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Marching Forward: A Qualitative Examination of Adapting
Enlisted Veteran Leadership Skills in the Corporate Environment

Casey William Jensen

A Dissertation Submitted to The Graduate School at the
University of Missouri–St. Louis, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Business Administration with an Emphasis in Human Resource Management

St. Louis, Missouri

August 2022

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Disclaimer: This research paper, written by Casey W. Jensen, was prepared in his personal capacity. The opinions expressed herein are his own and do not reflect the views of the United States Military, United States Government, Health Care industry, or the University of Missouri System.

Abstract

Enlisted veterans are an enormous source of talent for the corporate environment. This study investigated how Post 9/11 enlisted military veterans utilized their military-gained leadership skills and experience in the corporate environment. Specifically, this study answered what leadership skills directly transferred and which skills required adaptation. Then more importantly, this study revealed how enlisted veterans adapted their skills to the corporate environment. A qualitative method was used to perform 17 semi-structured interviews of Post 9/11 enlisted veterans and non-veteran managers. This research found that only a portion of veteran skills directly transfer to the corporate environment, and many required adaptations. In addition, the novel finds self-reliance directly transferred, while mission-focused, loyalty, communication, humility, reprioritizing values, sharing military experiences, ambiguous dress code, lack of visual identifiers, profit strategy and planning, resource utilization, and conforming to corporate policies all required adaptation. Veterans primarily adapt their leadership skills through internal and external networking, mentors, coaches, managing and resetting expectations, and understanding light and dark ambiguity. The theoretical contributions of this research are in paternalistic leadership and veteran enlisted research. The practical implications assist veterans in understanding how to adapt and strategies to adapt their skills. In addition, managers and peers may use this research to understand veterans' challenges better when leaving military service. Next, talent acquisition professionals can use this research to better identify military veteran candidates for specific roles and have more clarity on veteran experiences. Finally, companies may use this research to build

integration programs to ease the transition of veterans coming into the corporate environment.

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The journey to complete this degree has been filled with every emotion imaginable. UMSL's DBA program provided me with a foundation that led to self-discovery that has taught me how to be a researcher, a better consultant, and more intuitive within my profession. Reflecting on this journey, I am grateful for the experience that has provided me so much.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

In an increasingly fast-paced and agile work environment, companies are looking for high-potential candidates that can quickly integrate into a company's culture and are ready to lead people and complex projects (Fernández-Aráoz, Roscoe, & Aramaki, 2017; Kirchner, 2018). The United States (U.S.) military enlisted force is a rich source of leadership talent that is adaptable and equipped to execute. The enlisted force is considered the backbone of all U.S. military branches (N.D.U., 2014). Also, the enlisted force is a plentiful source of critical leadership skills, such as team building, critical thinking, accelerated learning, and problem-solving skills that immediately impact business operations (Kirchner & Akdere, 2017; Pollak, Arshanapalli, & Hobson, 2019).

Enlisted military members attend required training that focuses on continuous development based on rank, job title, and assigned responsibilities. The formal leadership training programs are rigorous and required for advancement and promotion (Powers, 2019a, 2019b; Smith, 2020; U.S.A.F., 2019b; U.S.N., 2019). However, there is scant research on how veterans transfer, adapt, and utilize their acquired military leadership training and experience in the corporate environment. The primary goal of this study is to identify how Post-9/11 enlisted veterans transfer and adapt their military-gained leadership skills to the corporate environment.

Enlisted leadership development focuses on various topics (e.g., leadership, communication, legal environment) and expands on critical business skills, such as public speaking, coaching, and critical thinking. Further, the enlisted professional military education (E.P.M.E.) courses go well beyond leadership theory and practice. The design

of the courses is to improve the "whole person" through lectures, facilitation, experiential activities, assignments, and tests. For example, U.S. Air Force, enlisted members must receive a 70% or better on the written capstone scenario-based test and experiential activities in business writing, public speaking, and interpersonal communication. Graded experiential activities are performed live in front of students and facilitators for a shared experience. These activities include a formal coaching session over real business issues (e.g., tardiness, family issues, performance issues), public speaking, and business writing (e.g., written feedback, performance issues, and annual performance reports). Additionally, evaluations on teamwork and leadership skills are measured by performing drill-and-ceremonies demonstrations in which individuals are graded based on leadership and followership. Mayne (2013) states that military 'drill and ceremonies' "...helps develop pride and confidence in their actions, learning professionalism, and most importantly, it teaches them how to work as a team" (para. 6).

Enlisted members must demonstrate understanding and application by "extracting meaning and interpretation, exemplify, classify, summarizing, inferring, comparing, or explaining" (U.S.A.F., 2019, p. 11) the institutional competencies. For example, the design of the U.S. Air Force (U.S.A.F.) Airman Leadership School (A.L.S.) is a five-week required residency for members moving from an individual contributor to a people leader role. A.L.S. covers a wide range of topics, such as expeditionary airman (global operations), supervisor of airmen (leadership theory and practice), professional airman (laws, customs & courtesies, policy, and procedures), and supervisory communicator (reading, writing, presenting, interpersonal communication, and public speaking). In addition, the A.L.S. course grants nine credit hours towards an individual's Associate of

Applied Science Degree from the Community College of the Air Force, accredited by S.A.C.S.C.C. (U.S.A.F., 2019). Also, with the promotion of enlisted members, higher levels of formal leadership education are required and expand on management, leadership, and operations concepts. These courses include the non-commissioned officers (N.C.O.) academy (N.C.O.A.), a six-week in-person residency covering the military professional, operational airmen, unit manager, and managerial communicator and grant 11 credit hours (U.S.A.F., 2018). Another example of formal leadership development is the Senior N.C.O.A. (S.N.C.O.A.), a seven-week in-person residency. It expands on the military professional and operational manager, joint warfighter (a collaboration between internal and external partners), and senior communicator and grants 13 credit hours (U.S.A.F., 2019). Each military branch offers unique development opportunities for its members that fit within the branch's mission, but the primary focus on developing the whole person concept stays consistent. If enlisted members fail to pass the final requirements, their promotion is withheld or lost.

The progressive leadership and operational acumen courses better position enlisted members to build efficient teams, problem solve, force-multipliers (able to do more with less) and enforce the rules and responsibilities of the military to attain a desirable outcome. These members effectively lead and execute plans and responsibilities and take concepts to implementation (N.D.U., 2014). After completing the leadership courses, the annual performance evaluations gauge performance in several categories, including leadership, followership, and employee development (i.e., personal and professional development opportunities for themselves and their teams). For example, the Air Force (A.F.) Form 910 is the enlisted annual performance report for N.C.O., and A.F.

Form 911 is for S.N.C.O. The A.F. Form 910 covers three significant performance categories: (1) task knowledge/proficiency, (2) followership/leadership, and (3) the whole airman concept. The whole airman concept includes how well individuals adopt, internalize, and demonstrate core values and consider personal and professional development efforts for themselves and their work centers/departments. Finally, the whole airman concept considers how well individuals demonstrate camaraderie, embrace esprit de corps (morale), and act as a U.S.A.F. ambassador. The followership and whole airman concept align with formal education, including teamwork, communication skills, resource utilization, compliance, and enforcing standards (U.S.A.F., 2015a). Similarly, the A.F. Form 911 covers leadership, primary duties, followership, training (ensuring their teams are trained and have the necessary professional certifications), and the whole airman concept. Followership involves distinct requirements to execute orders and build teams through collaboration and communication (U.S.A.F., 2015b).

Despite the abundant leadership talent coming out of the military, neither veterans nor business corporations are sufficiently informed about the transfer and the adaptation process of these skills to the corporate environment (Kirchner, Minnis, & Stull, 2020; Minnis, 2017). In 2018, global corporate training spending was approximately 366.2 billion U.S. dollars, with about one percent (\$3.4 billion, 0.9%) allocated to leadership development (Training Industry, 2019). The U.S. spent over \$87.6 billion on corporate training and development in 2018 (Pontefract, 2019). However, companies may increase efficiency in attaining business objectives by hiring veterans who are already equipped with leadership skills and operational experiences to drive results. However, there is a lack of empirical research examining how veterans transfer, adapt and utilize the

professional development and on-the-job leadership experience they acquire in the military to drive business results in the corporate environment. In addition to a lack of awareness of what relevant leadership skills veterans bring to the civilian work context, there is also scant research on how enlisted members develop specific leadership skills during formal and informal military leadership training are adapted to the corporate environment (Stone & Stone, 2015).

The leadership track for enlisted military members follows an accelerated timeline based on the rate of promotion and individual rank. In many cases, military members can change locations, deploy to remote parts of the planet, and move positions with or without a promotion (Malinowski, 2016). As a result, opportunities are provided to military members to gain valuable insight on how to apply leadership and teamwork principles in different environments in a relatively short timeframe with formal leadership training and experience leading complex projects and programs (Price, 2011). On average, enlisted Air Force veterans attend their first formal leadership course around four years of service and before holding a formal leadership position (Miller, 2019). An employee in the civilian environment spends an average of ten years in a mid-level managerial position before their first formal applied leadership training, which may provide ample time for unproductive habits (e.g., poor communication, lack of soft skills, poor goal setting) to form (Blanchard, 2020). In contrast, enlisted members build management and leadership skills early in their careers, and these skills are continuously refined through formal (personal and professional development) and informal (coaching and mentoring) leadership development opportunities.

Brenner and Barnes (2012) suggest that it is challenging for many veterans to leave a meaningful and well-defined military culture and re-establish their reputation and a new career path in a more ambiguous civilian environment. In addition, military and corporate cultures have significant differences, such as a well-defined promotion system in the military versus a less structured promotion system in the corporate environment.

Company executives' lack of familiarity with veteran leadership attributes may be due to the low number of U.S. citizens that serve in the U.S. Armed Forces. According to the 2018 U.S. Census, only 7% of the adult population identify as veterans, and less than one-half of 1 percent of the U.S. population (1.3 million in 2020) of the U.S. population is currently serving on active duty (CFR.org, 2020). Veteran employment is spread across many industries, with the majority working in government (22%), followed by manufacturing (12%), and professional and business services (11%), which include jobs in consulting, management, and accounting (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Also, one of the most significant challenges for veterans is finding meaningful employment; therefore, their representation in corporate leadership roles is also limited (U.S.A. Facts, 2019).

Veterans' skills throughout their military careers are undoubtedly beneficial to employers (Minnis, 2017). However, veterans should be aware of the unique skills and values they bring to the corporate context. Therefore, scholars should conduct more empirical research to understand how enlisted military leadership skills are transferred and adapted for corporate success. This is important because (1) veterans bring value through an accelerated learning curve, which refers to the veteran's ability to develop and learn new skills and concepts quickly (Parker, 2012); (2) veterans are quick to build high-

performing teams (Gore, 2018); (3) veterans already have applied formal leadership training and experience. With a more precise understanding of veterans' leadership skills in the corporate environment created through scholarly research, practitioners could act on research-backed findings and create a win-win for corporations and a meaningful work environment for those who served the country.

Purpose and Contribution of this Research

Veterans are an essential source of leadership talent for public and private corporations. On average, veterans that retire with 20+ years of experience have a built mentality of service-above-self with ingrained values of integrity, honor, excellence, and commitment (Lake, Allen, & Armstrong, 2016). Veterans with less than 20+ years of service also provide significant value with their experience, training, and education, "...for the civilian sector, this amount of professional experience produces an enormous opportunity for the second occasion of many more productive employment years" (Lake et al., 2016, p. 506). When veterans transition from the military to a civilian environment, those skills may become "lost in translation" if veterans cannot identify implementation behaviors that require adjustment in the civilian culture. An inability to capitalize on these valuable existing skills could result in a loss of competitive advantage for organizations.

Identifying successful veteran transition strategies has multiple practical implications. First, findings contribute insights into the military's formal leadership development process through the veterans' lived experiences. Second, findings will inform veterans of best practices and strategies to adapt their military-gained leadership skills to the corporate environment. Third, there is scant research on veteran adaptation to

the corporate environment, and this study will attempt to fill that gap in scholarly research (Lake et al., 2016; Snyder, Wick, Skillman, & Frogner, 2016). Finally, this research will provide a practical framework for veterans to effectively and efficiently transfer and adapt their skills within the business context.

Overall, enlisted service members who complete formal leadership development in the military have unique skills and experiences that business organizations seek in leadership positions. This study aims to uncover veterans' specific adaptations when successfully applying military-gained leadership skills in a corporate environment. This study also addresses how veterans can better communicate and adapt their military-gained skills to the various levels of a corporate organization.

According to 38 U.S.C. § 101, veterans are "a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and was discharged or released from under conditions other than dishonorable." This study will focus on post-9/11 active duty enlisted veterans because this is the current population exiting the military and entering the corporate environment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Post 9/11 veteran refers to all those who served after the terrorist attacks in New York on September 11, 2001.

Research Questions

How do post-9/11 U.S. Military Veterans utilize their military-gained leadership skills and experience in the corporate environment?

- What leadership skills transfer (positive/negative) directly to the civilian business environment?
- What leadership skills require adaptation (positive/negative) to the civilian business context?

- How are these leadership skills (positive/negative) transferred or adapted to the corporate environment?

As part of this investigation, I identify the salient cultural factors that either facilitate or challenge the direct application of military leadership skills in the civilian business environment and the interpersonal cues that indicate that adaptation is necessary to the veteran.

In addition to interviewing veterans, I also synthesize responses from civilian managers of veterans to obtain an external perspective on veteran leader adaptation to the civilian environment. These managers could also speak to interventions that managers and organizations may implement to ease veteran adaptation to the new culture.

Summary

Enlisted military members' training occurs in a unique culture that focuses on developing leadership skills and values that should be useful in the corporate environment. The military is a self-sufficient entity that provides a culture that instills an ethos in each service member. This culture guides the force towards perseverance, responsibility for others, motivation by a higher calling, ability to set priorities, make tradeoffs, adapt, and accept dependence on others (Redmond et al., 2015), which are all critical to effective corporate leadership.

Enlisted veterans are a rich source of talent for corporations. Enlisted members start their careers as individual contributors and learn a specific skill set, such as technical training based on the profession. As their careers grow, veterans accelerate into leadership roles, typically within four years, with increased responsibility and job complexity (Powers, 2019a, 2019c; S. Smith, 2020; U.S.A.F., 2019). Also, enlisted

members can adapt to various cultures and quickly deliver results by learning to be multi-talented and resourceful to complete assigned tasks timely and successfully (N.D.U., 2014).

The veterans' ability to transfer the gained leadership skills is a significant competitive advantage to businesses. These skills include but are not limited to team building, critical thinking, accelerated learning curve (Parker, 2012), and problem-solving skills that immediately impact business operations (Kirchner & Akdere, 2017; Pollak et al., 2019) in the corporate work context. Additionally, enlisted members quickly adapt to new cultures and job requirements and build high-performing teams under ambiguous situations (Price, 2011). This research study aims to understand how post-9/11 U.S. military veterans to transfer, adapt, and utilize their military-gained leadership skills and experience in the corporate environment. The following chapter reviews the relevant extant literature, including previous research on skill transfer and veterans in the workplace. Chapter 3 describes the research methods for this study. Chapter 4 introduces the study's results. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the study's findings, theoretical implications for leadership and veterans research, practical implications for business organizations, limitations, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of Literature

This literature review will discuss six research streams that apply to this study. The first part reviews the military culture and briefly explains the military culture and the differences between military and corporate business culture. Second, the military development process will be reviewed, focusing on the process and formal and informal development opportunities. Third, a discussion of the transition process veterans experience identifies the challenges that occur during separation or retirement from the military. Fourth, we will review extant research on skill transfer and discuss the transfer of training theory and how it applies to military service and the civilian environment. Next, we will discuss self-efficacy theory and how it applies to veteran skill transfer and adaptation. Finally, a review of previous research on veterans in the workplace explains how veterans react and interact within the civilian business context.

U.S. Military Culture

Veterans are indoctrinated into the military culture from the start of service, and regardless of the length of duty, veterans report "strong identification with the military decades later" (Meyer, 2015, p. 416). Veterans typically attempt to live by the same military values (McCormick et al., 2019) even after exiting service. The military is an isolated and self-sufficient culture with limited interactions with the corporate environment (McCormick et al., 2019; Redmond et al., 2015). Military members are held to a high standard of conduct according to branch regulations, the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), and the Manual for Courts-Martial (MCM) (Meyer, 2015; Suzuki & Kawakami, 2016).

For this study's purpose, culture is defined as the idiosyncrasies that shape attitudes, behavior, values, belonging, purpose, worldview, and social norms of those with shared developmental experiences (Groysberg, Lee, Price, & Cheng, 2018; Kuehner, 2013; McCormick et al., 2019; Redmond et al., 2015). Regardless of the U.S. military branch, veterans undergo a similar cultural adaptation experience with a different mission. Understanding military culture can be challenging for an outsider, given the "distinct traditions, socialization, values, vocabulary, behavioral norms, and branch distinctions" (Hall, 2011; Ross, Ravindranath, Clay, & Lypson, 2015, p. 521). For example, upon entrance to the U.S. military, basic military training (B.M.T.) creates a new set of rules and standards (e.g., uniforms, saluting, marching, and curfew) which are put in place to assist the recruits in performing as a team and indoctrinate into a new culture. The military thrives on defined performance, significantly influencing service members' skills, knowledge, abilities, and group identity (Suzuki & Kawakami, 2016).

Many private and public companies see military culture as overly strict and rule-driven (Suzuki & Kawakami, 2016). Although military rules and regulations are restrictive with boundaries (Hall, 2011) and customs, it is mainly to get military members to work as a team.

Many military professions align directly with a business profession; for example, in the U.S.A.F., a profession of 8T000 (Enlisted Professional Military Education Instructor) directly aligns with the leadership, learning, and development profession within the business context (ONET, 2020a). Another example is that military air traffic controllers are held to the same Federal Aviation Administration (F.A.A.) requirements as the civilian environment (ONET, 2020b). Another important fact is that only 14% of

the armed forces' career fields are combat specialties, which means approximately 86% of military professions align with a comparable business function in the corporate environment (Constantine, 2018). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022), approximately 16.25% of military members are in a combat-related field, and 83.75% are in a career that may align with a corporate function. The most being Army with ~112,000 (29%) and Marine Corp with 43,000 (27%) in combat fields. However, military police or security forces may be considered a combat field based on their mission to protect the base.

