of the researcher's focus and effort to capture specified and finite data, but the strength of delimitations can become its weakness. Researcher-placed barriers may eliminate important data if the researcher is unsure of the exact purpose of the study. The benefits of delimitations are clarity, focus, credibility, and validity, specifically shining a light on the pertinent data and locating the outcome that is most relevant (Goerres et al., 2019). The delimitation for this study is that of creating boundaries at the knowledge/feedback level, focusing on hiring decision-makers from a previous veteran transition event that have already shown interest in veteran candidates by attending. The study draws a line of delimitation at the utilization of a training intervention directed at HRDs and TA teams, gaining the feedback to shape and guide future research on veteran integration into the civilian workplace. The study is not directed at decreasing veteran homelessness, substance abuse, or unemployment rates, although those are all possible impacts of educating hiring decision-makers, further research will be needed to explore these various pathways.

## **Assumptions**

Assumptions within the research have the strength of known data that is understood as fact, but on the other side, assumptions can be inaccurate, leaving room for error (Tokarz, & Malinowska, 2019). Assumptions that follow for this section are that of survey issuance, specifically the integrity and honesty of survey participants, and their willingness to utilize professional criticism. The utilization of anonymous results should help to keep integrity intact and derive the most useful and honest data from the survey (Tokarz, & Malinowska, 2019). Another assumption for the study is that the target

audience will have some experience with talent acquisition and interviewing, solidifying the need for them to receive the training intervention focusing on veteran candidates.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are another inevitable portion of research studies, leading to the necessity of an outline of such limitations for this study. There are consistent limitations within the use of qualitative methods, such as the lack of visualization of cause-and-effect correlations, a vast amount of data to sift through, and the generalizability of the data (Goerres et al., 2019). As an intervention directed at HRDs and TA teams are finite and tangible, some generalizations bleed through, specifically aimed at the experience and multi-faceted nature of HRDs and TA Teams in an organizational structure. The limitations are grounded in the types of employees needed to fill roles, the work culture, and the prevalence of HRDs and TA teams in the organization (Dexter, 2020). The amount of time that must be dedicated to a qualitative study design results in verification due to participant data flow control, investigation of causality, and lack of statistical representation are all consistent limitations in the realm of qualitative design data (Goerres et al., 2019). The major limitation of this study revolves around the diversity and multi-faceted nature of HRDs and TA teams in various organizational structures, leaving much room for rejection of such an intervention due to perceived unimportance.

### **Summary**

This chapter has focused on the methodological structure of the study, specifically how the foundation is built upon qualitative methodology with a phenomenological design and thematic approach. This is highlighted by the utilization of a training intervention focused on veteran transferrable skillsets and experience. The participant

group was that of HRDs and TA team representatives within social media groups. Informed consent was obtained before dissemination of the training. The training intervention was accompanied by a demographic questionnaire and a URL link to Calendly to schedule a 30-minute phone call to discuss a 12-question survey that focused on the feedback of those who participated in the training intervention, specifically their thoughts, beliefs, and responses to the intervention as well as business industry demographics. The feedback was utilized to analyze the effect of the training and potential improvements to better educate members of HRDs and TA teams.

The results section will serve as the foundation to build on for further research and intervention development. This will be accomplished by further study and the utilization of participant feedback, to educate greater numbers of HRDs and TA teams. The next chapter will focus on the results of the study, specifically the overview, descriptive results, findings of the study, and a final summary with the details from the obtained data. With the completion of detailed descriptions of each methodological component, the focus will shift in the next chapter to the results of the study.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### Overview

This qualitative study and phenomenological design aimed to examine the impact of educational training integration based on military veteran skillsets towards HRDs and TA teams as well as their decision-making steps when considering veteran candidates for hire. Data collection was completed by posting a recruitment post on five social media groups focused on HRD's and TA Teams which had a total of 96 respondents with only 14 completing the entire process, 3 choosing not to submit the demographic survey, and participation criteria removing the other 79 respondents (A copy of the recruitment post is included in Appendix A). The disqualification criteria consisted of a lack of signed informed consent, a lack of recruiting experience and not participating in scheduled interviews. Participation took 45-65 minutes in total, split between three-time slots, starting with a 5-minute introductory demographic survey (via email), followed by one 15–30-minute slot for review of the disseminated training via PowerPoint (via email), and a 15 to 30-minute slot dedicated to an audio-recorded phone interview consisting of 12 questions about the training. The demographic survey consisted of seven questions that started with verification that the participant is currently or has previously been in a recruiting, TA, or similar role that included sourcing, recruiting, and interviewing. Follow-up questions focused on business size and geographical location of current employer, age group, highest education level, and current employment status.