Further, military culture demands that differences in race, religion, geographic and ethnic origins, economic, and educational backgrounds are used and viewed as a strategic advantage with a combination of diverse knowledge, skills, and abilities (K.S.A.s) for the greater good of the mission (Hall, 2011; Kuehner, 2013). This is an important distinction as each rank has a specific level of K.S.A.s that individuals must meet to grow a military career that does not distinguish between the individual's background, gender, or race.

Military Leadership Skill Development

This section reviews the formal leadership development programs per U.S. Military branch. Military leadership development is critical since this research examines how the military acquires leadership skills and transfers them to the corporate environment. In order to do so, we must have a foundational understanding of where veterans learned leadership skills.

The U.S. military has a rigorous learning and development program with self-driven and formal coursework (U.S.A.F., 2018). Understanding veterans' formal

leadership courses are essential to inform the research question. These designed opportunities build the whole person concept to make service members more knowledgeable and efficient. Leaders ensure that service members have opportunities to develop in all aspects, including engaging within the community (community service requirement) and education (leadership development and civilian academic degrees) (U.S.A.F., 2018)

Each branch of the U.S. Military has a distinct tiered approach to formal leadership development. The distinction lies within each branch's purpose, mission, and vision, which helps to ensure continued focus and accomplishment. For example:

- U.S.A.F. provides "compelling air, space, and cyber capabilities for combatant commanders. Excels as stewards of all Air Force resources in service to the American people, while providing precise and reliable Global Vigilance, Reach and Power for the nation" (U.S.A.F., 2020b).
- U.S.A. – "To deploy, fight, and win our Nation's wars by providing ready, prompt, and sustained land dominance by Army forces across the full spectrum of conflict as part of the joint force. The Army mission is vital to the Nation because we are the service capable of defeating enemy ground forces and indefinitely seizing and controlling those things an adversary prizes most – its land, its resources, and its population" (U.S.A., 2020a).
- U.S.N. – "To recruit, train, equip, and organize to deliver combat-ready Naval forces to win conflicts and wars while maintaining security and deterrence through sustained forward presence" (U.S.N., 2020).

- U.S.M.C. – "forward deploy to win the Nation's battles swiftly and aggressively in times of crisis. U.S.M.C. fights on land, sea, and air and provides forces and detachments to naval ships and ground operations. Marines have a long history of developing expeditionary doctrine and innovations that set the example while leading other countries in multinational military operations. These unique capabilities and leadership qualities make the Marines our Nation's first line of defense" (U.S.M.C., 2020f).

Table 1:

U.S. Military Entry Requirements

Requirement	Army	Air Force	Marine Corp	Navy
Min Age	17	17	17	17
Max Age	32	39	28	39
Residency	U.S. Citizen; U.S. National; Green Card	U.S. Citizen or Legal Resident	Legal Resident	U.S. Citizen or Legal Resident
ASVAB	X	X	X	X
Medical/ Physical Exam	X	X	X	X
Education	High School Diploma; GED; or GED with 15 college credits	High School Diploma; GED; or GED with 15 college credits	High School Diploma	High School Diploma or GED
Enlistment Terms	2 – 6 Years	4 – 6 Years	4 – 6 Years	4 – 6 Years
Inactive Ready Reserve Commitment	2 – 6 Years	2 – 4 Years	2 – 4 Years	2 – 4 Years

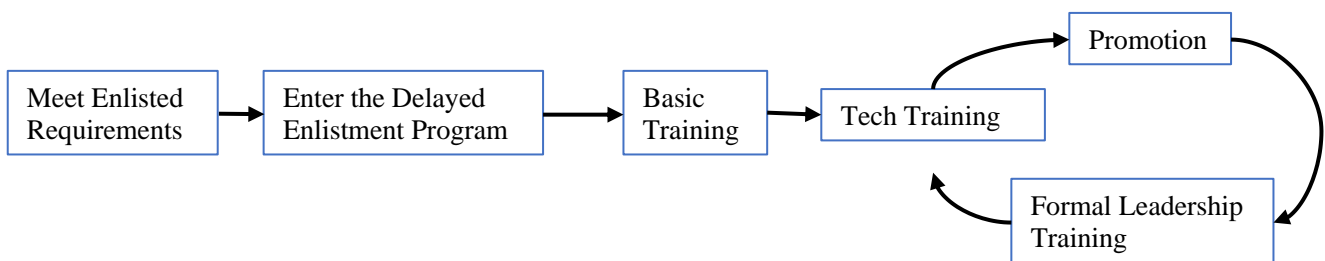
The above model demonstrates the typical cycle for enlisted members. First, entrants must meet branch enlistment criteria. Table 1 provides the essential information

for entry for each branch. The physical, medical, psychological, and cognitive requirements are specific to each specialty based on the required K.S.A.s needed to perform the function. As shown in Table 1, the only difference in requirements is that the age requirement for the Marine Corp caps is 28 years old, and the Army caps are 32 years old. Age is an important consideration given the physical requirements to accomplish the mission of the Army and Marines.

Once accepted, the recruit joins the delayed enlistment program (DEP), which allows an individual to prepare before basic training. The DEP creates an environment for individuals to enlist while waiting for an official date to attend basic training. Once the recruit enters basic training, and upon completing BMT, the military members attend specific technical training for their specialty. Once promoted to an N.C.O. rank, attendance in formal leadership and technical courses is required. From here, the cycle depicted in Figure 1 continues at critical points throughout a veteran’s time in service.

Figure 1

Military Development Cycle



A review of each branch's promotion cycles is necessary to understand the rigor and importance of formal military leadership development. Formal leadership development of military members directly relates to promotion to higher leadership roles. In this study, only the N.C.O. and S.N.C.O. promotions requirements are discussed

because these groups must have completed a minimum of one formal leadership development course and have several years of technical and leadership experience. As defined above, each branch has a specific mission that they must prepare service members to meet. However, formal development goes beyond just those missions into fundamental skills transitioning to a business context. All four branches have formal leadership training for E-5s before entering a leadership role. For example, the U.S. Army utilizes a developmental model with three dimensions; operational, institutional, and self-development. Each domain focuses on training, experience, and education (Army, 2018).

Next, a brief overview of each department's formal leadership programs will provide a baseline understanding of the purpose of each program. Each program is designed as a platform to develop influential leaders. Each military educational institution is accredited by a regional or national agency that provides standards and ensures that each program complies with the accrediting body's rigorous standards. Each branch may follow a unique structure and curriculum, but each provides comprehensive scenario-based testing and experiential activities to demonstrate working knowledge. In addition, the leadership skills and objectives are continually measured through annual performance reports.

- The Air University and the Marine Corps University are both accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) (SACSCOC, 2022a, 2022b)
- Army – Higher learning Commission (Higher Learning Commission, 2022)

- Navy Education and Training Command has nine subsidiaries nationally accredited through the Council on Occupational Education (COE) (Council on Occupational Education, 2022)

Air Force Formal Leadership Development Courses

The U.S.A.F. has four primary leadership development levels managed by the Air University and the Barnes Center for Enlisted Education. Each level has a primary tailored focus for each level. For example, level one is for transitioning from individual contributor to supervisor or manager, and level four is for the top one percent of the U.S.A.F. enlisted force to learn strategic leadership and the senior executive level. Below is a brief explanation for each U.S.A.F. enlisted leadership development course.

Level 1: Airman Leadership School (A.L.S.)

The A.L.S. is designed for enlisted personnel in grades E4 and E5. The course is four consecutive weeks and “prepares senior airmen to assume supervisory duties by offering instruction in leadership, followership, written and oral communication skills, and the profession of arms” (A.U., 2020b, para 1). A.L.S. focuses on leadership theory, business acumen, global operations, communications, and business writing (A.U., 2020b).

Level 2: Non-commission Officer Academy (N.C.O.A.)

The N.C.O.A. is the second level of U.S.A.F. enlisted professional military education. N.C.O.A. is a four-week, consecutive course designed for enlisted personnel in the grade of E6. The course “prepares Technical Sergeants to be professional, war-fighting Airmen and Space Professionals who can manage and lead units in the employment of Air and Space power” (A.U., 2020d). Additionally, the designed course

provides the “best academic” platform to “educate and advance the high ideals necessary for leadership, teamwork, good order, and discipline” (A.U., 2020d). The goal is to provide tools to lead people and manage resources.

Finally, senior leadership advocates for this program and invests in resources, people, and facilities, as there is excellent awareness of the vital training in strengthening enlisted leadership.

Level 3: Senior Non-commission Officer Academy (S.N.C.O.A.)

The S.N.C.O.A. is the third level of enlisted professional military education designed for enlisted personnel in E7 and E8. The course is five consecutive weeks and “prepares SNCOs for increased leadership responsibilities in the joint, combined, and inter-agency operating/strategic environment” and “leads the enlisted force in the employment of air and space power in support of US national security objectives.” S.N.C.O.A. provides a platform for senior leaders to adapt to operating in critical, strategic, and joint complex and ambiguous environments by applying four learning outcomes: leadership, problem-solving, mission, and culture. Learning outcomes for this course are “leading the enlisted force, effectively communicating rank-appropriate tasks, and modeling and developing professional military attributes”(A.U., 2020a).

Level 4: Chief Master Sargent Leadership Course (C.L.C.)

The C.L.C. is a four consecutive week course and the pinnacle of U.S.A.F. enlisted personnel and designed for one percent of the enlisted personnel who obtain the grade of E9. The C.L.C. provides the instruction to “bridge strategic vision into tactical execution.” Additionally, the C.L.C. emphasizes enterprise leadership to “lead, manage, and mentor organizations to operational readiness. Chief Master Sergeants are taught to

think strategically and ingrain the leadership competencies that are “instrumental to fly, fight, and win across the full spectrum of conflict and domains of military power” (A.U., 2020c, para 1).

The learning outcomes of the C.L.C. consist of three objectives (A.U., 2020c, para 2):

- “Critically analyze competencies and develop strategies to lead the enlisted force through uncertain environments.”
- “Develop awareness of self and others that fosters continuous learning and strengthens the profession of arms; cultivate strategic and professional relationships and inspire collaboration to accomplish the mission effectively.”
- “Create and deliver strategic communication to inform and encourage superiors, subordinates, and the public.”

Army Formal Leadership Development Courses

The U.S.A. views leadership as a critical part of success within the Army, thus “advancing your education, advancing your career.” The belief is that the “most effective leaders are those that lead from the front.” Soldiers “lead by example in thought, word, and deed” (U.S.A., 2020b). Soldiers who choose to grow a career and move in the N.C.O. ranks and desire to take on increased responsibility and accountability must complete specific courses tailored to their level through the N.C.O. education system (N.C.O.E.S.). There are six levels to formal leadership development in the N.C.O.E.S. (U.S.A., 2020b).

Level 1: Basic Leader Course

The Basic Leader Course (B.L.C.) is the first step in developing leadership in the Army. B.L.C. is a one-month course that prepares E4s to become E5s to lead a squad (4 – 10 soldiers) (Powers, 2019b). The course is not profession-specific, and the Army creates an environment with diverse experiences to enhance the learning process. During the course, soldiers combine theoretical classwork and practice application to enhance the transfer of the learning process. Finally, during this course, soldiers learn about leadership, training management, map reading, land navigation, drill and ceremony, and warfighting (U.S.A., 2020c).

Level 2: Advanced Leader Course

The next level of development is the Advanced Leader Course (A.L.C.) is designed for the grade of E6 and leads a squad (4-10 soldiers) or platoon (16-40 soldiers) (Powers, 2019b). The course's purpose is to focus on leadership and technical skills specific to a profession.

ALC is broken into two pieces and mixed between web-based learning and in-person experience. The web-based is a 90-day “highly facilitated web-based common core program” and a profession-specific residency for an average duration of eight weeks.

Level 3: Senior Leader Course

The Senior Leader Course (SLC) is a branch-specific course that provides an opportunity for Soldiers selected for promotion to E7 to acquire the leadership, technical, and tactical skills, knowledge, and experience needed to lead platoon (16-40 soldiers) and company-size units (100-200 Soldiers in 3 – 5 platoons) (Powers, 2019b; U.S.A., 2020f).

Level 4: First Sergeant Academy

The role of First Sergeant is a unique position and serves as an advisor to the commander, assists in the administration of training, discipline, and advisor to the enlisted force. The first Sergeant typically assists the commander at the company level (60 – 200 soldiers) (U.S.A., 2020g).

The First Sergeants Academy prepares E7s and E8s in the “subject areas of unit administration, communication skills, discipline and morale, logistics and maintenance, personnel management, physical training, security, tactical operations, training management” (U.S.A., 2020e). The two-phased course starts with self-paced virtual learning that encompasses 31 lessons with a capstone exam. Phase two consists of three weeks of in-person interactive instruction that includes training management, unit administration, communicative skills, discipline and morale, logistics and maintenance, tactical operations, and physical fitness training” (U.S.A., 2020e).

Level 5: Sergeant Major Course

The U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy (USASMA) serves a dual purpose. First, this academy is responsible for creating the curriculum for the N.C.O.E.S. for all levels and is “acknowledged by military and civilian organizations as the world's premier institution for the education of noncommissioned officers” (U.S.A., 2020h).

The second function is to teach and train E9s over ten months to lead at the most senior enlisted position and make strategic decisions that shape the Army enlisted force (U.S.A., 2020h).

Level 6: Command Sergeant Major Course

Command Sergeant Majors (C.S.M. E9) serve at the highest levels of enlisted leadership and assist officers managing 1,500 – 2,000 soldiers (brigade level) (U.S.A., 2020g). C.S.M. is responsible for recommendations to the commander and “carry our policies and standards on the performance, training, appearance, and conduct of the enlisted personnel” (U.S.A., 2020g). The C.S.M.C. is a five-day course designed to prepare E9s to perform the duties at the Battalion level with subject areas of “interpersonal relationships with the command and staff, assigning and utilizing soldiers, developing training plans, and caring for soldiers and their families.” Designed to share ideas in five days with various experiences and professions (U.S.A., 2020d).

Marine Corps Formal Leadership Development Courses

The College of Enlisted Military Education provides a range of instruction to improve leadership, critical, and creative thinking skills at the right moments in a Marine’s leadership journey. The college is dedicated to fostering “ethical, professional leaders who make sound decisions in complex operational situations” (C.E.M.E., 2020). Although no Marines were interviewed for this research, it is essential to understand that all military branches have rigorous training, education, learning, and leadership programs to develop leaders early and create an effective succession plan.

Level 1: Corporals Course

The Corporal Course is designed for E4s starting to lead small units learning the basics of leadership and what it means to be a Marine NCO. This leadership development program has two forms: a distance learning program and a command-sponsored in-residence for selected Corporals (C.D.E.T., 2020; C.E.M.E., 2020).

Level 2: Resident Sergeants School

The Sergeants residency school is a four-week program for E-5s. It provides students with the knowledge and skills to enable Marines to serve as “ethical leaders, professional warfighters, critical thinkers, and sound decision-makers” (U.S.M.C., 2020c) and utilize practical communication skills. This course also allows Marines to recognize how personal actions impact warfighting functions and operations (U.S.M.C., 2020c).

Level 3: Resident Career School

The Career School is an intermediate-level seven-week program for E-6s. It is intended to enable Marines to serve as ethical leaders and professional warfighters, enhance unit cohesion and comply with organizational values through doctrine and sound and diverse decision-makers (U.S.M.C., 2020b).

Level 4: Resident Advanced School

The Advanced School is an intermediate-level seven-week program for E-7s to learn higher-level ethical leadership, professional warfighting, and sound decision-making through the use of theories in command and control, challenges of leadership development, fundamentals of managing the force at a tactical level, and the translation of policy into action (U.S.M.C., 2020a).

Level 5: Senior Enlisted Professional Military Education (SEPME) Course

Senior Enlisted Professional Military Education (SEPME) course is designed to equip Marines in Master Sergeant, and First Sergeant ranks with the critical thinking and adaptability skills necessary to function at war's operational and strategic levels.

Completing the course equips senior enlisted Marines with demonstrated proficiency in the Marine Corps Planning Process (MCPP), communication, and administration. At its

highest level, SEPME enhances the senior leader's ability to provide sound recommendations for mission success (U.S.M.C., 2020d).

Level 6: Sergeants Major Course

The Sergeants Major Course enables E-9s to serve in senior leadership roles as “principle advisors, utilizing organizational behavior theories, philosophies, techniques, and practices required to advise and assist battalion/squadron level commanders” (U.S.M.C., 2020e).

Navy Formal Leadership Development Courses

Navy leaders are critical to the success of forming teams with shared values and commitment. Navy leaders must learn, innovate, experiment, practice, sustain, seize the moment, connect, communicate, challenge, train, and recover with the team (U.S.N., 2019b). The U.S.N. utilizes three lanes that consist of character (consistent with Navy core values), competence (specialty experts), and connections (personal and professionals to share experience and development) (U.S.N., 2019b) framework to guide leader development. This framework creates an “ongoing, iterative training model” (U.S.N., 2019a) delivered at pivotal moments in an enlisted sailor's career that moves away from other branches' just-in-time models. In addition, three models of Navy leader development consist of formal schools, on-the-job training, and self-learning opportunities.

The U.S. Navy does not make the course information publicly available; this overview will focus on how the schools provide increased competence, character, and connections across the Navy. First, enhanced competence is created during formal schools by creating an environment for learning leadership basics. Next, the character is

developed by building on the foundation of institutional values and competencies during the formal course. Next, the enlisted forces attend “formal lectures, small group discussions, and coaching” sessions (U.S.N., 2019b). Finally, connections are developed within the formal courses to interact and learn from peers, teachers, and mentors that encourage connections for growth through an “open exchange of ideas” (U.S.N., 2019b) and to utilize a similar problem-solving framework with other sailors.

The first three levels displayed below are meant for E3 – E6, which primarily focus on leadership, character, ethics, self-awareness, stress management, and decision-making (N.E.T.C Public Affairs, 2019). Finally, throughout the enlisted career in the Navy, leadership development is also provided by the “Sailor 360” program, which focuses on developing sailors through education, training, feedback, self-awareness, challenging opportunities, alignment to mission and vision, and positive habits and behavior (N.E.T.C., 2019).

Level 1: Foundational Leader Development Course

The Foundational Leader Development Course is designed for E3 and E4s (U.S.N., 2019a).

Level 2: Intermediate Leader Development Course

The Intermediate Leader Development Course is designed for E5s.

Level 3: Advanced Leader Development Course

The Advanced Leader Development Course is designed for E6s.

Level 4: Chief Petty Officer Leader Development Course

The Chief Petty Officer Leader Development Course is designed for E7s, focusing on leadership, team development, team performance, goals, character, ethics,

self-awareness, stress management, and decision-making (N.E.T.C., 2019; U.S.N., 2019a, 2019c).

Level 5: Senior Enlisted Academy

The Senior Enlisted Academy is designed for E8 and E9 and focuses on management, leadership, national security, and fitness. This course aims to develop agile, adaptable, ethical, disciplined, resilient, and inspirational leaders who can communicate, mitigate risks, and critical thinking. The training is delivered in two phases. The first phase is distant learning which introduces the sailors to various topics with required deliverables to create baseline knowledge within an asynchronous environment. Phase two is the residency that builds upon the distant learning phase and utilizes lectures, experiential activities, seminars, and fitness requirements to advance the leadership and teamwork concepts (N.E.T.C., 2020).

Level 6: Navy Senior Leader Symposium

The Navy Senior Leader Symposium provides a platform for senior enlisted leaders (E9s) to increase the functionality and readiness of the U.S. Navy. The symposium also provides a platform to discuss leadership challenges and best practices (Paschall, 2018).

Level 7: Executive Leadership Symposium

The Executive Leader Symposium is designed for top enlisted leaders (E9s). The symposium focuses on supporting the commander's intent, emotional strength, diversity and inclusion, resources, and warfighting, including understanding a strategic view of the Navy and the world. Finally, it is a forum for connection and networking that is central to the future of the Navy (Paschall, 2019).

Informal Leadership Development

Informal leadership development, such as community involvement, is essential for developing military leadership. Gordon and Gordon (2017) suggest that holding a leadership position in volunteer organizations develops practical leadership skills. Community involvement assists in leadership development and gaining new insights into diverse personalities, different thought processes, and problem-solving. Community outreach is especially significant for the military, given the requirement to volunteer within the community. Serving in a leadership capacity within volunteer clubs or their community is viewed favorably in the military. For example, the Air Force performance report has a specific section for volunteer actions (Gordon & Gordon, 2017; U.S.A.F., 2015a, 2015b). Furthermore, volunteering action also develops humility and focuses on the right priorities (Gordon & Gordon, 2017).

Volunteering and leading a project also requires diagnosing skills, understanding the practicality, bringing a team together to accomplish the task through a vision, and focusing on the task at hand (Bell, 2007). Finally, this forces the veteran to receive feedback and lead those not in their “chain of command.” These informal leadership skill development opportunities are embedded in military leadership development training with the ability to continually develop by moving to new environments.

Transitioning out of the Military

Research suggests that most veterans may not possess the necessary knowledge to translate military-gained skills to a chosen civilian career. For example, Caamal (2019) published a phenomenology study of six veterans and found that because of the "sound structure" of the military culture, many veterans have a hard time adjusting to a civilian

job because of a lack of direction, support, and structure in the civilian work environment. In addition, previous research demonstrates a lack of transition assistance to prepare veterans for life after the military. For veterans to have a successful transition, they must be proactive; however, after even a few years of service, it may be challenging to reacclimate into the civilian environment and talk about the military-gained skills in a relevant manner (Yadoo, 2015). In addition, many veterans lack the understanding of how leadership skills transfer from the military culture to a corporate environment because there is insufficient knowledge of the corporate environment (Redmond et al., 2015; Yadoo, 2015).

One aspect of veterans transitioning back to the civilian world is the difference between a well-defined structure and one more ambiguous. Many veterans have a tough time adjusting to civilian life because it is difficult for those without military experience to relate to military training and culture, such as direct feedback, well-defined rules and regulations, uniform requirements, military symbols, and formal structures (Caamal, 2019). As a result, in many cases, veterans choose not to speak about their military experience. Also, veterans often find transitioning from the military into a second career challenging because civilian roles are often less defined (McCormick et al., 2019). For example, 44% of veterans report understating or omitting their military service on their resume and job applications (Pollak et al., 2019), and 77% of veterans report feeling misunderstood by civilians (Meyer, 2015).

Another issue during transition is veterans' lack of connections to the business world due to years of military service, and, in many cases, veterans move multiple times, limiting their local business connections to get a job (Redmond et al., 2015) comparative

to the non-military member that can build connections and understand a specific industry(s) over time. Furthermore, since veterans come from an isolated culture and environment, it is considerably less likely that they will be able to make business connections within the corporate environment throughout a military career. In addition, military members also face moving to new national and international locations every few years and losing local connections.

Skill Transfer and Adaptation

Knowledge, skill, and ability (KSAs) transfer and skill adaptation are essential topics for this research. This section will discuss previous research to inform military leadership training transfer and adaptation of KSAs. As such, the transfer of skills is "the application of knowledge or skills learned in one context to solve problems in another context" (Castillo et al., 2018, p. 593; Dyre & Tolsgaard, 2018, p. 580). This definition is critical as we review the leadership skills that veterans transfer and adapt to the corporate environment. In addition, research from the international business regarding expatriate adaptation is used as there may be similarities between working in and adapting to a different country and veterans integrating into the corporate environment. Like individuals adapting to a new country, veterans must adapt to the business context's culture, language, and work processes.

Many businesses lack training transfer to the work environment despite billions of dollars invested in training programs and courses. To effectively transfer training or adapt, application, generalization, and maintenance are required for new KSAs to transfer to the new work context (Castillo et al., 2018; Grossman & Salas, 2011). For learning to have a long-term impact, one must apply, practice, reflect, synthesize, and refresh the

information meaningfully (including modeling behavior, managing mistakes, and practicing in an operational environment). This means the learning process does not conclude at the end of the training, and the information must be revisited with after-action reviews, discussions, opportunities to practice, and critical feedback to promote learning transfer (Grossman & Salas, 2011; Plummer & Wilson, 2018). Dyre and Tolsgaard (2018) support this process in the medical field as they found little evidence that simulation-based training transfers into practical application. They state that more contextual effort linking training to the real world is essential. Finally, annual performance evaluations formally evaluate military members' adoption of the curriculum.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Grossman and Salas (2011) also made a case that the selection of participants should be based on cognitive ability, self-efficacy, motivation, and perceived utility. In his research on expatriate adaptation, Yamazaki (2010) found a few critical items that may also apply to the enlisted veterans transitioning out of the military into the business environment. First, skills develop to the same level or higher as the host country managers the longer an individual stays in a new culture. It was also found that expatriates may increase their adaptation of nine learning skills in the host environment (e.g., leadership, relationships, sense-making, theory building, quantitative analysis, technology, goal setting, action, and initiative). However, short stints in overseas assignments could prove too short to sufficiently develop essential abilities for performance, whereas longer tenure could become ingrained in the culture and local norms. Finally, previous research suggests that overseas experience for expatriates is

critical for acquiring and developing critical skills and abilities for leadership skill advancement (Yamazaki, 2010).

Pollak et al. (2019) found similarities among veteran KSAs that align with Yamazaki (2010) findings on the abovementioned nine skills. The authors consolidated 13 studies to create a list of critical attributes and competencies "relevant to civilian employers" (p. 53). The list includes 19 specific skills: leadership, teamwork, resilience, work ethic, communication, relationship building, attention to detail, self-discipline, dependability, flexibility, experience training others, experience with safety compliance, mission-focused, initiative, cross-cultural understanding, problem-solving, responsibility, courage, and knowledge/expertise in defense issues. The similarities are in leadership skills, relationship building, problem-solving, and initiative.

When reviewing the military leadership development process, we find that many aspects align with training transfer and cross-cultural adaptation literature. The military utilizes a training process through a cyclical training and experience-building application. The process for enlisted members typically results in the following process: basic training, technical (job-specific) training, application training, and build experience, promotion, attending formal leadership development, and build experience. This is important as military members who complete formal training must utilize the learned skills in various environments and cultures.

Training transfer across contexts coincides with military leadership development as most courses focus on communication, interpersonal communication, and leadership. Thus, it may be inferred that the military designed the courses with the knowledge that members need to adapt quickly to various cultures and environments. All four military

branches design and execute leadership development programs to enhance all forms of communication (speaking, writing, interpersonal), which is a critical part of developing Airmen, Marines, Sailors, and Soldiers. Many enlisted members complete multiple transoceanic assignments, which require adaptation to the host country's culture and mission. For example, many military members are required to complete formal cultural training for geographical areas to understand cultures and mannerisms while learning what the mission is and how to accomplish it (Air Univeristy, 2022; Marine Corps University, 2022). Depending on the location, overseas tours range from one to four years. Many times, veterans' tour length is dependent on whether it is considered an accompanied (immediate family members joined for the duration of the tour) or unaccompanied (no family, single) tour.

Yamazaki (2010) found that the length of time an expatriate spends in a host country is positively related to the skill development and adaptation to a point where the skills will equal or higher than the host country managers. Additionally, expatriates' success was positively influenced by relationship-building and interpersonal skills (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004) rather than operational skills. Furthermore, emotional intelligence research suggests that interpersonal skills are more strongly related to success than analytical abilities (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004). One recommendation for learning in a cross-cultural environment is action learning, which focuses on solving problems through learning teams. Action learning requires individuals to understand diverse cultures to succeed (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004). Finally, communication (written and verbal) was found to be a defining element in each of the four categories (concrete experiences, reflective observations, abstract conceptualization, and active

experimentation) in the experiential learning theory (ELT) to learning (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004).

In line with the training transfer and cross-cultural research, military members can apply and reflect on provided information through experiential activities and synthesize the meaning and approach to make effective decisions. Training and adaptation research offers a practical approach as it provides context to real-world issues that managers may encounter (e.g., poor employee performance), which provides context to apply back at their day jobs. For example, the U.S.A.F. utilizes the AF Form 910 and 911 to gauge leadership abilities, team building, and teamwork. These items relate to the appropriate formal leadership development course's learning objectives.

Next, the U.S. Military makes a point to go through several exercises that help to nurture skill development and transfer back to the operational environment. These exercises include practical skill building such as researching topics, presenting information, and practicing communication through experiential activities.

The military primarily designs the leadership development program around continuous development improvement from formal to informal. As mentioned on the AF Form 911, S.N.C.O.s are graded on their mentorship of lower-ranking individuals, coinciding with the leadership training. Thus, it is reasonable to expect military leadership development skills to transfer at a high percentage.

Transfer of training (Burke & Hutchins, 2007) aligns with the military promotion cycle based on the whole person concept and the ability to complete formal courses successfully. Nevertheless, we see that transfer theory relates to the experiential learning exercises of military leadership development.

Training transfer and adaptation research show that reinforcement of completed training is a significant factor for individuals to utilize learning. As previously mentioned, many leadership topics taught in the military formal leadership courses continue to be monitored via a formal annual review process, mid-term check-ins, and informal mentoring within each branch. Although each branch has a specific approach to gauging the impact, the high-level objectives are the same.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy plays a unique role in this study because veterans perceive their ability to transfer and adapt military-gained leadership skills. Bandura (1982) stated that "perceived self-efficacy is concerned with judgments of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (pg. 122). This self-judgment applies to veterans changing to a new corporate culture and achieving positive results in the new civilian context. Therefore, we will examine how veterans adapt self-efficacy to a new culture for this research.

Grossman and Salas (2011) found that self-efficacy is positively related to training transfer, which is defined as a "judgment an individual makes about his or her ability to perform a given task" (p. 109). Research has shown that a moderate amount of self-efficacy is necessary for successful training transfer, communication, and a clear link from training to application. However, overconfidence may play a negative role, lowering motivation and decreasing the amount of effort used to learn (Grossman & Salas, 2011).

Self-efficacy research aligns with military training as veterans are trained to deal with ambiguous situations and overcome uncomfortable situations. Military training also instills confidence in members to react to the unknown. Decision-making with limited

information and the confidence to proceed with a decision is a staple of military training (Caamal, 2019; Constantine, 2018; Gati, Ryzhik, & Vertsberger, 2013; Minnis, 2017).

Military members often use self-efficacy to overwrite instructions and fall back on training, which provides clarity and confidence to accomplish a task.

Hudson (2016) found that military leaders' emotional intelligence was positively related to self-efficacy, which is an essential finding as military leaders can utilize their teams to accomplish a task, which means understanding the team's needs and having the confidence that the team will succeed. This research's findings helped inform how self-efficacy is used during transitioning from the military into a corporate environment. In addition, some research shows that the longer a veteran is entrenched in the military culture, the more challenging it may be to adapt to a new culture (Yamazaki, 2010).

Newcomer and Social Validation

Considerable research on newcomer orientation and social validation may inform this research study. Nifadkar and Bauer (2016) studied newcomers' information seeking and found two paths, coworker and supervisor-centric, that played an important role for new employees to seek information about the organization, role expectations, and the ability to be productive. Ellis et al. (2015) reviewed research on newcomer socialization and suggested that in stable and predictable work environments, focusing on task performance may increase effectiveness; however, in business organizations where work roles and requirements are dynamic, adaptive behaviors are necessary to improve effectiveness. Social undermining may also have a significant negative impact on newcomer integration. For example, when social anxiety is triggered due to poor coworker relationships, the available information may be transferred at a reduced rate to

the newcomer, which may cause issues with social acceptance and role clarity (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007). Further, Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Rubenstein, and Song (2013), found that proactive information seeking is related to the continued support of peers and managers. They found that a decline in support typically results in a decline in information seeking from the newcomers.

Supportive supervisors may initiate relationship building that increases information seeking and enhances the available information to newcomers (Ellis, Nifadkar, Bauer, & Erdogan, 2017). Direct managers are critical to newcomers feeling validated and supplied with enough information to succeed in the given role. Previous research suggests that newcomers may successfully and productively integrate into a new culture if the direct manager is perceived as a positive source of information (Ellis et al., 2017; Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016).

Organizations should continue to monitor the experiences of the newcomers to assist in creating a better onboarding experience with the company. Also, organizations should encourage tenured employees to limit conflict with newcomers and assist in creating a favorable adjustment period and a culture that empowers the newcomers to actively seek information (Chen, 2005; Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016; L. Smith, Amiot, Smith, Callan, & Terry, 2013).

Veterans in the Workplace

This section reviews the limited extant research on veterans in the workplace. This review provides context to the benefits of veterans working in the corporate environment; however, there is scant research on how veterans' skills are adapted and applied within the corporate environment.

Previous research has shown the significant value of having veterans in the workplace. For example, Pollak et al. (2019) found that companies that prioritize veteran recruiting and hiring and receive a military-friendly designation have higher stock performance. Veterans are a robust potential talent for corporations. Companies will see higher retention rates and loyalty when the recruiting strategy targets and provides a "new mission" for the veteran. Research has shown a positive association between veterans thriving at a company and overall company financial performance (Blank, 2019).

The enlisted members provide a reliable source of experience and talent to the healthcare industry within the medical profession. The military-trained nurses have significant experience with clinical expertise, leadership, resiliency, crisis management, triage, natural disasters, and humanitarian missions. Also, the enlisted members have significant training and experience in the support roles, as credentialed licensed practical nurses may fill the roles of health care support occupations, medical laboratory technicians, surgical technologist, pharmacy technologist, and medical assistants. Furthermore, veterans have experience and skills in evidence-based practice, safety, informatics, quality management, teamwork, and collaboration (Lake et al., 2016). In addition, active-duty members in healthcare professions obtain extensive leadership skills in various practice areas. These areas include management, innovation, health care operations, clinical competencies, community perspectives, leadership, interprofessional expertise, and higher education.

Previous studies have shown 24 leadership qualities veterans may provide to companies in a corporate environment. For example, these skills included flexibility, decision-making, attention to detail, entrepreneurship, quickly developing new skills,

accelerated learning curve, ethical decision making, dealing with ambiguous situations, leadership, teamwork, team building, character, discipline, diversity, inclusion, problem-solving, ability to perform under stress, adaptability to new technologies, ability to make decisions, handle failure, adapt to new cultures, going beyond assigned responsibilities, self-discipline, and self-development (Cycyota & Ferrante, 2007; Delbourg-Delphis, 2014; Harrell & Berglass, 2012; Kirchner & Akdere, 2017; O'Keefe, 2010; Parker, 2012; Price, 2011; Teachman, 2011; Useem, 2010). In addition, Price (2011) identified 18 leadership values and skills that veterans may transfer to the corporate environment. These values and skills include independence, adaptive thinking, dealing with complex and ambiguous situations, flexibility, teamwork, take situational charge, possess superior people and communication skills, operated in a resource-constrained environment, followership, results-oriented, problem-solving, do more with less, assist senior decision-makers, work long hours, are dependable and accountable, provide advice when asked, manage various projects, and are mature and disciplined. However, little is known about how these skills are transferred or adapted to the corporate environment.

Another significant benefit of hiring veterans is that the "warrior ethos" is embedded in the culture and training. For example, the U.S. Army (2011) defined warrior ethos "as a way of life that applies to our personal and professional lives. It defines who we are and whom we aspire to become." For example, Redmond et al. (2015) identified an essential concept to building highly effective teams called a "warrior ethos" that instilled veterans to "think and behave in ways that show perseverance; responsibility for others; motivation by a higher calling; and ability to set priorities, make tradeoffs, adapt, and accept dependence on others" (pg. 14).

Finally, the leadership benefits of military experience can be seen even at the C-suite level. For example, Benmelech and Frydman (2015) found that military service correlated to more ethical behavior. In addition, a few trends appeared using an ordinary least squared (OLS) regression on ~4,000 managers at ~1500 companies with ~22,000 data points reviewing C.E.O.s with military experience. First, C.E.O.s with military experience typically have a higher tenure, perform better under pressure (e.g., company facing financial stress), reduce fraudulent activities by 70%, and make tough decisions with limited information.

Also, Blank (2019) identified six traits that C.E.O.s with military experience demonstrate in the boardroom; 1) learning how to work as part of a team; 2) resource management; 3) communication skills; 4) defining a clear goal and motivating others to pursue it; 5) highly developed sense of ethics; 6) ability to remain calm under pressure. Second, C.E.O.s with military experience were less likely to be involved in financial misconduct (Koch-Bayram & Wernicke, 2018; Law & Mills, 2017). Koch-Bayram and Wernicke (2018) found that veterans may be less likely to commit financial misconduct and backdate stock options. Their results suggest that veterans in the C-suite successfully and ethically prioritize the organization's financial growth.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative research design with semi-structured interviews to address the question: “How do post 9/11 U.S. Military Veterans utilize their military-gained leadership skills and experience in the corporate environment?” First, I describe the method, analysis, and sampling strategies to complete this research. Then, the results are reported in Chapter 4.