The first two survey questions issued during the recorded interview portion of the process were focused on understanding the participant's knowledge level of veteran skillsets before and after the training intervention. Follow up questions focused on

training intervention relevancy, usefulness in the participant's workplace, and asking what factors would keep them from utilizing the training in their work life. The remaining survey questions focused on determining the most impactful and effective portions of the training, if the training was clear and logical and suggestions for improvements to the training to increase effectiveness. Moving forward, there will be highlights of the results from data collection such as demographics, questionnaire responses, and other descriptive results. Study findings focused on the foundational research questions will follow, which will contain the research findings and themes that formed during the data collection process. The chapter will conclude with a summary of all content previously mentioned in the results section.

### **Descriptive Results**

A demographic survey (A copy of the Demographic Survey can be found in Appendix D), as well as training intervention, were disseminated to all 17 participants with the 7-question demographic survey being e-mailed before the training intervention and the 12-question training intervention questionnaire utilized during the phone interview.

#### **Demographic Survey**

Out of the 17 participants used in the qualitative analysis, only 14 completed the demographic survey and participated in the entirety of the study (A copy of the Demographic Survey can be found in Appendix D). The first demographic item asked if the participant currently or previously worked as a recruiter, talent acquisition specialist, or in a role that included sourcing, recruiting, or interviews. All 14 participants that completed the demographic survey answered that they had worked in or currently work

in those areas. The next question focused on the size of the business each participant worked for with six participants working for a company of 300-500 employees, three working for a company of 50-150 employees, three in a company of 150-300, and the final two were on opposite ends of the range with one working for a company with under 50 employees and the last with over 500 employees. Geographic location in the United States was determined with five located in the northeast, three in the southeast, three in the Midwest, two in the southwest, and the final participant in the northwest. Six participants were specific to the talent acquisition field and eight were human resources specific. The age range of the participants was mostly in the 25-34 range with nine participants residing in that range with three in the 35-44 range and the last two in the 18-24 range.

The final two demographic questions focused on the highest education level achieved and employment status. All participants graduated high school at the minimum, with one participant stopping there, six earning a Bachelor's, six earning a Master's, and one participant with some college and no earned college degree. Seven of the participants are currently designated as full-time employees, five as part-time, and two as self-employed. Two participants designated themselves as students with one being a part-time employee and one a full-time employee.

## **Study Findings**

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: Will the integration of a veteran skills training intervention effectively translate veteran work experience to HRDs and TA teams?

RQ 2: What aspects of the intervention are most impactful?



RQ 3: What aspects of the intervention are least helpful?

RQ 4: Will the information presented and knowledge obtained from this training regarding the parallels between military and civilian workplace constructs impact hiring decisions?

### **Research Question One**

Research question 1 focused on the effective translation of veteran work experience to HRD and TA teams. Questions 1, 2, 7, 11, and 12 from the feedback survey collected data to address this question. Questions 1 and 2 inquire about the participant's knowledge of the course topic before and after the training intervention. Focusing on knowledge before the training intervention, six participants stated that they were slightly knowledgeable, three stated they were not at all knowledgeable, three claimed to be very knowledgeable and five stated they were moderately knowledgeable on the course topic. After the completion of the training survey, one participant claimed to be moderately knowledgeable, six were extremely knowledgeable and 10 claimed to be very knowledgeable on the course topic.

Survey questions 11 and 12 focused on the training interventions' structure and organization by utilizing yes or no responses.

Question 11 assessed the training interventions' organization and structure with 16 participants responding that the training was organized and easy to follow and one stating that it was not easy to follow. Question 12 assessed the training intervention structure with all 17 participants responding that the training content structure was clear and logical. Question 7 asked an open-ended question regarding improvements to the course to make it a more effective learning experience. Due to the question being open-

ended and targeting opinions, thematic analysis was utilized on the responses from the participants (Burns, 2018). The themes that were identified were to make the training more accessible via seminar, video format, or online course which was identified by 12 participants, condensing the material to be more concise and making it more mobile device friendly which was identified by three participants, one participant suggested personal accounts of biases that veterans have experienced during job searches and the final participant replied that the training was good as is.