Research Design

This qualitative study utilized a dual qualitative approach to understand how post 9/11 U.S. Military Veterans transfer, adapt, and utilize their military-gained leadership skills and experience in various industries, including healthcare and technology. The dual qualitative approach was selected because there is scant research on enlisted veteran skill transfer and adaptation. Additionally, interviews provided the opportunity to gain better insight into the what and why behind skill transfer and adaptation.

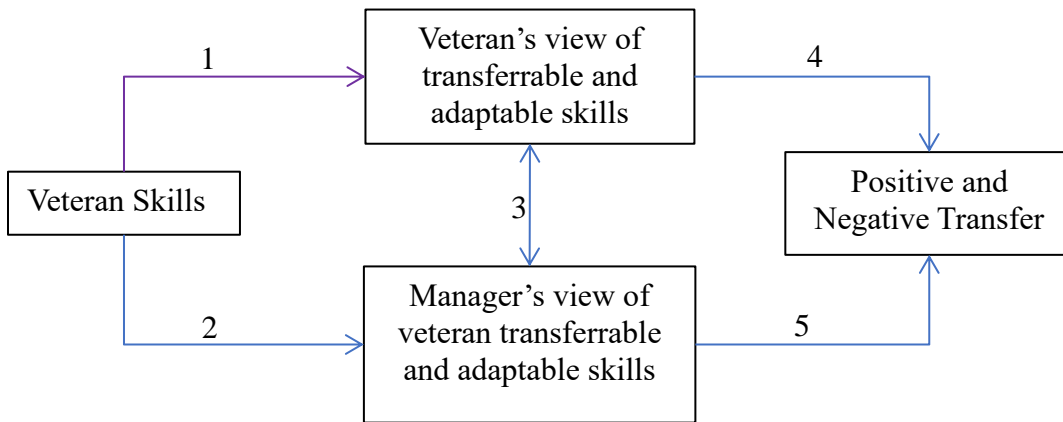
The dual qualitative approach was created to better understand veterans and non-veteran managers and provide valuable insights. The first component of the study focused on veterans to understand their lived experiences and learn which skills transfer and which skills require adaptation in the corporate environment. Second, managers that supervised veterans were interviewed to understand what skills veterans excel at and which may require adaptation. Finally, a qualitative design was selected to study better the cultural dynamics and the social context within the military and corporate environments (Meyers, 2013).

Qualitative Research Design

There are five paths in this research design to understand the veteran's perspective on military skill development and skill transfer to the civilian work environment. First, the primary focus is on understanding veterans' views of necessary changes to successfully apply their military leadership training in the new environment. Second, the study aims to understand the managers' point of view on the positive and negative skills that veterans bring to the work environment. Third, the study consolidated the data to understand both manager and veteran perspectives regarding positive and negative leadership skills that transfer and are adapted to the corporate environment.

Figure 2

Research Framework



Sample

Veteran Participants

The total military sample consisted of 10 U.S. Military Enlisted veterans across the Army, Air Force, and Navy and seven non-veteran managers of veterans within the private sector. This research focuses on the active-duty enlisted military component from three primary branches (U.S.A.F., U.S.A., and U.S.N.). Each U.S. military branch

contains several components, including civilian roles, full-time (active duty), and part-time (national guard and reserve) military roles (Redmond et al. (2015). The National Guard and Reserve components are excluded because many hold civilian positions, so less adaptation may be required to transition to a civilian career. Although some National Guard and Reserve members are full-time, these two components perform a military function and train one weekend per month and two weeks per year. However, the National Guard and Reserve components may be activated for extended periods, usually between six months to one year in conflict or war.

The Coast Guard was removed from this study since the entity technically reports to the Department of Homeland Security (D.H.S.) and not the Department of Defense (DHS, 2019). However, there are still significant collaborations between the two departments. Second, the U.S. Space Force (U.S.S.F.) was excluded from this study because the branch was signed into executive order in December 2019, enacted in January 2020, and is transitioning into full functionality (U.S.S.F., 2020). The U.S.S.F. was created by separating the A.F. Space Command (A.F.S.C.) and expanding the responsibilities and mission to create a new branch of the U.S. military. However, since no veterans from the U.S.S.F. meet the participant requirements, this branch was excluded from the research.

Veteran participants were recruited via a veteran resource group at a Fortune 500 healthcare company and LinkedIn. Participants were selected using a qualifying survey via Qualtrics available through the LinkedIn post, personal communications, and specific messages to a veteran resource group. To participate in this study, veteran participants met the following criteria:

1. Participants must have an honorable discharge or under honorable conditions from military service. The discharge status shows a good standing upon retiring or separating from military service and should limit bias and negativity from those removed from the military for administrative or punitive actions. See Appendix 1 for additional information and explanation on the administrative and punitive discharges. The veteran must present a copy of the D.D. form 214 – Certificate of release or discharge from active duty was presented at the beginning of the interview to verify the discharge status. If provided via e-mail, all identifying and personal information identifiers will be removed. Block 24 of the form states the type of discharge explicitly.
2. Must have obtained a grade of E-5 or above. This study aims to understand leadership skill transfer from military service members to the corporate environment, including formalized leadership development. One must have served long enough to gain leadership skills. At the grade of E-5 or above, most active-duty members have four years of experience and at least one formal leadership development course completed.
3. Must have completed a minimum of one formal leadership development course. This study aims to understand how skills are developed and transferred from military service to the civilian environment. While serving, part of the development includes formal leadership development courses, which will help compare military leadership skills versus skill usage in the corporate environment.

4. Must have a minimum of two years of civilian managerial work experience.

To understand how the transferred skills are utilized in the civilian workplace.

Two years allow individuals to adapt to the culture and clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.

5. Have a minimum of two direct reports. A minimum of two direct reports while on active duty and within the civilian environment is essential to compare the two environments when viewing leadership skill transfer. The participant will have two years in management while in the military and at least one year in the civilian corporate capacity.

Of the 54 veteran responses, ten (18.5%) veterans met the above requirements.

The ten veterans that were interviewed are identified by the numbers 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 in discussing the study's results. All veterans met an honorable discharge status (100%) and a minimum grade of E-5 (100%). The average interview was 91 minutes, with an average of one follow-up interview. The age range was 25 – 64 years (25 – 34 (10%), 35-44 (30%), 45 – 54 (50%), and 55 – 64 (10%)). 90% of the veteran participants identified as male and 10% female. 80% of the participants identified as white, 10% as African-American, and 10% as Native American. On average, veteran respondents spent 16 years in the military, ranging from six to 29 years. Finally, the veteran respondents reported an average tenure with their current company of 5.3 years, ranging from two to nine years (see Table 2).

Table 2

Veteran Participants' Sample Characteristics

Veteran	Sex	Ethnicity	Age	Role	Industry	Civilian Field	# of Companies after Service	Tenure at company (in yrs)	Service (in yrs)	Branch
#8	M	African American	45-54	Senior Director	Healthcare	Account Management	2	7	25	Air Force
#9	M	White	55-64	Senior Manager	Healthcare	Operations	0	7	29	Army
#10	M	White	25-34	Manager	Healthcare	Customer Service	5	8	10	Army
#11	M	White	45-54	Manager	Healthcare	Medical	2	4	20	Air Force
#12	M	White	45-54	Director	Healthcare	Training and Development	0	9	22	Air Force
#13	M	White	35-44	Manager	Healthcare	Project Management	1	2	12	Army
#14	M	White	45-54	Vice President	Healthcare	Customer Service	5	4	10	Air Force
#15	F	White	35-44	Director	Healthcare	Customer Service	2	3	9	Army
#16	M	American Indian	35-44	Director	Wellness and Fitness	Operations	5	4	6	Navy
#17	M	White	35-44	Manager	Manufacturing	Program Manager	0	5	10	Army

Manager Participants

Seven direct managers of veterans were interviewed for data triangulation.

Managers were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Must have a minimum of two years of civilian managerial work experience.

Individuals must have a minimum of two years at their company to understand how the transferred and adapted skills are utilized in the civilian workplace. Two years allows managers to adapt to the culture and understand their teams.

2. Must not be a veteran. The goal is to understand the manager's perspective without having prior biases based on service. In addition, understanding the perspective of those managers that have not been in the military provides insight into how managers perceive veterans. This is especially important since only 1% of the population currently serves, and 9% are categorized as veterans.

Furthermore, only 21% (of the 9%) is considered a post-9/11 veteran. Therefore, veterans leaving the service are significantly more likely to report to an individual without military experience.

3. Have a minimum of two direct reports. A minimum of two is essential to provide good insight into leading a veteran. One of the direct reports must be a veteran. In addition, the manager should have worked with the veteran for at least one year or the entire performance evaluation cycle. Data was collected from an individual with two or more direct reports.
4. Actively is or previously was a direct leader of a veteran. Since the objective is to understand the managerial perspective of veteran skill transfer and adaptation, a matched direct manager sample was not required to examine the research

question. The goal is to transfer know-how leadership skills and adapt to the corporate environment; therefore, manager participants were not required to be the direct manager of a veteran interviewee.

A total of seven manager interviews were completed for this research. Manager interviews are identifiable by #01, #02, #03, #04, #05, #06, and #07. Two (28%) manager interviewees were female and five (72%) males. Ages ranged from 35 to 64 years, with four (57%) in the 35 to 44 age range. One (14%) of participants identified as Asian American, and six (86%) were white. The average company tenure was 11.2 years, ranging from 4 to 21 years. Finally, manager respondents directly supervised an average of 3.85 veterans over the last five years, ranging from one to seven (see Table 3).

Table 3*Manager Participant Sample Characteristics*

Manager	Sex	Ethnicity	Role	Industry	Field	Tenure at company (in years)	# of Veterans Managed	Age
#1	F	White	Director	Healthcare	Technology	4	3	35-44
#2	F	White	Director	Healthcare	Technology	19	5	35-44
#3	M	White	Director	Healthcare	Technology	5	1	44-54
#4	M	White	Vice President	Healthcare	Account Management	4	6	55-64
#5	M	White	Senior VP	Manufacturing	Technology	9	3	55-64
#6	M	White	Senior Manager	Aerospace	Sales	17	7	35-44
#7	M	Asian-American	Director	Healthcare	Operations	21	2	44-54

Interview Method

This research used a semi-structured interview approach, with veteran interviews lasting 91 minutes on average (range = 47 minutes to 2 hours and 45 minutes). Manager interviews lasted 50 minutes on average (range = 27 minutes to 1 hour and 22 minutes). For veterans and managers, some individuals had richer experiences, resulting in more extended interviews and more detailed stories.

Due to the COVID-19 work-from-home order, all interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom between February 2021 and June 2021.

The data were collected in two waves; the first set of interviews was based on the lived experiences of veterans across the U.S.A.F., U.S.A., and the U.S.N. The second set of interviews focused on the managers' perspectives of veterans' leadership skills.

This qualitative research aimed to explore the lived experiences of enlisted veterans that transferred or adapted leadership skills to the corporate environment. Once the interviews were completed, the recordings were transcribed automatically via Zoom. The author reviewed each interview transcription, and a complete coding process was conducted in NVivo 12 Pro, which was used as an organizational tool. The auto-code function was not used in this research. Dr. Ekin Pellegrini reviewed, coded, and discussed the first six interviews with the researcher.

Ethics

Some sensitive situations and incidents from deployments, combat and personal issues were shared during the veteran interviews. Empathy was used, and each participant was allowed to stop the interview. All veterans were willing to share some deeply

personal experiences knowing that their names would not be associated with the data, and also, perhaps, they felt comfortable because I am also a veteran.

Conclusion

The study aims to understand how military leadership skills are transferred from active duty to the corporate context. The study used a qualitative method and interviewed 17 participants, including ten enlisted members from the U.S.A.F., U.S.A., the U.S.N. and seven managers. Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of the study findings, followed by a discussion of the results, including theoretical and practical implications in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter reviews the findings of the four primary research questions. Each research question is presented separately and provides specific findings. This chapter is organized as follows, the findings of the research questions:

- (1) What veteran leadership skills transfer directly to the civilian business environment?
- (2) What veteran leadership skills require adaptation to the business environment?
- (3) How do veterans adapt the identified leadership skills to the corporate environment?
- (4) What are the managers' perceptions of veteran leadership skills?

Coding and Analytical Process

There was a total of four rounds of the coding process. The first round consisted of a thorough review of the Zoom transcripts and interview recordings to ensure accuracy and a better understanding of individual stories, feelings, emotions, and important stories to the participant. Next, the information was grouped and categorized based on the surface terms. Finally, Dr. Ekin Pellegrini coded the first six interviews to ensure inter-rater reliability. Once we both independently coded, we discussed our findings and ultimately agreed on the emerging themes.

Next, a 'values coding' approach was applied, which "is the application of codes to qualitative data that reflect a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives" (Saldana, 2021, p. 167). The values approach was appropriate since participants were providing their perspectives on two different cultures (military

and civilian) and providing experiences that shaped those perspectives and the areas that were easy and difficult for veterans' adaptability to the corporate environment.

The third round utilized a 'focused coding' approach that "searches for the most frequent or significant codes to develop the most salient categories in the data corpus and "requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense" (Saldana, 2021, p. 303). Focus coding provided the approach to combine terms, definitions, and experiences and finalize the central themes and associated codes. Although other codes appeared, this research focused on the most salient themes.

The final coding round was a thorough review of the transcripts, memos, recordings, and codes to ensure that the salient themes, categories, and codes were appropriate for this research and best fit the data the participants provided.

Veteran leadership skills that directly transfer to the corporate environment

Table 4 lists the respondents' skills as directly transferrable to the civilian business environment. Results suggest that, in line with previous research, eight leadership skills directly and positively transfer to the corporate environment: teamwork, resilience, work ethic, self-discipline, dependability, flexibility, responsibility, and initiative. Further, one novel transferrable skill emerged in this study called "self-reliance." Both managers and veterans identified self-reliance as the ability to complete a task with minimal guidance or follow-up required."

Veterans and managers identified the below transferrable skills through their lived experiences. In addition, managers and veterans provided rich stories that provided context through follow-up questions and discussion of the identified transferrable skills.

Likewise, through the lived experiences of veterans and managers, I was able to ascertain the skills that directly transferred to the corporate environment.

Table 4*Veteran leadership skills that transfer to the civilian business environment*

Leadership Skill	Term Definitions	Sample Quotes
Teamwork	group member's interactions/interdependent acts that convert inputs to outcomes through cognitive, verbal, and behavioral activities that are directed toward the achievement of a common goal (Meslec, Duel, & Soeters, 2020, p. 326)	One of the veterans on the team stopped what they were doing and took time to educate another colleague on the process... just this general notion of wanting to see the team succeed and helping others along the way (#02).
Resilience	The ability to encounter and move through significant hardship while functioning effectively in basic life tasks, such as working, interacting with and maintaining relationships with friends and relatives, and remaining interested and involved in leisure pursuits (Rice & Liu, 2016, p. 326).	Again, dedication, knowing just the long hours , the stress , and kind of the back and forth that we have to do something like that, a marathon, basically in the time it takes to sprint (#01).
Work Ethic	the attitude motivating our behavior in the workplace towards our work (Dawson, 2005, p. 57)	... for the most part, they are very dedicated , punctual , and determined to get the work done (#03).
Self-Discipline	individual's capacity to actively work toward long-term goals and to resist temptations (Hagger et al., 2021)	I think there is something to be said for preparedness and focusing on discipline and time management (#07).
Flexibility	Employees' ability to reach and respond to unexpected changes in the firm's environment (Au, Dong, & Tremblay, 2021, pp. 853-854)	For [veterans] to do something, they will give 100% to ensure it gets done within that given timeframe and is not making excuses. Although they are working on getting it done, they are always willing to help work overtime or put in extra hours and do whatever it takes to get things completed

		and help out any team member [at any time] (#03).
Responsibility	Trust to complete tasks on time and submit high-caliber work; professionals with a consistent work ethic who take action daily toward their professional goals; work to advance company success and strive to perform their daily duties well; engaged in their daily activities and establish a culture of accountability that advances individual careers and increases company productivity (Glassdoor, 2021, p. 2)	there has definitely been an increased willingness to accept the responsibility and to lead small, medium-sized teams (#01).
Dependability (reliability)	The extent to which an individual, or other entity, may be counted on to do what is expected of them (Webster, 2022, p. 1)	A person who served in the military is reliable ; they will show up, do not sneak out early, and get the job done . They tend not to be clock watchers and are not nine to fivers (#04).
Self-Reliance	A socially desirable trait that reflects an absence of excessive dependence on others, a sense of control over one’s life, and personal initiative (Schaumberg & Flynn, 2017)	... they are really somebody that can survive on their own , if you will, every person I’ve worked with, from a veteran standpoint, has been able to do that (#01).

Self-Reliance

Self-reliance emerged as a new directly transferrable leadership skill. Self-reliance distinguishes itself from the other identified skills by veterans working independently. This skill works in conjunction with the other eight skills but has the distinction of adding a new ‘socially desirable trait that reflects an absence of excessive dependence on others, a sense of control over one’s life, and personal initiative’ (Schaumberg & Flynn, 2017). One manager noted that:

“...if you give [veterans] instructions, you do not have to sit there and give them instructions 10 million times. Instead, you can give [veterans] instructions on what they need to do once [and they do it]; they are quick learners” (#03).

Managers (#01, #02, #03, #04, #05, #06) identified that veterans typically demonstrate independence and personal initiative by devising a plan to solve a problem.

“[Veterans] usually have a plan already... they didn't come to me first. They wanted to devise a plan before he brought it to me, and the only way he could do, that is, of course, work on it and have something to present...” (#03).

However, some veterans and managers identified self-reliance as a negative transfer. Managers voiced a concern about veterans asking for help. From the managers' perspective, veterans “*should not hesitate to ask for help*” (#01), and managers found that veterans had varying degrees of “*willingness to reach out and ask for help*” (#04). Four veterans (40%) shared the experience that asking for help “*felt a little difficult at certain times because I wasn't the kind of person who likes to ask for help*” (#12).

Finally, veterans not asking for help often provided a neutral or unfavorable view of the veteran. At times, veterans would hold off contributing to a conversation until they could research the topic, terms, and acronyms used.

Veterans also indicated that self-reliance was often utilized to understand a problem and develop a plan or talking points with their teams. This was significant as both managers and veterans found that self-reliance was a positive skill. However, at times it may come across as not asking for help or not talking. Attempting to do too much on their own was shown as a negative transfer, while other managers viewed it as a positive transfer, especially when they created a plan to discuss a problem.

These nine directly transferrable skills require the veteran to understand and complete tasks and take care of the team members around them. However, these skills also speak to the veterans' ability to work in ambiguity, which will be discussed when addressing question #3.

Veteran leadership skills that require skill adaptation

A total of 11 leadership skills were identified as requiring adaptation. Previous research found four skills (mission-focused, loyalty, communication, and humility) to be directly transferrable; however, this research revealed four and an additional seven leadership skills that may require adaptation (see Table 5). The additional seven themes from this research are reprioritizing values, sharing military experiences, dressing for the job, outward symbols, strategy and strategic planning, resource utilization, adapting to the corporate rules, compliance, and accountability.

These themes emerged from the lived experiences of veterans and managers; several follow-up questions were asked to discover the challenges that veterans and

managers faced, and more importantly, each veteran was asked, “how did you adapt that skill to the corporate environment?” Managers were asked the following two questions: “how did the veteran adapt to the corporate environment?” and “how did you coach or mentor the veteran to adapt to the corporate environment?”

Table 5

Veteran leadership skills that require adaptation to the civilian business environment

Leadership Skill	Sample Quotes
Mission-focus	In the DoD fulfillment pharmacy, we track all mail order pharmacy requests. It's really cool to continue to provide [and serve] for [other] veterans, friends, and my family (#11).
Loyalty	I would say a loyalty component , not to me as a leader, but to the company and what they're doing . This passion that you see a level of perseverance for wanting to achieve that and outcome of what they're setting out to do, and that function or role (#02).
Communication	We came from these big jobs and while we're just sharing our experience is as fact, we can very easily create barriers for ourselves with non-military . Because they may take it as, you know, on the left tail of this oh this person is a threat to my job they're going to want my job. So, it creates relationship [and communication] barriers there as a broad brush and the other piece of that was allowed people to get to know you first what you're willing to do first, because if you lead with the substantial responsibilities that you had before it can be misinterpreted as well easily this role is beneath you show you won't be given the chance and I didn't realize just how heavily that played because I almost did not get the opportunity, because of some people's concern that I would be bored with the role (#08).
Humility	I had a false sense of confidence coming out of those because my education which squared away, I lead very large organizations I've been an executive leader in very large organizations . I'd lead people in at their best and at their worst, and you walk away from the military with a sense that another organization would have a difficult time putting a situation in front of you that didn't resemble something you had experienced already and that was a bad perspective to have, I think, because what we forgot is when you cross out of the military in the corporate the language changes and while we may be talking about very similar situations because we're using different language we're talking past each other so that gets to you know my difficulties in transitioning.

<p>Reprioritizing Values</p>	<p>I left the traditional consulting roles because it meant too much time away from my family, which would have gotten me right back into the routine that I had in the military (#08).</p>
<p>Sharing Military Experiences</p>	<p>Well, in my experience, for example, if I have some military buddies in town and we go out to a bar and get to drinking, then we're talking about [military events] because they're the only people you really feel comfortable talking about it with right and then pretty soon you start looking around and, the place thinned out in a radius around where you and your boys are sitting. What I mean, I guess a lot of things that we do over there make people feel uncomfortable when they start hearing anything even remotely close to the reality (#10).</p>
<p>Ambiguous Dress Code</p>	<p>The transition was interesting; you know I went, first of all, to be honest, I had no idea, you had to wear a brown belt with brown shoes and a black belt with black shoes (#09).</p>
<p>Lack of Visual Identification</p>	<p>In the corporate world, the only outward sign you have is your face assuming people recognize you for the level of leadership that you have, and then, of course, that personal brand that you build.</p>
<p>Profit Strategy and Planning</p>	<p>the biggest skill often is thinking about something from the interests of the Corporation... I think it's the hardest part is to stop sometimes and say guys if we do that for every single person will be out of business. The organization has an interest that we must keep in mind how much it costs to do it, the long-term profitability behind this idea or whether it's a flash in the pan. I don't want to say military service Members are veterans are not cognizant of cost, they are. I think it's the longer-term business interests thinking that [veterans] lack, that is harder to bring them institutional interests are not something the military generally once individual service members thinking about (#04).</p>
<p>Resource Utilization</p>	<p>I think the natural skills that seemed to be present [in veterans] is this knowledge around how to make the movement of product effective and maybe that's a small niche in the military, but it seems like there's this common theme around getting the right things to the right place at the right time, that translated well into these operations type roles (#05).</p>
<p>Conforming to Ambiguous Corporate Policies</p>	<p>In the military, everything is based on regulations, and that's why people can move so often, your leaders move every year or two. Others move every three years, but you can do that, because you all work within the guidelines of an air force instruction and other regulations.</p> <p>[In the corporate environment] you're looking for the reference for this or where's the justification for that and there isn't one. So where is the guidebook, I can look forward to see how we do this type of work there isn't a lot of the historical information on the work that you do is based in the people that you work with when you're in the</p>

	corporate environment... because while everything in the military could be referenced, I don't know that corporate America could operate that way, you need to have some flexibility it changes so rapidly (#12).
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Mission-Focused

Although ‘mission-focused’ was a directly transferable skill on the surface, it was also a misnomer. ‘Mission-focused’ was referred in two different perspectives by managers and veterans (#01, #03, #04, #05, #07, #11, #14, #17). The first perspective was a belief in the purpose of the company’s mission and vision and a deep reliance on serving something greater, whereas the second was the ability to focus on the current task or objective and see it through to completion.

The first refers to the veteran’s desire to join a company with a deeper purpose of ‘serving’ and identified that having a ‘higher purpose’ directly impacts the veterans’ job satisfaction. Therefore, ‘mission-focused’ requires adaptation to align the veterans’ desire to continue to serve with the company’s purpose and reason for existence.

“[Veterans] are mission-oriented, so you know the world’s role depending on your company’s. So, if you have got a mission that they believe in, whether that is an engineering company trying to build the next platform or you are delivering airplane parts or whether they are delivering health care, if it is a mission that can motivate them, they can orient very well or found a company’s mission statement and how it resonates with them” (#04).

Veterans identified that it does take time to recognize and understand if the company’s purpose aligns with the veterans continued desire to serve.

“Being able to impact someone’s life each day positively. It may not be directly because you do not see that patient; you don’t see the relief they are given, but if you do not do your job, [the patient does not get medical help]. So that is sort of purposeful thinking that purposeful approach to leadership and management I think has been precious to me and how I perform my job here across the enterprise” (#08).

If the company and veteran’s values are misaligned, lower job satisfaction is experienced (#07, #09, #10, #11, #12). For example, one veteran regarded a position at a convenience store as unfavorable because *“it wasn’t really a career. I mean, come on, that was an \$8.25 an hour, and I was just literally trying to keep the roof over my head”* (#10).

The second mission-focused perspective referred to task-focused as work ethic or responsibility. Managers identified that veterans tend to be “mission-oriented” (#01, #02, #03, #04, #05) with a high level of ‘attention to detail’ (#01, #05). Furthermore, managers found that veterans typically *“already have a plan”* when an issue is discovered. *“They put some plan together to show me, to demonstrate what [they] were working on and how [they] think it will be beneficial to the team”* (#03).

Next, managers quickly identified that veterans do not conform to typical work hours (#01, #02, #03, #04, #06). If there is a need to work early or late, the veteran is typically there. Which again aligns with the second definition of ‘mission-focused.’

In these cases, managers and veterans recognized and appreciated the focus on the company’s goal(s) and how quickly veterans were “willing to jump in and be a part of it” (#05). In addition, one veteran mentioned that the Air Force and company had “very

similar core values” (#11), which created a “comfortable and familiar environment” (#11).

The research found that veterans are mission-focused when the company and veteran values align, but it directly transfers when mission-focused refers to accomplishing a task. Therefore, being ‘mission-focused’ partially required adaptation as it takes time to align and relate to veteran values. However, the second perspective of ‘mission-focused’ did directly transfer as referred to accomplishing a task.

Loyalty

Managers and veterans identified loyalty (#01, #02, #03, #04, #05, #09, #10, #12, #13, #14, #16) as a central theme that aligns closely with ‘mission-focused.’ Previous research found that loyalty was a direct skill transfer for veterans entering the corporate environment. However, this research found that loyalty requires a sense of personal and company purpose and values to transfer, and it took time for veterans to place loyalty. Veterans also found that loyalty was an optional factor as they could leave a position if corporate values changed. However, when personal and mission-focused values aligned, it created the optimum environment for veterans to show loyalty.

"I think that is another thing people do not realize you can get from hiring a [veteran], especially a retired military member is a sense of loyalty. There is a certain amount of commitment that [veterans] will bring; while others might be ready to quit and run, we will hold on for a bit. So, I do not think I have an immediate sense of choosing something else and giving up" (#12).

A common perspective of loyalty was the "dedication, working long hours, and handling stress" (#01, #02, #04, #05), "[Complete] a marathon in basically the time it

takes to make a sprint" (#01). Meaning the willingness to get the job done was perceived by managers and veterans as a sense of loyalty.

"I think military guys make pretty good employees; we show up, and I mean it is crazy to me that is probably, the biggest difference that I've seen between the military and civilian world is the obligation to show up every day they don't feel like that's out in the world, but I did I didn't really have any difficulty with it as far as just you know coming to work doing my job service" (#11, #17).

Managers associated loyalty with mission-focus as "sticking with something and seeing it through to an end; doing what it takes to help others get the job" (#02, #03).

However, along with the perseverance aspect of loyalty, 'peer support was also apparent in how veterans went out of their way' to help colleagues' (#01, #02, #03, #05, #09, #14).

"[veterans] will give 100% to ensure it gets done within that given timeframe, and they are not making excuses. They're working on getting it done; they are also always willing to help work overtime or put extra hours and do whatever it takes to get things completed and help out in any way" (#03).

Loyalty requires adapting to the corporate environment by appealing to the veteran's value structure and aligning with the company's purpose and values or the company's mission. Therefore, results suggest that veterans must first learn how and where they fit in the company and how it aligns with veterans' values and the desire to serve. Once these conditions are met, loyalty follows.

Communication

Previous research found that communication skills were directly transferrable by veterans. However, this research found that most veterans needed time to adapt to how to

communicate in the corporate environment. For example, one veteran found that they had to change the way to communicate company goals and purpose:

“...in the military, everyone has the same common goal, regardless of branch. Almost every service member understands that their jobs relate to the greater mission. However, in the corporate environment, individuals want to know ‘what is in it for them,’ then the department, then the company” (#08).

Adapting the communication style was especially difficult for service members since the “*military typically thinks big to small*” when translating the mission, purpose, and motivation. For example, one veteran found that they lost the team’s attention when the motivational comments turned into “preaching” (#08), which lowered employee motivation. Therefore, veterans need to switch how they communicate to the individual level first and then link to the company objective.

Military Thought Process: Country → Team → Self

Corporate Thought Process: Self → Company

Another aspect veterans identified was that “honing communication skills” (#06, #08, #09, #11, #12, #13, #15, #16, #17) was critically important. For example, successful veterans can ‘speak in plain English’ (#06, #08, #09) and limit or “eliminate the military jargon” (#16). Veterans recognize that military jargon confuses people, and veterans must adapt to a “clear and concise communication style on a specific thing without using any kind of weird [military] jargon” (#16). The “new language piece” (#08, #13) and communication styles depend on where veterans are coming from and “[how veterans’

communication] needs to be adapted' (#15, #17) to the corporate environment. Veterans were able to adapt to the new language rules over time.

Another aspect of adaptation was using “cleaner language” (#09, #10, #14) and “not use an F and S bomb every other word” (#10). Veterans recognized that they needed to learn to “watch their language” and “know the environment” (#09) in order to succeed. The corporate environment typically uses more politically correct and clean language, which veterans had to adapt.

Listening also played a central theme for veterans adapting to the corporate environment. “The art of listening, the ability to influence, and winning doesn't mean that I was right all the time; when it comes down to it, winning is when we get the best outcome for the company, for patients, and whatever that looks like” (#08, #12).

“Generally, the military [used] less communication, but when that communication happened, it was swift... Generally, the answer came back fairly quickly, even if that answer was ‘hey, that fourth thing I really don't know I'm going to have to find out, give me a couple of days.’ However, within corporate, they'll come out with a list of questions, and sometimes it takes a long time for anybody to answer those questions or decide on this thing. So that has been the difference between the two elements in terms of communication” (#13).

Veterans experienced an abundance of milder communication in the corporate environment. Veterans had to adapt to “communication [in the corporate environment] is a lot slower to either get to the point or come to a solution” (#13). Another veteran identified that aspect of communication was less direct and too much “people pleasing”

(#11, #12). One veteran's perspective stated, *"I think [corporate] leaders [need to learn to have a] difficult conversation because I think we tend to shy away from it"* (#11, #12). Some veterans felt that the corporate environment *"tries to sugarcoat stuff a little bit too much and put too much spin on it"* (#12). Veterans recognized that although changing how they communicated was necessary, veterans still had 'difficult' conversations and were direct.

One veteran voiced their frustration with the number of emails sent versus having a direct conversation with all parties involved.

"There was another time, there were a whole bunch of issues came up, and just a million emails were being thrown around because there was a, basically, we when we went live with a project that project had bugs which, in all they always do, and there wasn't a very good stream of communication. People were getting partial info, other people were getting the same info, and people were working on the same problem. Knowing that communication is like one of the most important things, and like you really need a communication conduit you need a place where customer talks to have a core you need one line there, and maybe there's some people on that email thread or on the meetings so that they are aware, but like you have to have that line of communication, because you can't have a million different people doing a million different things, all at once and so, knowing that and like organizing that during this project was with from the military is like getting everybody down and then ensuring to respect the people's times and like hey, you are going to

be the main person who gets an email, are you okay with that is that find you have the time will be on the CC line so that we can start working on the problem when you get it, but all information will go through you to them, so that they're only talking to one person, rather than emailing for different people so I'd say that's the other, the other military experience is just identifying gaps and communication, because there's too much communication and then the other thing is direct messages communicate like when you write an email or when you communicate with somebody there is a certain amount of directness that you need to put but at the same time, you have to always open it up for the person to want to talk to you again, is the best way to put it, even when you're like closing a door behind somebody is like hey this is your job, you need to do it, you now own this thing like we no longer are involved in this you can't tell somebody that you have to be very, diplomatic it's a better way to put it, I guess, so and that's another thing that I think, I think almost everybody in the military kind of struggles, with a little bit when they get out is like the difference between having to be direct and then now did like being diplomatic is probably more important than being so direct with somebody compared to the military were a little bit different like you can go direct somebody almost all the time, and people are so used to it in the military" (#13).

Next, managers and veterans identified the 'varying degrees of [veterans'] willingness to speak up' (#04, #08) during business meetings. Managers expect people to

speak and ask questions during meetings. This is often difficult for veterans since ‘not repeating information, ‘humility’ and ‘being reserved’ (#08, #09) were respected leadership skills within the military. One manager recounted, “if you do not speak up, you will find yourself uninvited” (#04). This contradicts the veteran’s mentality of wanting a seat at the table. Thus, veterans adapted to the new environment to become more vulnerable and ask questions because “others expect a point of view, and you’re only going to have so many opportunities not to say anything or to wait toward the end to say something before you’re no longer in the room” (#08). Managers and veterans recognize that a voice within meetings is critical to success as a leader within the corporate environment. However, many veterans recounted that “I want to make sure I understand before I speak, and when I do speak, I am offering additional value, not simply regurgitating, restating or reiterating” (#07, #08, #11).

“I think you have to convince service members veterans that the perspectives, they have, coupled with the information they’re hearing create an impression, an opinion right some bit of information that now coupled with their own experience here their prior experience and what they’ve heard. it’s created something in your head” (#04).

“So, they understand the broader benefit instead of starting from the organization and then letting their questions drive me to detail because what I found is one, they’re not always willing to ask the questions that get to the level of detail they’re really looking for because they don’t want to seem selfish and to, they don’t always know the right questions to ask to get after the detail they’re looking at. So, if I start where I think

they're most interested, that encourages them to ask the important questions, and I can always tie it back to the broader organization afterward" (#08).

Communication skills require adaptation to the corporate environment by appealing to the individual first, honing communication, eliminating military jargon, using cleaner language, reducing directness, and learning to speak during meetings. Therefore, results suggest veterans must learn to adapt all forms of communication aligned with the corporate environment. Interpersonal skills changed to the individual focus, written communication was softer, and verbal communication was less direct.

Humility

Humility was another central theme mentioned by each interviewee. Owens and Hekman (2016) defined humility as “an interpersonal characteristic that emerges in social contexts and connotes (a) a willingness to view oneself accurately, (b) an appreciation of others’ strengths and contributions, and (c) teachability, or openness to new ideas and feedback” (page 1088). Using this definition, we find that both managers and veterans see humility, both positive and negative transfer, as a central theme for veterans entering the corporate environment. Managers and veterans determined that veterans tend to “undersell skills and capabilities” (#05, #08, #09). Veterans must learn to translate better and “give credit for how transferable those skills are” (#05).

Team building and listening to new ideas were both positive and negative. Some veterans could come to the corporate environment, listen to new ideas, and adjust their approach based on feedback. However, other veterans showed ‘stubbornness’ (#07), and it took time to teach them that their “answers are not always right” (#07).

“I think it’s just being humble and coming to the team and saying, you know what guys, I don’t have all the answers. If I did, we wouldn’t be having this discussion but encouraging them that it’s okay not to have those answers. That’s been tough when they probably lived a life, where, if you didn’t have the answer, something really bad could happen, or didn’t have the tools or solutions. Then, something awful could happen here, so surround yourself with a team of decision-makers and like-minded people equally passionate about things that you are then as a team you come up with those answers” (#07).

Veterans recognize that the transition process is ‘daunting.’ However, to be successful, a high degree of humility is essential, especially when first transitioning, because the environments are so different.