### **Research Question Two**

Research question 2 is focused on the effectiveness of the course by asking what aspects of the training were the most impactful. Survey questions 6 and 8 collected data to answer the question by asking what the participant planned to use from the course and what part of the course was most helpful to their learning. Both questions were open-ended, leading to the use of a thematic approach to identify the major themes that arose. The themes that arose for question 6 were veteran transferrable skills which were identified by six participants, hiring/training by three participants, leadership skills by two participants, veteran benefits by one participant, and use of all aspects of the training by the last five participants. The themes that arose for question 8 were compensation and benefits by two participants, military/civilian hierarchy comparison by four participants, the structure of presentation by four participants, core values and skills by three participants, and the final four stated that all sections were equally helpful.

### **Research Question Three**

Research question 3 was addressed by survey questions 7 and 10, which asked open-ended questions about the least helpful aspects of the training and asked how the

course could be improved to make it a more effective learning experience. Due to the questions being open-ended, thematic analysis was utilized on the responses from the participants. The themes that were identified for question 7 were to make the training more accessible via seminar, video format, or online course which was identified by 12 participants, condensing the material to be more concise, and making it more mobile device friendly which was identified by three participants, one participant suggested personal accounts of biases that veterans have experienced during job searches and the final participant replied that the training was good as is. The themes that arose for question 10 were graphics/tables/text/verbiage which was identified by four participants, military units/ranks by three participants, references by one participant, and the final nine participants who claimed that all the training was equally helpful.

#### **Research Question Four**

Research question 4 was addressed with survey questions 3, 4, and 5 which asked how relevant the course was to their current work and if they would use what they had learned in the course in their work, and what factors will keep them from using the course content in their work life. Survey question 3 had five possible answers with 11 participants responding that they believe the training is “Extremely relevant”, five participants stated that it is “Very relevant”, and one participant stated that it was “Moderately relevant”. Survey question 4 had six possible answers with 16 participants responding with “Definitely Yes” they will use what they have learned in this training in their work and one participant responding “Possibly”. Survey question 5 asked what factors will keep them from using the content of the training in their work. There were seven pre-determined answers to this question and one “other” selection that asked for

elaboration. Two participants responded “I will not have the resources I need”, one responded “Course content is not relevant to my current work”, two responded “my supervisor will not support me in using what I learned”, 10 participants did not have any factors that would keep them from using the content of the training and two themes arose from the “other” selection. The two themes that arose were “not understanding certain aspects of the training” and “If the training is controversial” with one participant responding to each.

### **Summary**

Chapter four began with an overview depicting the details of data collection, participants, specifics of the training intervention, and data collected. The next section covered the importance of descriptive results, which focused on demographic answers from the participants of the study and study findings, which revolve around the foundational research questions that drive the study. Each research question was reiterated, compared to the survey questions issued during the interview, and the non-interpreted data was shared from the interviews. Every survey question and every participant’s response were organized by the corresponding research question. Participant responses were either multiple choice selection or open-ended responses that were gathered into themes. The next chapter will introduce a discussion of the data collected and move into a comparison between that data and the literature review of chapter two in the discussion of findings. Implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research will follow with a closing summary to close out the final chapter and research.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### Overview

This qualitative study and phenomenological design aimed to examine the impact of educational training integration based on military veteran skillsets towards HRDs and TA teams as well as their decision-making steps when considering veteran candidates for hire. This chapter will dissect the details of the data collected that was mentioned in the previous chapter by beginning with a summary of findings to outline the details of the findings discovered. Once the foundation of the study's findings is built, a discussion regarding the findings as they compare to chapter two will be initiated, focusing on the contribution of these findings towards the theoretical constructs and the biblical integration previously determined in chapter two. This section will outline the most important aspects of the study's findings and highlight what should be taken away from that data. The next section will focus on the implications of the study's findings, specifically the impact of the data on the scientific, veteran, and business communities. This will allow a deeper look into the connection between the study's purpose and the application of the study's findings.

After the implications have been laid out, the limitations section will magnify the previously mentioned limitations and list any limitations discovered within the data collection and analysis portions of the study. Once the limitations have been highlighted, recommendations for future research will be discussed, which will be derived from the study's findings. The final section of this chapter will be the conclusion of both the chapter and the entire study, summarizing the key details, outcomes, and implications of the research study.