“I think one of those things is to know yourself, know your strengths, and be able to open with something impactful and straightforward. People always talk about that elevator speech or that 30 seconds that you might get to talk to somebody without being too grandiose with some on attainable kind of a statement like I am the emperor of training and development. But something that says, look, I can really help you, with your talent and growing your teams to find more effective and efficient ways of developing skills and keeping ahead of the curve, I mean something that just up front, this is what I can do for you um I think a lot of times in the military we’re very programs to tell you what I’ve done” (#12).

Humility played a central role in veterans adapting to the corporate environment. Veterans must use humility to be successful within the corporate environment. It requires veterans to learn how to sell their skills and be open to new ideas. Therefore, veterans must learn to display a high degree of humility as they leave an isolated culture to the corporate environment. For example, one veteran recounted a conversation with their direct executive about the veteran's past and experiences.

“So just trying, through conversation with them to convey the humility that why, yes, I realize I’m fortunate to have these experiences and to be able to bring these [experiences] to the company. I’m also humble enough to know that I still have a lot to learn in this organization and while I can certainly apply those tools, skills, and competencies to my role here, it doesn't mean that I have outsized expectations for what my role.

I’ve had [executives] tell me that getting to know my previous experiences, they were a bit intimidated to interact with me in this environment... I actually had a VP tell me during a conversation, where he was getting to know me ‘oh, and you got all those experiences, know you could take my job.’ And I was like, no I couldn't because you have industry, knowledge, and experience that I need to learn (#08).

This situation showed the importance of humility to build relationships are view oneself accurately. Veterans may come from extreme environments and have many responsibilities, but this veteran politely explained that he lacked industry experience and understanding of how the corporate environment worked. Thus, humility provided a framework to break down communication and perception.

Reprioritizing Values

Although many values transitioned from the military to the corporate environment, veterans recognized that some values required reprioritization. For example, veterans realized that although family values (#08, #14, #15) were a priority in the service, the value took a higher priority when transferring to the corporate environment, meaning the “*reprioritization of valuing family time*” (#08). In addition, some veterans’ reason for leaving the service was family-related, so the change in values provided a new path.

“...on the family side of it, rebuilding the relationships. What was lost on me is how, even while I tried to be as involved with my wife and kids as much as possible, amid all the other demands on my time, I learned just how disconnected I had become from my family. Once I actually retired, and forgive me if I get a little upset, but the lightning bolt was when I was thinking about retiring, and you know, I asked my 11-year-old daughter, “Hey sweetheart, how would you feel about Daddy Retiring from the Air Force?” She looked at me and surprise, with a big smile and her response was ‘Oh, I get my Daddy back’” (#08).

Veterans recognized that the military environment took precedence over several personal values and how veterans can reprioritize their values in the corporate environment. For example, one veteran resigned from a role because the company misaligned with the veterans’ adapted values. This veteran resigned from a position after the company violated the original agreement.

“I left car sales because one of the conditions I put in place when they hired me was when they were in a tight spot if they needed me to work on Saturdays, I was willing. However, it was not going to be something I did routinely because it took away from my family time. Long story short, I was more successful than [management] expected; faster than they expected; so about four months in, they asked me to start working on Saturdays because it was their busiest day and they believed I would do well. So, I decided to leave” (#09).

Therefore, results suggest that military discipline, loyalty, and values directly and positively transfer into the corporate environment. Specifically, loyalty and a desire to accomplish the mission break traditional boundaries such as the workday, assisting colleagues, and completing tasks to advance the company. Additionally, veterans orient positively and negatively to the company’s mission and vision. The results show a positive transfer when the mission focuses on serving a perceived noble purpose and a negative when the veteran could not connect to the company's purpose.

Sharing Military Experiences:

Managers and veterans identified that there is a limit to how much a veteran should share about their military past (#01, #02, #03, #05, #06, #07, #08, #09, #11, #12, #13, #14, #15, #16, #17). Managers were interested in learning more about veteran backgrounds and experiences. However, the caveat is “open about their background in the service and not necessarily talking about specific deployments...” (#01, #05), which means that the veterans have some degree to which they must wear a mask and do not feel a sense of freedom to disclose experiences fully.

“I think it’s always nice and it’s kind of interesting, so how some folks will mention it, and some won’t I always appreciate when folks just fully like when you’re in an interview process and, as you know, you get to the inevitable point you know tell me about yourself and who you are and what you do somebody that is open about their background in the service and not necessarily you know talking about specific deployments and things like that, but it’s definitely a very good point to touch on just from a who they are standpoint, making sure to touch on the fact that you know we were in the service for X amount of time and my responsibilities were this and this it’s kind of to me a you know, a talking point amongst any other type of relevant work experience they have you know speaking to win and why you are your service in the service to me is you know I always appreciate it” (#01).

Most veterans agreed about being reserved about the military and military experiences within the corporate context. “We came from these big jobs and while we’re just sharing our experience is as fact, we can very easily create barriers for ourselves with non-military” (#08, #10). Veterans recognized that being reserved and purposeful about their past was a better approach to limiting communication barriers. Veterans specifically mentioned that some of the military experience is ‘unpleasant and would rather talk about something else’ (#08, #10 #15).

“...and not talking so much about military stuff because a lot of people in a corporate environment they don’t really want to hear all that...”
(#10).

“...if you lead with the substantial responsibilities that you had before, it can to easily be misinterpreted as well; this role is beneath you show you won't be given a chance, and I didn't realize just how heavily that played because I almost did not get the opportunity, because of some people's concern that I would be bored with the role. That it wouldn't be challenging enough for me because of previous responsibilities and that I would either not stay long or might become difficult to work with and you know, on those on those two points like that sharing the experiences may create barriers and in talking about the experience that that may limit your opportunities” (#08).

One veteran recommended talking about the technical skills and how those could apply or experiences and certifications that directly relate to the environment (#17); others recommended “[do] not volunteer information [about military experiences] until asked” (#08, #09).

Veterans also recognize the difference in the corporate environment for storytelling and shared experiences with other veterans versus non-veterans. “Well, one specific piece of advice that was very pointed and hit me like a bolt of lightning as military, we are accustomed to sharing our experiences; it is what we do, it is how we get to know each other, it is how we make connections, whether or not we may have served together in a particular theater country whatever whether we are in the same branch or not” (#08).

“Well, in my experience, for example, if I have some military buddies in from out of town and we go out to a bar, and we get to drinking, we're

loud, and we're talking about these [military stories] because they're the only people you really feel comfortable talking about it with right, then pretty soon you start looking around and like the place thinned out in a radius around where you and your boys are sitting. What I mean, I guess, a lot of things that we do over there make people feel uncomfortable when they start hearing anything even remotely close to the reality [they clear out]. It has happened so many times, but one of the most memorable times was back in 2014. I had my army buddies in town and we went out to this really packed bar, it's a little oyster house slash Irish bar and we have a table. We've got to drinking and, of course, we started talking about the military and telling these really crazy stories that happened, but just I guess, a lot of the things that we thought were funny about these stories weren't so much to the people sitting around us, and this is a place that is normally just very tightly packed and within about a half an hour we literally had the place thinned out around us pretty good" (#10).

"One piece of advice that I got from a military person was don't tell people what you did don't offer it unless they're asked unless you're asked, and only tell as much as is relevant to the question his point was and he held a rather significant leadership role in the military himself. His point was that we came from these big jobs and while we're just sharing our experience, we can very easily create barriers for ourselves with non-military" (#08).

“But outside of the military, that’s a no-go because I don’t know exactly how to describe it, but if the average civilian heard a group of us talking, they would be pretty much completely appalled” (#10).

Veterans learned to be cautious about when to speak about military experiences. Veterans and managers both agreed that although experiences should be shared, they should be shared in a limited way with little detail. Therefore, most veterans feel they must hide military experiences to fit in the corporate environment. Some military experiences may limit opportunities and create interpersonal barriers between veterans and non-veterans. Non-veterans want to know about the veteran experience in a limited capacity and only to bridge previous experience with the current position.

Ambiguous Dress Code

In line with previous research, the longer individuals are in a specific culture and environment, the more institutionalized they become. Once leaving that environment takes time to learn and adapt to the new culture and requirements (Yamazaki, 2010). The military is no exception. One significant challenge among veterans was the adaptation to the ambiguity of the corporate dress code.

Adapting to a new dress code was a significant challenge for most veterans, especially for relying on specific ~200-page manuals (Army, 2021; Navy, 2021; U.S.A.F., 2022; U.S.M.C., 2018). Within the military, one way to stand out is having a “sharp, squared away, and precise image that when you walked into a room... you stood out amongst other sharp squared away people” (#08); however, after so long in the military, veterans identified that it was difficult to understand what to wear in a ‘business casual’ (#08, #09, #11, #14, #15, #17) environment. For example, one veteran recounted,

"Well, as you can see, I am wearing a uniform. So, I love that I don't ever have to try and decide what I'm going to wear. I have a company-provided shirt, and that's a very comfortable feeling. But, it stresses me out having to figure out what to wear every day" (04).

"Look, I could not figure out what to wear to work and, like a blue shirt with blue jeans, that looks stupid. So, I could not decide, and then here is a black shirt; man, it is like joe's crab shack. Is someone going to find that offensive? and can I wear that? So, I was actually showing up late to work because I didn't know what I should wear and things like that. I can't put my finger on it, and so I started talking to people, and they adjusted my start time from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. for a couple of weeks, just so I can sort things out, and they allowed me that time that extra hour, for whatever reason, I needed it. So, I was on a wall, just wearing the same uniform, day in and day out for work. My realization, I've never worn civilian clothes. The work before, I don't know, I had no fashion sense anymore, the military stripped that and that was one of those initial things, just say what I wear to work?" (#17).

Most veterans struggle to understand what is appropriate to wear in the corporate environment. For example, one recounted that in the beginning, they wore 'slacks and a button-down shirt,' and a few years later, they are typically working in 'shorts and a t-shirt' (#09). The change in dress code was a significant source of stress for most veterans.

Lack of Visual Identification

Next, veterans identified that a lack of outward signs in the corporate environment was a source of apprehension and required adaptation. For example, it was easy to size up a room; “uniforms, especially if they are in their [formal uniform] you see the rank on their arm, or the shoulder, you see the ribbons, you see core devices. All of those things can quickly tell you a lot about that person before you even talk to them” (#08, #09, #12). Versus the “outward sign [within the corporate environment] is your face, assuming people recognize you for the level of leadership that you have” (#08, #09, #12, #16, #17). The apprehension came from not immediately recognizing the status and level of individuals that veterans have not met.

“...in the military, everybody walks around with outward signs of who they are, their level of responsibility, and therefore what level of respect and deference you should pay them unless they prove otherwise. So, you develop that reliance on those outward signs. [In the military], you are [able to] quickly size up a room. You can see [if there are] officers, junior enlisted, or you [a different] group. You can see if they have deployed. Those kinds of things are keys that kind of get you ready for what you’re going to be talking about to the audience” (#12).

Veterans found it challenging to adapt to the lack of outward symbols that provide a context of the level and importance of individuals. The change in dress code in the corporate environment was a source of anxiety for veterans that required outside intervention. In addition, as veterans can no longer rely on outward signs to size up a

room, it is not easy to adjust when all identifying symbols are removed in the corporate environment.

Profit Strategy and Planning

Managers and veterans also identified creating strategy and strategic planning as adaptable leadership skills. Managers identified that ‘big picture thinking is missing for veterans’ (#05) and the ability to develop a strategy and focus on the larger system, not on an individual level. Managers also identified that strategic thinking might be more difficult for enlisted members to see a strategic view because “enlisted personnel brief issues and ask about direction. Sometimes they will brief the issue and tell you what they think, what you should do; that is a big transition in some ways...” (#04). This interview distinguished that SNCOs may have an easier time adapting than NCOs.

“I think you call it more strategic thinking. So, there’s strategic planning, overall strategies and those are great, but you have to have planning involved with strategy, so if you don’t have a pathway to get to that strategy then it’s going to be difficult later to come up with it once that meetings over and everybody disbanded. You can’t plan through email, so I think that’s a big part for me I realized anytime we come up with something before we walk away, we have steps to get there and it doesn’t have to be fully baked” (#12).

Another concept that is a significant adaptation is that “[the military] is not a profit-making endeavor. It is a present mission-oriented endeavor” (#04). The military has finite resources, making veterans focus on immediate solutions with their recommendations. Consequently, veterans also need to learn how to turn

recommendations into a strategic direction with a clear vision of how they can be executed, "...trying to contextualize why this is a good idea and I think we have to do better about exposing [veterans] who have not translated into corporate thinking" (#07). Many veterans do not have exposure or experience to profit and loss statements. However, some veterans have made a significant change by noticing a problem and approaching management with a solution.

"We couldn't find one that's going to work, just like write it all up and we'll get it ordered. You know, it was that simple and it wouldn't have been that simple in the military and if it first off, you know you can only order stuff certain times of the year, because the budgets always messed up then you had to spend more money" (#11).

Most veterans also do not have experience with "business issues" (#04, #05), which requires adaptation to understand strategic planning with data trending and analysis:

"...to help address issues and create training solutions, maybe mitigate those failures from happening, so you know I think taught [veterans] to learn and lead and lean into numbers right so that we can better understand the whys behind things. And you can't always assume that your answers are the right ones" (#07).

Resource Utilization

When it comes to utilizing resources, veterans are typically viewed very positively by "planning how to make that work better, faster, safer, cheaper, more

efficient” (#04, #05, #07, #08, #09, #13, #16). In addition, veterans identified these skills developed during leadership development which enhanced:

“the natural skills that seemed to be present [in veterans] and the knowledge around how to make the movement of product effective and maybe that’s a small niche in the military, but it seems like there’s this common theme around getting the right things to the right place at the right time, that translated well into these operations type roles” (#05).

Managers also identified that veterans “[know] how to run operations on reduced budgets” (#06). In addition, veterans have learned to keep composure and overcome objections despite the lack of resources. Managers find this a valuable “skillset to succeed without the ideal situations” (#06).

Managers identified veterans as resource multipliers that can accomplish tasks with limited resources. Therefore, veterans may lack the knowledge and skills to the strategic plan in a corporate environment focused on profit upon transition. However, veterans have a natural ability to manage minimal or abundant resources for short- and long-term effective use.

Conforming to Ambiguous Corporate Policies

Veterans found that adapting to an ambiguous environment lacking formal rules was challenging. Veterans identified that the “lack of formal rules and regulations [was] frustrating and difficult to adjust to” (#09, #12). Military members “...work within the guidelines of an Air Force instruction, other regulations, job descriptions, so when you take person A and person B, there is an expectation of how they will perform coming into the military...” (#12). As a result, veterans actively sought written ‘references,

justification, guidebooks, and other regulations' (#12) to look up information before asking. Veterans stated that in the corporate environment, "...it really does come back again to networking and I think there could make it difficult finding that balance, because while everything in the military could be referenced, I do not know that corporate America could operate that way, you need to have some flexibility as it changes so rapidly (#12)."

For example, one individual worked for a convenience store company and was fired when the veteran chased down an individual who stole from the store, as it was against company policies and values. The veteran recounted the event as a reaction:

"I actually got fired from [the convenience store] for chasing a beer runner out the door because it was against the policy. We weren't supposed to chase them. But you know [my training] kind of kicked in. I didn't even think about it, man. it's like this guy's running off with something that's not his, and I got it for some reason I felt the need to protect the company's merchandise when I had no stake in it right, but it was just something that happened I didn't catch him, you know, he was [fast], I was starting to get pretty out of shape by then being out of the military, but they had me on camera, and so that was a violation of company policy I could have ran out the door and got shot, so, they didn't like that (#10)."

Another veteran recounted the hard adjustment to human resources and company policies, such as mandatory breaks and sick days. They recounted, "there was no option to not show up for work in the military...to move into a situation where we have personal

time off, or I can just call in sick if I don't want to be here today was very odd to me, and it is not something that I choose to take advantage of very often, but I'm always amazed at how many people do (#11, #12)."

"We have interestingly enough, because of the do defense contract, we are required to get 56 hours of paid sick time per year penalty-free. So, so that you can absolutely just call up and say I'm not coming in today and, you know I think in in the past, if you didn't have an excuse me, there might be there might be a penalty involved and points or your annual review or something like that, but that we have 56 hours a year where nothing can be done whatsoever I'm going to be five minutes late because I'm sick, I'm going to use my personal sick time so for my paid sick time for that so, you know, they can you do that 12 times and they still can point you for being late, because it took some time so there's no repercussions for the day that that went into effect over half of the pharmacy pulled off just because they could. But it is really nice that we don't have to do the gravelly voice cough, cough final feel good today I'm not going to make it we don't even have to talk to a person yeah it's a completely automated line we just call off and say we're going to use sick time for the day and that's it there's never any attitude, or were you really sick kind of thing it's your turn entitlement and the next day, when you come in, everybody asks if you're okay and especially this year Nobody argues (#11)."

Veterans also had to adjust to the level of engagement expected in the corporate environment.

“In the corporate world we have HR policies and practices that make some of what leaders did in the military a violation of personal privacy in the corporate world. But while the cultures are different people are people. I had to work hard to balance that need to make sure my team was Okay. That they were felt comfortable bringing their whole selves to work. They trusted the rest of us to help them get their jobs done. Be there for them within reason personally if they were struggling with something. I struggled with finding that balance” (#09).

“How engaged a leader is in the lives of their direct reports were in the military, we had to be engaged personally and professionally with our teams to make sure our folks were in a good headspace, if you will, before they went out on missions that their families were taken care of their kids were fed their finances were squared away, you know they had nothing that would distract them from getting mission done (#09).

Veterans found the lack of formal policies and information on the company rules and regulations frustrating. The military has an abundance of written rules and regulations that may be referred to when needed. However, the corporate environment does not have that level of detail. Therefore, the lack of formal rules and regulations is a source of frustration for veterans, creating a negative transfer to the corporate environment. For example, the desire to continue to care for their teams and the human resources rules prevented the same deep connection required within the military. Three

veterans specifically mentioned that they could not connect with or get involved with their direct reports as much or as profoundly as in the military due to human resource policies. In the military, personally and professionally, caring for your team was measurable via the annual performance evaluation. This typically meant that the military leader understood their team's home life and stood as a resource to help solve any issues, including anything that may come up during deployment. Veterans found that it was more challenging, and at times, against human resources policy, to build a deeper relationship and get involved personally with their direct reports.