### Summary of Findings

This section is focused on outlining the key components of findings for this study, broken up into closed questions responses and open-ended responses. The closed-question responses will start with the knowledge level of participants on veteran skillsets before the training and after, the relevancy of the training, if they would use what they learned, and what factors would keep them from using the training. The open-ended responses will start with what they plan to use from the training, how the course could be improved, what were the most helpful and least helpful aspects of the training, and if the content was well organized, easy to follow, clear, and logical. Nine of the 17 participants were slightly knowledgeable/not at all knowledgeable on veteran skillsets before the training while the other 8 were moderate to very knowledgeable. After the training, all but one participant responded that they were very knowledgeable to extremely knowledgeable on the subject after the training, with the final participant stating they were now moderately knowledgeable. All but one participant claimed that the training was very relevant or extremely relevant to their work, with the latter stating it was moderately relevant.

All participants but one stated they would use the knowledge gained from the training with one participant stating they would possibly use it. Ten of the participants did not find reasons that would prevent them from utilizing the knowledge they gained from the training while the seven others stated the course content is not relevant to their work, their supervisor will not support them, they will lack the resources, and if they do not fully understand all aspects of the training. From the open-ended responses, five participants stated that they would use all aspects of the training and the remaining 12

participants stated they plan to use transferrable skills in the workplace, development of hiring/training practices, leadership skills, and veteran benefits. Question 7 asked the participants how the training could be improved to make it a more effective learning experience. The consensus of all but one of the study participants (who did not believe the training needed improvement) was that the course could be improved by condensing the training into a less wordy and mobile-friendly experience, branching out dissemination efforts to reach more people, or taking personal accounts from affected veterans during the hunt for employment. When asked about the most helpful aspects of the training for learning, 13 participants stated that compensation/benefits, military branches/ranks, presentation structure, and core values/skillsets were most helpful. Four participants believed that all aspects were equally helpful for learning.

When asked what the least helpful aspects of the training were, nine participants stated that all aspects were equally helpful, with the other eight claiming the military unit and ranking structure, references, and the training graphics/tables/text were the least helpful aspects of the training. When asked if the training content was well organized and easy to follow, and if the structure of the content was clear and logical, all participants answered yes, with one participant stating that the content could have been more organized with less text crowding the training.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The literature from chapter two focused on the groundwork of veteran transferrable skills into the civilian workforce, specifically the difficulties of transition from the active-duty military into the civilian workplace. The literature also focused on Human Resource Departments and Talent Acquisition Teams' lack of training and

education on veteran skillsets in the scope of transferability into commonplace civilian positions (Ford, 2017). The findings and takeaways of this study, the literature and Biblical foundation of chapter two, and the overlaps of all three outline why the study was necessary.

### **Training Usage**

The responses from all 17 participants indicate that more than half of the group were not previously knowledgeable or were slightly about the transferable skills and impactful experience that military veterans offer the civilian workforce. After the training had been disseminated and all participants had completed the training, the responses were that all 17 participants claimed to be very knowledgeable or extremely knowledgeable except for one participant that claimed they were only moderately knowledgeable. The comparison of questions 1 and 2 indicates that the training was impactful and effective in participants' belief that they were more knowledgeable on the topic of veteran transferrable skills after they had completed the disseminated training. All 17 participants believed the topic was at least moderately relevant with the majority believing it to be extremely relevant to their current work and that all but one participant would definitely use what they learned. This indicates that the participants believe that what they learned from the training is relevant and will be utilized in their profession, leading the way for a more educated and prepared hiring force in the business world. A more prepared and educated hiring team may more easily identify parallels and commonalities in veteran skillsets and the prerequisites necessary to fill positions which the literature outlines as a key reason for veteran unemployment (MacLean, 2017).



Ten of the participants did not see any factors that would inhibit their ability to use what they learned from the training, but the remaining seven believed that they would experience issues. Seven participants believed they would either not have the resources necessary to implement the training, the training was not relevant to their work, their supervisors would not support the use of the training or they wouldn't fully understand all aspects of the training. Question eight asked the participants what part of the training was most helpful to their learning and identified that five participants believed that they would use all aspects of the training. The remaining 12 stated that the most impactful pieces of the training were the transferable skillsets, leadership skills, veteran benefits, and hiring/training practices. This indicates that although some participants will not be able to actively utilize the training in their current work environment, the training is effective at comparing veteran skillsets to civilian workforce equivalency, specifically the portion of the training that highlights skillsets, benefits, and hiring practices to apply the training in a recruiting environment. The literature builds a foundation on the importance of the HRD and TA team's caring and involvement in the improvement of human capital effectiveness, specifically keeping up with current events in the HR world and adapting to ensure all members are growing and developing (i.e., training, conferences and other forms of professional development) (Saks, 2022). The necessity of improvement and awareness in HRD and TA teams is highlighted in this study's focus on the gap between recruiting teams and veteran job candidates, allowing for future research and practice to focus on the maximum effectiveness of training to better equip HRD and TA teams for veteran applicants (Ford, 2017).

### **Training Improvement**

The responses from the candidates on opportunities to improve the training for better exposure paves a way for this and similar training to impact hiring teams on their decision-making skills, reaching them through various platforms (i.e., video, conferences, social media, etc.) and may increase the likelihood of the training material usage. When asked how the training could be improved, the participants responded that a mobile-friendly or more condensed format would be beneficial. Others stated that greater accessibility and reach to others in the industry would be a great improvement while one stated that the training was good as is and another that personal accounts of experienced biases by veterans in the job-hunting process would be helpful. These results show room for improvement in the way of training execution, specifically that more condensed and easily accessible means of dissemination (not PowerPoint), may be most effective in reaching more HRD and TA teams. When asked what the most and least helpful aspects of the training were, the responses were that compensation/benefits, military ranking/structure, the structure of the training presentation, and core values/skills were all helpful, while four determined all aspects of the training were equally helpful. The least helpful aspects of the training were stated as the reference section, units/ranking structure of the military, graphics/tables/text/verbiage and nine participants believed all aspects of the training were helpful.

The feedback from the other eight participants indicates that the least impactful aspects of the training are easily addressed. More tailored training with less wordy and crammed verbiage, more aesthetically pleasing graphs and charts, and less emphasis on individual rank could greatly improve veteran transferable skills training used in the workplace when the training is focused on millennial and post-millennial recipients (11

of the 14 demographic responses annotated they were millennial or post-millennial) (Paukert et al., 2021). When asked if the training was well organized, easy to follow, clear, and logical, all participants (except for one) answered yes that the training was organized, easy to follow, clear, and logical. The last participant answered no that the training was not organized and easy to follow, referencing the issue of condensing verbiage and text in a simpler manner. The takeaway from the participant's responses is that the training was effective at translating veteran work experience to HRD and TA teams, the most helpful and least helpful aspects of the training were outlined, and the information presented, and knowledge obtained from the training will be used and will impact hiring decisions. This study may help pave the way to a greater understanding of veteran capabilities in the civilian workplace by bridging the gap between HRD and TA teams and veteran transferable skills, specifically focusing on how the target audience learns best and how they perceive human resources effectiveness (Paukert et al., 2021).

### **Literature Comparison**

The results from the participant interviews parallel various areas of chapter two and highlight the importance of educating hiring decision-makers such as HRD and TA teams. In the literature review, six themes arose that highlighted the most impactful areas of the study, specifically military structure, education, training & skills, core values, compensation, and hiring decision-makers in the transition process (Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021). When comparing the results of the study with the literature regarding military structure such as rank and tier, some participants believe that information to be less important or non-factors, while others believed the comparison of military rank and civilian hierarchy was effective at gauging parallel comparison (Cooper et al., 2018). The

education comparison between the military's various types of education (career, rank, or positional) versus standard formal education was not highlighted in the most helpful or least helpful aspects of the training in the study results but is grouped into the response of "all aspects of the training were equally helpful". The sections on training & skills, core values, compensation, and hiring decisions in the transition process are focused on the comprehension, translation, and utilization of that data to make more informed hiring decisions in HRD and TA teams (Opengart, 2021).