Briefly, this study identified nine directly transferable skills to the corporate environment: teamwork, resilience, work ethic, self-discipline, dependability, flexibility, responsibility, reliability, and self-reliance. These skills showed a positive direct transfer focused on accomplishing tasks and supporting the team.

The study identified 11 skills that require adaptation: mission-focused, loyalty, communication, humility, reprioritizing values, sharing military experiences, dressing for the job and outward symbols, strategy and strategic planning, resource utilization, and conforming to ambiguous corporate policies. Respondents identified these skills that need to be adapted and stated that these adaptations are required to be successful in the corporate environment.

How veterans adapt their skills to the corporate environment

This study identified four major themes in addressing how veterans adapt their skills to the corporate context: internal corporate networking, external industry networking, coaching, and managing and resetting expectations. Finally, ambiguity was a factor to veterans' success of adapting to the corporate environment and culture.

Internal and external networking

Networking outside the military is not something most veterans are used to (#05). Networking was identified in two forms, external and internal networking. Internal networking played a part in organizational politics and the ability to build relationships to accomplish a specific task and connect with other veterans through employee resource groups. *“I would definitely recommend being a part of that ... because others will have stories and experiences that they can share. And ultimately, things will help you feel connected to a large organization of 77,000 employees”* (#07).

External networking creates the “ability to connect with individuals to do rotational assignments” (#06). “Always building your contacts, you know you’re trying to make those contacts you know LinkedIn you know build those profiles” (#09).

“About that same time one of my former Air Force buddies who was working with express scripts contacted me saying they had. A new team, they were starting up with express scripts thought I’d be perfect. Hence, as for my resume and you know about a month later, I’m an express scripts employee” (#08). *“put it into civilian speak lack of a better term so. I got that but then I sent that resume out, I sent it out to my brother who’s you know, a businessman, and has been for a long time actually sent one out to the guy I currently work for to get his opinion and I’ll get into that a minute and they gave me feedback from the from the corporate side”* (#09).

“I sent a guy my resume and asked him to take a look at it wasn’t even looking for a job and a month later he hired me. He hired me because of

who I was, and because we worked, we worked together before and you know, because of what I've done since then I've been able to keep my job" (#09).

"I networked. I went and talked to a lot of people I got on LinkedIn and, I mean, I had lunch, I took people for coffee that I think, in my mind, I was hoping that they could get me a job or point me in the direction, but if anything, just talking with them and saying 'hey can you give me feedback' it felt a little difficult at certain times because I wasn't the kind of person who like to ask for help. But I found that you know, and it does go full circle, I mean at that point, I was the one asking for help, I was the one who had to network, but now I do that for other people, and it should be that way. To where you learn, then you teach, you learn, then you teach and so, for me it was just that connecting with people I would go to events they used to have a I don't know if they still do it in COVID times, I'm sure they're not but it was a network after work event that they would do once a month and you just show up. And it would just be a random group of people, some that were looking for jobs, some that were just you know, having a drink, but again, another good way to network and just get some feedback met some people there and I would go to lunch as well, and just talk to them about you know what they're doing so, I think that was a good investment of my time because" (#12).

Networking is a new skill for veterans. Typically, veterans are in an isolated culture and environment requiring internal networking but almost no external

networking. Therefore, veterans need to learn how to find external networking opportunities. Results suggest that both internal and external networking are critical for veterans to learn, specifically as they learn how to write resumes, communicate within the corporate environment, and build industry connections.

Coaching

Coaching was a significant factor in veterans' understanding of how to adapt to the corporate environment. In the interviews, coaching and mentoring were used interchangeably. Managers reported that veterans were highly coachable and that they were able to provide coaching to veterans, and veterans sought coaches from various sources to adapt to the corporate environment (#04, #05, #06, #07, #08, #09, #10, #14, #15).

Managers helped to coach veterans with articulating their skills and abilities. For example, one manager stated, "*... I won't call myself a mentor, but I kind of help them understand how to land in the business world it's really been about packaging his skill set in a way that people understand it and you'll sell it, because he has them and it's awe-inspiring. However, unfortunately, veterans cannot articulate the skills in a meaningful way*" (#05).

"I think some [veterans] struggle with multiple ways of achieving mission success; sustainment or new product development, you can go down both of those paths... In some cases [old products] are just as lethal and effective as something coming off the line with the latest technology. I think [veterans] really struggle with their allegiance, maybe to the service and having a different lens of now my focus is how

do I, how do I provide value to the service now also. Ensuring that I'm positioning my company, for the most success, you know with related to [profit and loss]" (#06).

Managers also coached veterans with goal creation and career plans over the next few years. Coaching also included identifying specific behaviors to improve; some managers and veterans use an indirect coaching process to improve veteran behavior. For example, one manager specifically mentioned that when a veteran does not talk or offer an opinion or insight during a meeting, they would *"often go to their boss, and say hey you got tapped on the shoulder. I don't invite them to meetings just sit here and do nothing. There's something in his head, get it out. I tell them to participate in this meeting, I didn't bring them here fly him in or bring them on the phone for them to say nothing"* (#04).

The manager also reported that an adaptive coaching approach created a safe and trusting environment for veterans to talk openly. For example, one manager mentioned that a veteran was gaining a poor reputation for *"others have commented that maybe they are not all there, or they're just not focused, or maybe they don't have that drive or that desire"* (#07). So, the manager created a safe environment by trying to *"understand those challenges with sensitive subjects, especially if there's a little bit of some of that [PTSD] state she has talked to me about that, and I always just want to lean in with a listening ear first, help me understand and not just jump to solution mode, and I'm not always the one that has all the answers right"* (#07).

Veterans found connections with other veterans already in the corporate environment that allowed for a more manageable transition period. For example, one

veteran stated it felt like finding a “... *familiar support system to help make the transition [easier]. I found folks that were already in the corporate [environment]. [It made] my transition easier because [those veterans] understood what I was struggling with and how they help to translate*” my leadership skills (#08).

“...figuring out how to translate those processes into corporate where, yes, we do talk about mission, why do we exist, what is our purpose and that statement should excite should make us proud to be a part vision, what do we aspire to be in the future and that statement should make us excited about being a part of this organization” (#08).

“...pathways to help them grow, and you know I don't think we've done that, historically, so we can do, we can do more as a company, that's for sure, and I think it just starts with. Understanding this is a need, embracing it as a problem, and wanting to be a partner and solution right if you have that intentionality around your efforts (#07).

“I'd be writing them down and then I knew I could go back to my director or a couple of other Coworkers” (#12).

Access to coaching was found to be a critical component of veteran success.

Veterans need to make an effort to seek a coach to ensure personalized attention to fixed specific behaviors. Managers who actively coach veterans may create a positive and welcoming environment for veterans to successfully integrate into the corporate culture. The coaching process may also help veterans define the purpose of their roles and reduce role ambiguity.

Managing and resetting expectations

A significant finding was the importance of personal attitudes towards transitioning. Veterans and managers identified that successfully adapting a leadership skill necessitates resetting expectations. Veterans had to learn that the values that served them in the military may no longer be valid in the corporate environment. As a result, successfully adapted veterans learned to reset their expectations for the “new culture and environment and the right fit” (#09).

“...when you come over to the civilian side of that, it’s not That way, you know you, you really do have to be more vocal you have to be more engaged, to set yourself up for promotion, and if you don’t then it’s not necessarily true that you will get promoted, and I mean I talked to people, and it’s hard sometimes because they’ll say I’ve been with the company for 20 years and they’re still, at the low band for or a high band three, and I’m like Okay, congratulations on your time with the company, but for me, it’s like, were you just comfortable in the position that you are? Were you not groomed to learn how to develop leadership skills? So, it took a little while for me to wrap my head around it, and we talked about it, so I think we’ve gotten to a good point, but it is still strange” (#12).

Managers recommended that veterans reset expectations on where to start within an organization, especially if veterans are “starting a profession” (#01, #04, #05). A negative transition point is that some veterans enter the corporate environment expecting to have the same level of responsibilities. Some managers found that the higher the rank,

the harder it is to get back into building those relationships (#04, #06, #09). One veteran recounted a significant difference in the corporate environment: their additional administrative actions. For example, as a high-ranking member in the Air Force, they had a team to 'book travel and accommodations, and the veteran just had to show up and focus on the job versus the corporate environment where they had to "book their travel again" (#08).

"I've worked with other individuals that maybe sometimes it is hard for [veterans] to come in and not command, roll up their sleeves if you will, and get dirty; not everything is sexy. But, of course, everybody likes to be there to close the deal and deliver the product, etc., but in many cases, some general administrative things must get done, [which is not sexy]"
(#06).

Consistent with previous research, veterans in the service have more difficulty resetting expectations to fit the new culture and environment. Additionally, veterans found some level of disappointment with the lower standards and accountability within the corporate environment. Results suggest that veterans are entering a new environment and culture and must reset their expectations from the structured environment of military service to the less structured and more ambiguous corporate environment.

Ambiguity and Successful Adaptation

A common theme throughout the interviews with managers and veterans was the sense of ambiguity in transitioning. This research found two sides to ambiguity. First, operating in an ambiguous environment was found to have both direct transfer and skill adaptation requirements. The challenge is understanding the company's vision but being

unsure of how to get there. This creates an opportunity for the veteran to use creativity to solve the problem. This task ambiguity shall be referred to as *light ambiguity*. On the other side of ambiguity is when there is no clear vision, but an ambiguous task is assigned; veterans and managers identified that veterans struggle to complete the task in this environment. This purpose ambiguity shall be referred to as *dark ambiguity*.

The relationship between ambiguity and successful adaptation is an important finding. Both managers and veterans identified that coping with ambiguity was a predictor of success in adapting. As previously mentioned, ambiguity can relate to task or purpose ambiguity. Veterans thrive in task ambiguity, but results suggest that they typically struggle with purpose ambiguity.

Dealing with purpose ambiguity is a significant predictor of success or failure. Veterans had to learn to adapt to a company's profit strategy versus doing what is best for the customer or end user. Managers found that some veterans were more focused on providing more to the end user at a loss for the company. One manager had coached several veterans that "if we did that for every customer, then we would be out of business." This is a fundamental shift in thinking for veterans as service mission success is sometimes more important than the cost.

Purpose refers to the company's direction and why the company exists. In addition, it also refers to why the position exists and along with a defined vision for the future. Thus, it was found that the more ambiguous the company and department's purpose, the higher the chances that the veteran may fail to adapt to the environment. However, if the purpose is defined, but the vision is unclear, the veteran is more likely to

adapt successfully to the environment. In addition, managers and veterans both identified that veterans could react quickly to task ambiguity when the purpose is defined.

Purpose ambiguity also aligns with the veterans' understanding of the company, purpose, and ways to generate profits. At times, purpose ambiguity was a negative transfer from the veteran into the corporate environment, which created the opportunity for adaptation.

Ambiguity is a critical aspect that must be considered for veterans' success. Results suggest the type of ambiguity may influence veteran success in leadership skill adaptation. For example, a defined purpose with task ambiguity has a high potential for success. Conversely, purpose ambiguity may be a predictor of failure in adaptation.

This section provided the findings on how veterans adapt to the corporate environment. Both internal and external networking was reported as being essential for veterans to find new connections outside the military environment. Coaching provided a personalized focus on the veterans' personal and career development. Veterans identified that managing and resetting expectations to a more ambiguous environment was essential for success. Finally, the type of ambiguity played a significant role in the veteran success.

Manager perceptions of veteran leadership skills

Manager interviews provided an overall positive view of veteran leadership skills. Managers state having true appreciation for [veterans] in the service and respect for those who have served in the military (#01, #03, #04, #05, #06, #07). In addition, managers agreed that veterans have highly desirable skills beneficial to the corporate environment and identified considerable leadership skills that transfer to the corporate environment.

Managers also identified that there should be "...easier and better ways that [veterans] could be recognized" (#01, #03). There is a desire to recognize veterans' journeys and contributions better, and managers want companies to take a more active role in veterans' integration into the corporate environment.

"I just think that more and more companies really need to look at what they offer on veterans who are coming back into the work or corporate or anywhere when they're coming back to work into the working environment, I think that companies need to have programs, to help them and whatever it might be to help them deal with whatever issues that come across and not just in the very beginning, but through their whole career" (#03).

Finally, managers look to help and coach veterans while "they are still going through the [transition] curve" (#07) and connect with networking groups (#03, #05, #06, #07) to assist in veterans' integrations back to the corporate environment. However, some issues seem to be salient for 90% of veterans, but not managers. For example, veterans perceive that dressing is an issue, but no manager mentioned that they perceived it as an issue. Some veteran perspectives suggest that some managers are aware of the problem by allowing flexible hours at the beginning of employment to adjust to the new expectations. Salient issues for veterans, but managers do not seem to be aware of veterans' struggles when having a new dress code. The one exception was a special forces veteran that did not conform to the typical dress code while on active duty.

Managers support the efforts in making veteran leadership skills recognized and utilized in the corporate environment and are confident in the veterans' ability to transfer

and adapt their knowledge and skills to the corporate environment. Results suggest that managers in the corporate environment positively perceive veterans' leadership skill base and their benefits to the business.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This qualitative study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of veteran transition experiences through lived experiences of veterans and managers of veterans. Findings identify the veteran leadership skills that directly transfer to the corporate context and which skills require adaptation. The principal question of this study was: How do post-9/11 U.S. Military Veterans utilize their military-gained leadership skills and experiences in the corporate environment? The overall research question was studied through four sub-questions: (1) What veteran leadership skills directly transfer into the corporate environment? (2) What veteran skills require adaptation to the corporate environment? (3) How do veterans adapt their skills to the corporate environment? (4) What is the manager's perspective of veteran leadership skills?

Summary of Findings

This study found several interesting items. First, although previous research suggests that 19 skills are transferrable (Pollak et al., 2019; Yamazaki, 2010), this study found that veteran perceptions were that many required adaptations. However, this study found that not all these skills directly transfer to the business environment. While eight of these skills directly transfer (teamwork, resilience, work ethic, self-discipline, dependability, flexibility, responsibility, and reliability), current findings suggest four may require further adaptation (mission-focused, loyalty, communication, humility).

This study also identified a new transferrable skill (self-reliance) to the corporate context and seven additional skills that require adaptation to the corporate environment (reprioritizing values, sharing military experiences, ambiguous dress code, lack of visual

identification, profit strategy and planning, resource utilization, and conforming to ambiguous corporate policies).

The adaptable skills provided additional insight into salient issues, such as the ambiguous dress code and how veterans struggle during the transition. This is of interest as no manager mentioned the issue.

Direct Transfer of Veteran Leadership Skills – Key Finding

Self-reliance emerged as a key finding within transferrable skills. The self-reliance definition emerged from the interviews as the “ability to survive on their own with limited direction.” Self-reliance distinguished itself by providing additional insight into veterans' confidence to act independently and accomplish a task without reminders or additional explanations. Managers reported that veterans could work independently without additional follow-up or having to explain several times. Self-reliance also included the veterans' ability to put some thought into a project or solution before presenting it to the manager. Managers reacted positively to the approach as it provided something to respond to and provide feedback.

Interestingly, previous research found that self-reliance has a different impact on sub-groups. For example, Schaumberg and Flynn (2017) found a positive relationship between women's self-reliance and leadership evaluation. This was interesting as veterans tend to be self-reliant. In addition, these findings challenge some meaning from previous research. For example, Van Ness, Melinsky, Buff, and Seifert (2010) found that new workers are more self-reliant and independent than seasoned professionals. However, many businesses look for collaboration and teamwork. Therefore, although veterans may be self-reliant, they also have a keen sense of collaboration and teamwork.

Adaptation of Veteran Leadership Skills

The second research question also yielded novel findings. Contrary to previous research, four skills that were previously identified as direct transfers did not directly transfer and required adaptation (mission-focused, loyalty, communication, and humility) to be used effectively in the corporate environment. Further, seven additional themes (reprioritizing values, sharing military experiences, ambiguous dress code, lack of visual identification, profit strategy and planning, resource utilization, and conforming to ambiguous corporate policies) emerged as skills that require further adaptation.

Managers and veterans identified that mission-focused is an essential concept for adaptation to the corporate environment. Mission-focused has two meanings, task focus and the company's purpose. While in the military, service members 'purpose' exists to "support and defend the constitution of the United States of America against enemies foreign and domestic..." (U.S.A., 2021); once veterans transition out of the military, they search for new meaning and purpose to serve something more than themselves, i.e., does the company's purpose align with the veterans' desire to continue to serve? The central adaptation point is for veterans to make an intentional effort to understand the purpose and mission of a company truly. When veterans felt misinformed or felt no sense of purpose, they pursued another path. For example, several veterans who worked within the healthcare industry found that the company's purpose of providing the best healthcare to people was a purposeful endeavor to follow. Mission-focused and believing in the company were reported as essential for veterans' effectiveness and willingness to stay with the company. Conversely, when this purpose lacks or is misaligned, there is a higher

likelihood that the veteran will pursue a new position that creates more meaning in the veteran's life.

Along with being mission-focused and needing to serve a greater purpose, veterans continually showed loyalty. However, loyalty came after the veteran found a worthwhile cause to serve and when they understood the company culture. Adaptation came into play when the veteran started a new position and learned the purpose and culture. Managers especially found that when veterans believe in the company's purpose, loyalty transcends immediate management and is shown to be much higher. Conversely, findings suggest that if a company is not informed and violates a veteran's reprioritized values and loyalty is broken, the veteran may pursue a new career path.

Veterans also reported that they had to learn to be less direct, use appropriate language, and adapt communication techniques for motivation. Veterans found that they could still be direct but needed to use more tact to deliver a message effectively. For example, veterans recalled the frustration in adapting to receiving 'more emails with less information,' which led to a perception of employees lacking timely decision-making. In addition, veterans had to adapt to the cultural communication process over email, especially the number of emails going back and forth with little resolution to the issue and teams' slower response times.

Humility was also a significant carry-over skill that needed adaptation. Veterans identified that a high degree of humility was required to successfully transition to the corporate environment. Veterans continually found that they had to be open to feedback from coaches, peers, mentors, direct reports, and managers to be successful. However, how feedback was provided and from whom was not a consistent experience; only some

veterans found that people were open and willing to discuss areas that the veteran could improve. For example, one veteran used an investigative approach to understand the team. *"In the military, asking someone to show you their job is great, and there is pride. I asked a young soldier to teach me how to use a piece of equipment, and the soldier's eyes lit up and then spent the next hour teaching me how to use the equipment (#12)."*

However, when the same approach was used to understand the operations within the corporate environment, it was not well received and created an aura of distrust. Human Resources contacted the veteran and coached them on the situation. The veteran humbled themselves by listening to the feedback and then spent time with the individual having an open conversation that provided both parties more context into why the veteran was asking questions. The veteran recounted, "it took maybe a 30-minute conversation to clear up the confusion and get them to understand that I was coming from a place of support (#12)." Thus, veterans feel the corporate environment expects some level of trust that individuals are proficient, and when the veterans ask too many questions, it may yield a negative result.