The literature highlights the lack of education and training in hiring decision-makers, specifically HRD and TA teams misunderstanding veteran skill sets (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Study participants believed themselves to be somewhat knowledgeable on the topic of veteran transferable skills before the training and showed a consistent improvement in perceived knowledge after the training. Mismatches in compensation due to a lack of training on what equality means between military structure and civilian structure only add to the issue for veterans that make it through the initial pre-screening process when job hunting (Opengart, 2021). Although compensation, benefits, and job titles are dependent on many factors, without the proper training to decipher equality, veterans are at the mercy of assumption. Overall, the more educated and prepared HRDs and TA teams (or anyone in a recruiting role) are on veteran transferrable skills to source and recruit veteran candidates, the more likely veteran candidates will be given equal opportunity to move through the hiring process (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

### **Theory & Biblical Foundation**

Skills Leadership Theory (SLT) is broken up into technical, human, and conceptual skills, which are essential for all types of jobs, but the balance and percentage

of all three determine the level of management, whether lower, middle or senior leadership/management (Liggans et al., 2019). Middle management is an even balance of three aspects as the balance between lower and upper management, while lower management focuses more on technical skills and less on conceptual skills, which is reversed when looking at upper management makeup. SLT is applicable in both military and civilian workforce structures as there are comparable tiers in both, helping to solidify the transfer of skillsets. This is broken up into the comparisons of junior-enlisted and low-level management, NCOs and mid-level management, and SNCOs and senior leadership roles.

The Biblical foundation that is outlined is that of equality through diverse groups and various cultures. Although the comparison between civilians and military members is not directly specified in scripture, there are many examples of varying groups and nations that co-exist and work in unison regardless of differences. 1 Peter 3:8 specifies the command “Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind” (*English Standard Version*, 2001). The unification of diversity and similarity through a God-shaped lens creates a trifecta of inclusion and motivation to succeed in areas of conflict resolution and change in the workplace. Although the comparison between civilians and military members is not directly specified in scripture, there are many examples of varying groups and nations that co-exist and work in unison regardless of differences. Overall veterans are a diverse group that is under the stress of seclusion and segregation from the civilian workforce during their transition, as education of hiring-decision makers becomes a priority, the most influential aspect from a Christian

standpoint is that of inclusion and bridging the gaps created by structural and societal differences in civilian and military work environments.

The results from the study indicate that hiring decision-makers may be teachable and willing to use training in veteran transferrable skills to improve equality and fairness in the hiring process.

### **Implications**

This study supports that there is relevance in the human resource and talent acquisition world for veteran transferable skillsets. The outcome of participants believing themselves to be more educated and willing to utilize what was taught supports the need and the impact of such training on the desired audience. The more educated HRD and TA teams are for veteran candidates in the recruiting process, the more likely a mutually beneficial relationship can form between veterans and organizations (Tully, 2010). As more members of Human Resources and Talent Acquisition are trained on the benefit of veteran transferable skillsets, the more prepared and effective they can be at weighing candidates. The potential positive impact of well-educated recruiters is limitless, specifically reaching out to veterans who otherwise could become unemployed, homeless, or develop other issues from a negative experience in the transition process from active duty to civilian life. If veteran transferrable skills were more widely known and understood across HRD and TA teams, the likelihood of equality and fairness in the recruiting process may increase (Mattila et al., 2017).

A better understanding of the comparisons between veteran skillsets and civilian job requirements could positively impact both parties with veteran unemployment rates

decreasing, organization turnover rates decreasing, and a better relationship building between the veteran community and local businesses.

### **Limitations**

The major limitation of this study revolves around the diversity and multi-faceted nature of HRDs and TA teams in various organizational structures, leaving much room for rejection of such an intervention due to perceived unimportance. The perceived limitations of unimportance or lack of relevance to participants were mostly unfounded as all but one participant believed the training to be very to extremely relevant with the final participant believing it to be moderately relevant. The limitations of the expected outcome come into play as the target is to educate HRD and TA teams on veteran skill sets, but whether that will directly impact veteran unemployment rates is still questionable and limits a direct cause-and-effect scenario. Sample size and composition may limit the study's ability to account for differences in participants' demographic backgrounds, including the types of organizations for which participants are employed, the sizes of their companies, and their locations. The participant responses could also be altered by ideas of social desirability in the areas of human resources and talent acquisition, specifically, if participants were changing their natural responses to more favorable ones due to the nature of self-reporting. There is a limitation to the ability of generalization due to the small sample size and demographic composition, but these limitations do not negate the steps made toward closing the gap in current research and the findings support the need for future research.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The impact of veteran transferable skills training has had a mixed response from the participants, specifically on what aspects of the training were most/least helpful and how the training could have been improved to better support learning. A potential focus for future research could be that of the most impactful training methods, styles of learning, and how participants prefer to be taught. Greater knowledge on the topic of training dissemination from various platforms (i.e. video, in-person lecture, etc.) and their impact on participants could increase the rate of positive responses from such surveys and interviews. Research looking deeper into specific military careers that have a more direct transfer into civilian work could help to determine what military jobs have the highest unemployment rates or a more difficult time transitioning into civilian life. A further look into rank, specific military career, and formal education levels could help to identify the most at-risk sub-sections of the military. These sub-sections of the military could be highlighted and outlined to help condense and simplify future research and training for those in HRD and TA teams.

Veteran unemployment rates have decreased in the last few years and currently sit at 3.3% (Veteran Affairs, 2021). The turnover rate for recently separating veterans is increasing within their first jobs after military separation. Nearly 44% of veterans will leave their first post-military job within a year, correctly matching, understanding, and deciphering these skill sets in conjunction with organizational needs will save time, money, and effort (Stone, 2015). Using the results of this study as a foundation for future discovery, the impact of educated HRD and TA teams on veteran unemployment rates could greatly increase the overall impact of this study's accomplishments. The responses of all candidates illuminate the area of potential training improvement by way of



simplified and condensed training, lessening the impact of military rank unless compared to equal positioning in the civilian hierarchy. More focused and tailored training could help to keep the attention of participants and help to avoid a perceived feeling of irrelevance to the participant's specific situation.

### **Summary**

This chapter has highlighted the most important discoveries from this study and compares those results with the foundational aspects of Skills Leadership Theory and Biblical foundation. Hiring decision-makers are willing to learn and utilize what they have learned to improve the hiring process for transitioning veterans into the civilian workplace. Although some participants do not believe the training could be implemented in their work environments, they still believe the training to be beneficial and relevant. Most participants believe themselves to be more educated on veteran transferable skills after the training than beforehand and believed the training to be organized and easy to follow with the structure clear and logical. Although there were annotated improvement recommendations for the training, the consensus is that the training disseminated positively impacted hiring decision-makers in understanding veteran transferrable skillsets. This study has given a deep insight into the effectiveness of veteran skillset training and the willingness of those in a recruiting position to learn how to better support veterans, paving the way for future research that could positively impact transitioning veterans in the way of increased employment rates and decreased homelessness.

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**APPENDIX A:**  
**RECRUITMENT POST**

As a graduate student in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as a part of the requirements for a Ph.D. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study. The purpose of my research is to determine if training on the parallels between veteran and civilian employment is an effective method of educating the Human Resource Departments on veteran skill sets, as well as its impact on employment rates for separated military veterans. I am writing to invite eligible individuals to participate in my study.

Participants must be members of Human Resource Departments or Talent Acquisition teams or consistently serve in a recruiting role (sourcing, resume reviews, and interviews) to be eligible for participation. Participation will take approximately 45-65 minutes in total, split between three-time slots, starting with a 5-minute introductory demographic survey (via email), followed by one 15–30-minute slot for review of the disseminated training via PowerPoint (via email), and a 15 to 30-minute slot dedicated to an audio-recorded phone interview consisting of 12 questions about the training. Participants will be able to review their interview transcripts to confirm their accuracy. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please e-mail your intent.

A consent document that will contain further details about my research will be e-mailed to you. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me via email. Once I have received your signed consent form via e-mail, I will


**APPENDIX A: (CONTD.)**

reply with the 5-minute demographic survey and training. At the end of the training, there will be a link to the application “Calendly” which will give access to the available calendar and a 30-minute slot dedicated to the phone interview.

A \$10 amazon gift card code will be e-mailed to you upon completion of the phone-based feedback interview for participation in the study. If you have any questions, please reach out via email.

Thank you,

Jameson Gordon  
Ph.D. candidate / Liberty University



## APPENDIX B:

**Title of the Project:** Veteran Transition to the Workplace

**Principal Investigator:** Jameson Gordon, Ph.D. Student, Liberty University

### Invitation to be part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a member of Human Resources, Talent Acquisition, or consistently perform recruiting functions (sourcing, resume review, and interview). Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of educational training integration based on military veteran skillsets on Human Resource Department and Talent Acquisition teams as well as their decision-making steps when considering veteran candidates for hire.

### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Partake in a 5-minute demographic survey that will be e-mailed alongside the training.
2. Partake in a 15–30-minute training intervention focused on veteran skillsets, benefits, compensation, and comparisons of veteran candidates versus their civilian counterparts during the hiring process (via email).
3. Partake in a 20-35-minute audio-recorded phone call interview which will be slotted for a 12-question questionnaire consisting of closed and open-ended questions.
4. Participants will be given the opportunity to receive a copy of their interview transcripts.

### How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants may receive insight through the training intervention.

Benefits to Human Resource Department and Talent Acquisition Teams include the improvement in procedures, hiring practices, and utilization of capable military veterans during their separation from active-duty service in the civilian workplace.

### What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

## APPENDIX B: (CONTD.)

### How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of codes. Interviews will be conducted through a phone call where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Interviews will be recorded with recording software and stored in secured folders via a personal computer that is only accessible by the researcher.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

### How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Participants will receive \$10 Amazon electronic gift cards for their participation and completion of this research study. The e-mail containing the gift card code will be sent after data collection.

### Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

### What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

### Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Jameson Gordon. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Robyn Brown, at [REDACTED].

### Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by*

**APPENDIX B: (CONTD.)**

*federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.*

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researchers will keep a copy of the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above. Please sign, scan, and return via e-mail to [jgordon49@liberty.edu](mailto:jgordon49@liberty.edu).

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

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**Printed Subject Name**

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**Signature & Date**



**APPENDIX C:**  
**INTERVENTION FEEDBACK SURVEY**

1. Rate your knowledge of the course topic **before** the course.
  - Not at all knowledgeable
  - Slightly knowledgeable
  - Moderately knowledgeable
  - Very knowledgeable
  - Extremely knowledgeable
2. Rate your knowledge of (or skill in) the course topic now **after** the course.
  - Not at all knowledgeable
  - Slightly knowledgeable
  - Moderately knowledgeable
  - Very knowledgeable
  - Extremely knowledgeable
3. How relevant is this course to your current work?
  - Not at all relevant
  - Slightly relevant
  - Moderately relevant
  - Very relevant
  - Extremely relevant
4. Will you use what you learned in this course in your work?
  - Definitely not
  - Probably not
  - Possibly
  - Probably yes
  - Definitely yes
  - Not applicable — I did not learn anything new from this course
5. What factors will keep you from using the content of this course in your work?  
(Select all that apply)
  - I need additional training in the subject matter
  - I will not have the resources I need
  - I will not be provided opportunities to use what I learned
  - I will not have the time to use what I learned
  - My supervisor will not support me in using what I learned
  - My colleagues will not support me in using what I learned
  - The course content is not relevant to my current work
  - Other (please specify):
6. What, if anything, do you plan to use from this course?

**APPENDIX C: (CONTD.)**

7. How could this course be improved to make it a more effective learning experience?
8. What part of this course was most helpful to your learning?
9. What sector of business does your employer fall under (i.e., telecommunications, manufacturing etc.)?
10. What were the least helpful aspects of the training?
11. Was the content well organized and easy to follow?
12. Was the content structure clear and logical?

**APPENDIX D:**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY**

1. Have you previously worked as a recruiter, talent acquisition specialist or in a similar role that included sourcing, recruiting or interview scheduling?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
2. Business Size
  - a. Less than 50 employees
  - b. 50-150 employees
  - c. 150-300 employees
  - d. 300-500 employees
  - e. 500+ employees
3. What area of the country are you located in?
  - a. Southeast
  - b. Midwest
  - c. Northeast
  - d. Northwest
  - e. Southwest
  - f. Other
4. Does your experience align more closely with Talent Acquisition or Human Resources?
  - a. Talent Acquisition
  - b. Human Resources
5. What is your age?
  - a. 18-24
  - b. 25-34
  - c. 35-44
  - d. 45-54
  - e. Over 55
6. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
  - a. Less than a High School diploma
  - b. High school diploma or equivalent
  - c. Bachelor's degree
  - d. Master's Degree
  - e. Doctorate
  - f. Other
7. What is your current employment status?
  - a. Employed full-time (40+ hours a week)
  - b. Employed part-time (less than 40 hours a week)
  - c. Unemployed
  - d. Student

**APPENDIX D: (CONTD.)**

- e. Retired
- f. Self-employed