Another veteran found that their approach to motivating employees demoralized the team. As a result, veterans had to adapt their motivation techniques from focusing on benefiting the company to benefiting the individual. This approach is a fundamental shift in motivation approaches for veterans as the corporate environment may promote a 'what is in it for me' mentality while the military places the country above self-interest. One team member told the veteran to 'stop preaching' and 'we are not in the military, and neither are you.' This statement changed the veteran's perspective and humbled them with their approach to motivation and reaching employees.

Another veteran considered their skills and abilities when speaking with their manager, an executive, who was awestruck at the veterans' experience. As an E9, the veteran had years of experience planning, strategizing, and implementing multi-national programs. Furthermore, they were, directly and indirectly, responsible for thousands of service members. The vice president mentioned that they could be qualified to be an executive. However, the veteran explained that they could not because they had too much to learn about the industry, the company, and the overall approach to making money and mentioned this as an example of how becoming 'more humble' was essential to a successful transition. Frequently, veterans need to be aware of how some of their experiences may build barriers within the corporate environment. The military has a big mission and responsibility, and every level understands what part they play, which can be intimidating to the corporate environment.

Humility refers to (1) the willingness to view oneself accurately, (2) appreciation of others' strengths and contributions, and (3) teachability (Owens & Hekman, 2016). This research advanced how enlisted veterans adapt humility to post-military service. Veterans had to learn how humility manifested in the company and how humility looks different in the business context compared with the military. A significant difference is that humility expectations change from company to company but stay relatively the same in the military as service members change locations.

Veterans also found that their values changed during and after the transition from the armed services. Veterans found that their values had to be reprioritized after leaving the service and joining the corporate environment. For example, while serving in the military, 'family' was identified as an essential value; however, the oath of defending the

constitution of the United States of America took priority over the value of ‘family.’ Once veterans left the service, they reported that family moved to a higher priority. Three veterans in our sample reported resigning from positions because it placed them in a similar time commitment to the job as the military, thus taking time away from their families. Veterans understood that they were starting a ‘new career’ that required reprioritizing personal and professional values that required adaptation. Veterans found that they now had the freedom to choose work or family. Prior to the corporate environment, the choice was not necessarily theirs. Service-before-self partially meant that a military member could be deployed away from their family for up to 18 months, but the corporate environment did not hold the same type of power. The veteran had a choice to leave the position in the corporate environment versus the military, in which veterans must complete the service obligation (contract).

Once veterans enter the military, they are taught the uniform standards by the branch they enter. This is a significant difference from the corporate context, and the longer one is in the military, the less connected to the corporate environment they become. The corporate environment does not have strict guidelines for what to wear, but cultural norms exist that are expected to be followed. For example, one participant stated that they were unaware that it was a practice to “wear a brown belt with brown shoes and a black belt with black shoes” or what “business casual” meant. Another challenge was learning how to dress for the corporate environment and showing up to build credibility. This was important to the veterans as there may be an association between the strict dress code and military expectations based on the company's culture. Veterans took several approaches to understand and adapt to a new ambiguous dress code. One participant was

happy to work in a fulfillment environment with a required dress code, such as a uniform. Another veteran mentioned overdressing for their position for the first few weeks until they received coaching, but it was a problematic switch since the military is expected to look clean and sharp, and this veteran's perception was that over-dressing would accomplish that. Unfortunately, it was a mismatch to the corporate culture norms regarding how to dress. Another veteran had so much anxiety about what to wear that they were showing up late for work; however, with support from the company, the veteran received extra time to adjust and could adjust within a few weeks of starting.

Veterans and managers identified that sharing military experiences may be too much for coworkers to understand and relate to, which creates connection barriers. Veterans were required to reframe their experiences to fit in the new environment, as military stories may be too intimidating or overwhelming for non-veterans. In addition, veterans report that they feel they must hide a part of their past as full disclosure may cause relationship barriers.

Consistent with identity theory, veterans in transition are forced to have multiple identities. When veteran transitions into the corporate environment, they must depersonalize a portion of their past to fit into the new social context (Stets & Burke, 2000). Furthermore, when veterans enter the corporate environment, some past learning must be adjusted and rebuilt into a new context (Willets & Clarke, 2014) to effectively incorporate into the corporate culture. This included hiding details of their past and being reserved or changing past experiences to fit the new environment. Conversely, when veterans gather some return to their military identity, they impact non-veterans around them. They described that when they were back within a military identity and started

having conversations and reminiscing, it tended to cast a large shadow, and non-veterans would leave or move further away from the group. This is a representative experience that many veterans have faced, even when being brief or not divulging all details.

Managers reported wanting to know about the veterans' past but not about a specific deployment or experience. Managers wanted to understand what the veteran could bring to the team versus hearing war stories. This requires some depersonalization as the veteran must be aware of the new social context and change their communication to fit the new structure. Veterans also identified that they learned not to speak about their military past unless specifically asked; even then, it is a 'cleaned' version of the experience.

Veteran Adaptation – Key Findings

The third research question found four themes describing how veterans adapt their leadership skills to the corporate environment. The first theme was the importance of internal and external networking opportunities. Veterans must learn how to locate and participate in networking opportunities. These opportunities may include professional organizations, virtual meet-ups, or company-sponsored events. In addition, networking allows veterans to start adapting communication skills, how to dress and learn more about professions or industries they may want to pursue.

Second, veterans learn to adapt by finding mentors and coaches. A few veterans formed a mentoring relationship with a fellow veteran who has gone through the transition process and has adapted to the corporate environment. Mentors and peer support allow veterans to adjust through caring, tangible aid that provides relevant company information. Mentorship is a key to successful integration into the corporate

environment. Since veterans are entering a new culture, mentors may model ethical behavior, fundamentals of communication, lending meaning to work, and understanding social worth (Kay, Hagan, & Parker, 2009).

Managing and resetting expectations was a significant finding which advanced the theory of narrative identity for veterans (Beech, Gold, & Beech, 2017). This provided the context that veterans had to adapt to the new environment and what is accepted culturally. For example, one veteran recounted that while they were an E9 in the military, they had someone book their travel, and now in the corporate environment, they had to adjust their expectations and book their own travel. Although this was a quick adjustment, it differed from how the military operated.

Manager Perceptions – Key Findings

The fourth research question reviewed the managers' perceptions of veterans' leadership skills. Managers quickly identified that veterans are willing to help the team, take on additional responsibilities, and train even when inconvenient, such as late on a Friday afternoon without complaint. In addition, veterans are not typically clock watchers and do not conform to the '9 am to 5 pm' mentality, which provided managers faith in the veterans' abilities to lead and care for the team.

However, an interesting aspect is what the managers did not mention. First, there seem to be a few salient findings of what managers are unaware of and therefore do not know how to assist veterans. Managers and companies desire to support veterans, but often they are unaware of what and how to support them. Three specific examples appeared in this research. First, veterans' ability to dress for the job and the anxiety it created. Although, when one veteran arrived late to work, the management made some

discoveries and adjusted the veteran's start time for a few weeks. However, this only seemed to occur after an issue arose, not as a preventative measure.

The second salient finding was how veterans adjusted to the lack of outward signs when identifying the level and position of individuals within the corporate environment. This manifested in veterans being more reserved and not talking during meetings. Although this was a significant barrier for veterans, managers seemed unaware of the issue and how to support the veteran in transition.

Finally, the theme of dark ambiguity was partially recognized by two (28.5%) managers that mentioned veterans' ability to 'operate in the gray area' and needed to become more comfortable with ambiguity. Veterans, however, found that dark ambiguity appeared in many places, including a lack of corporate policies.

Theoretical Implications

Although some prior research focuses on military skill transfer to the corporate environment, the current study focuses explicitly on the enlisted population as there is scant research focusing on the enlisted population. This study provided novel findings for the enlisted military personnel to better transition into the corporate environment, including theoretical contributions to the literature on (1) military skill transfer and (2) paternalistic leadership.

This research found that not all identified skills directly transfer out of the military. Many skills are required to be adapted to the corporate environment and culture to be used effectively. This research found both positive and negative skill transfers to the corporate environment. For example, communication was a negative transfer due to the overly direct communication style in the military and learning to use cleaner language in

the corporate context. Veterans had to adapt to their new environment and culture, which took time.

Previous research showed that non-Western businesses utilize paternalistic leadership, which is defined as a “hierarchical relationship in which a leader guides professional and personal lives of subordinates in a manner resembling a parent, and in exchange expects loyalty and deference” (Pellegrini, Scandura, & Jayaraman, 2010; Scandura & Pellegrini, 2006). In this study, managers, and veterans both identified that the paternalistic leadership style is frequently used within the military as a ‘nurturing, caring, dependable, yet authoritative, demanding and disciplinarian’ (Pellegrini et al., 2010, p. 394). This shows that a sub-group within western culture, the military, commonly uses paternalistic leadership. However, once veterans leave service, there is a negative transfer. When veterans attempted to use paternalism within the corporate context, it ran counter to norms and even violated company policies, such as asking about or involving themselves in employees’ lives as human resource policies. However, veterans and managers identified that veterans could still build a close relationship with subordinates that allows for a benevolent paternalistic leadership approach over time.

Practical Implications

This study’s findings have at least four practical implications. First, findings provide veterans with a better understanding and explanation of leadership skills that transfer and require adaptation and practical advice and strategies to adapt to the corporate environment and integrate faster through internal and external networking, mentorship, and managing expectations. Specifically, veterans should seek out networking events (internal and external) to start building connections and practice

communication within the civilian environment. These events are critical since this research showed that communication was a point of adaptation and veterans need to learn how to communicate in a new language that discontinues military jargon. As veterans transition out of the military, veterans will need to start external networking opportunities to assimilate into the corporate environment. Once the veteran finds employment, it is highly encouraged to start internal networking to understand the company culture better. Networking also leads to the second practical implication of seeking mentors and coaches.

Next, veterans should seek to build a network of coaches (for specific skill-building) and mentors (for career or life advancement) (HR Research Institute, 2022). Veterans should rely on coaches to bridge knowledge gaps within the corporate context and the profession they are pursuing. Mentors should be used to help veterans navigate the corporate landscape and advise career direction or future development areas. This research found that veterans may receive the best outcomes if they use prior veterans as mentors to help navigate the complexity of the corporate environment. Coaches focused on skill development do not necessarily need to be a veteran; however, the veteran will need to display a high degree of humility to learn the new skill. It is recommended that mentors be veterans who experienced the transition process to the corporate environment and assist other veterans in setting their expectations and finding meaningful careers.

Findings may also assist veterans in understanding some of the challenges they may face, such as what I refer to as “dark ambiguity.” In the context of veteran adaptation, a primary consideration for companies should be reducing dark ambiguity, which refers to a lack of company purpose or project goal. Companies can increase

veteran integration success by providing more details to those transitioning from the military. However, this is not to say that dark ambiguity is all bad. Veterans identified that the existence of dark ambiguity required them to ask more questions to try and define the purpose. It only became an issue when the purpose could not be defined. Managers and veterans identified that the more ‘dark ambiguity’ existed, the higher the potential was for failure. This is significant since veterans are mission-focused and need a clear purpose to operate at their best. Finally, veterans must come to terms that they are, in essence, starting over in a new career which means reprioritizing values and resetting expectations.

Third, findings provide managers and peers additional insight into veteran leadership skills and transition challenges. Managers and peers may use this research to become better supporters of veterans as they transition into the corporate environment. Managers may also find it helpful to come from a place of empathy when transitioning veterans. Finally, these findings can assist team effectiveness and break down communication barriers by providing additional context on communication style or mission-focused means.

There are additional implications for the Talent Acquisition field and hiring managers to have more information and understanding about veterans’ leadership skills and abilities and understand how to better communicate with potential candidates. Additionally, this research may help break down communication barriers and give hiring managers more empathy and insight into the military context. Finally, hiring practices can be improved by understanding veterans' challenges when transitioning out of the military.

Fourth, findings provide companies and corporate human resources and training centers insight into the challenges that veterans may experience. For example, this research could set the foundation for veteran integration programs to assist veterans in incorporating into the corporate environment by providing less ambiguous instructions for how to dress and expand on the cultural rules, especially for those transitioning from the military to their first corporate roles. In addition, this research may assist companies in identifying specific support structures to assist veterans with a more effective transition and integration process.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study was limited to a small sample size of veterans and managers across nine professions and four industries. Therefore, there is potential to receive different results if the study solely focuses on a single industry or company. However, the findings were consistent among all veterans across industries, reaching saturation for all significant findings.

Another limitation was the location of the participants. Veterans and managers were interviewed in several different locations via Zoom. It was not unusual for the veterans and managers to have a decentralized team across the U.S.A. rather than a single location. Through the data analysis, there is no indication that the location impacted the results of this study. As previously mentioned, veterans identified that company culture and support significantly impacted the veteran's perception of a company. Sub-cultures may exist in specific industries or companies; however, this research aimed to understand a global perspective, not a specific branch or profession. Future research should be conducted to gain additional insight into skill transfer and adaptation from each military

branch. For example, previous research suggests that the Air Force and Navy are business-like, while Army and Marines are further away from the business spectrum. Therefore, different military branches may lead to differences in experience when transitioning into the corporate environment. This study pointed towards a few potential areas and differences between branches, but not enough for a conclusive result that may lead to substantive recommendations.

Future research should also investigate skill transfer and adaptation of the three major rank groups. Specifically, what are the challenges between E1-4 (junior enlisted), E5-6 (NCO), and E7-9 (SNCO)? This research found that some managers mentioned that the more time a veteran serves in the military, the harder it is to change their mindset from a military thought process to a corporate frame of reference. Each group will likely have some idiosyncrasy that will require adaptation; however, the longer and higher rank a veteran achieves, the more complex the adaptation may become, e.g., an individual in for four years versus 25 years. However, more research is needed to determine each group's specific positive and negative skills transfer and adaptation.

Next, a multi-year research study should follow veterans during and after the transition. Many veteran participants had multiple positions in the current study or were in their roles for years before it was conducted. In addition, several managers recognized that the veterans they employed were not "new" and came from other companies a few years after service. This may impact how the veteran learns new skills and adapts previous learning. Finally, comparing positions, companies, roles, and managers will provide additional insight into how leadership skills are transferred and adapted across roles and industries.

Another area of fruitful further investigation could be a comparative study between officers and enlisted to explore the differences in transition experiences between the two groups. Officers may be better equipped to enter the corporate environment given their higher levels of education and leadership experience. Wang, Bamber, Flynn, and McCormack (2022) found that senior officers in the UK are more likely to be satisfied with their corporate work but not necessarily able to find work quicker when compared to junior officers or soldiers. Senior officers also seem more able to access career transition resources and opportunities. Next, officers are less likely than soldiers to apply for positions below their perceived skill set.

However, this research suggests that enlisted members may be better equipped to enter the corporate environment. For example, one manager mentioned that high-level military officers have an issue with giving power and responsibility up, and they approach new positions as if they are still in charge, even as an individual contributor. This is contrary to the enlisted environment where a veteran started as a worker and then moved into management. In this context, enlisted members may be better suited for the corporate environment. However, officers have more experience in military strategic planning and budgeting, so the difference may come to the type of position a company is hiring for and the specific skill sets needed.

Conclusion and Summary

This qualitative study examines enlisted veteran leadership skills that transfer to the corporate environment. Additionally, this study contributes to understanding how veteran leadership skills are adapted after transitioning into the corporate culture. The

study's findings contribute to previous research and provide a framework for future research to examine veteran skill transfer and adaptation further.

As military research continues to grow, it becomes evident that enlisted veterans are an abundant source of talent for companies. Additionally, enlisted veterans have a wide range of experience and expertise that leads to a shorter learning curve and can incorporate into a company quickly and immediately and positively impact the company's goals. As a result, companies that follow this study's recommendations may be more likely to attract a vast talent pool that can integrate quickly into the corporate environment and positively impact the bottom line providing a competitive advantage to companies that understand how to integrate veterans successfully.

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Appendix A: Military Discharge Definitions and Examples

There are several types of military discharge that fall under two categories, administrative and punitive. The VA (2020) released information regarding each of the type of discharges.

- Administrative discharges are defined as:
 - Honorable discharge – met the term of service without any significant disciplinary issues
 - General Discharge (Under Honorable Conditions) – granted to those that served faithful and honest despite issues with fitness, military appearance, and a failure to progress in training
 - Other than Honorable Discharge – given to those that demonstrate a pattern of bad behavior that goes against the U.C.M.J. and DoD rules and regulations.
 - Entry-level separation – granted to those that could not conform to military standards within 180 days of service.
- Punitive discharges are typically a result of
 - Bad Conduct Dishonorable – special court-martial (non-capital cases) for enlisted personal only for reasons such as intoxicated while on duty, adultery, financial issues, absent without leave.
 - Dishonorable discharge – given by a court-martial due to broken laws and typically a prison sentence in a military prison.

Appendix B: Basic Information about the Military

	Air Force	Army	Navy	Marine Corps
Established	September 18, 1947	June 14, 1775	October 13, 1775	November 10, 1775
Core Values (Kuehner, 2013)	Integrity First, Service Before Self, Excellence in all We do	Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, Personal Courage	Honor Courage Commitment	Honor Courage Commitment Semper Fidelis (always faithful)
# of Career Fields	124 (U.S.A.F., 2020a)	150 (U.S.A., 2020g)	93	180
Enlisted Population (D.M.D.C., 2020)	265,289	388,439	283,834	160,508
% of men (D.M.D.C., 2020)	79.2% (210,074)	85.2% (330,803)	79.6% (225,810)	88.8% (146,165)
% of women (D.M.D.C., 2020)	20.8% (55,215)	14.8% (57,636)	20.4% (58,024)	11.2% (14,343)

Appendix C: Military Promotion Cycles

“Promotion is not a reward for past performance but more importantly it is an expectation of future performance” (U.S.M.C., 2012). Each branch follows a similar path for promoting enlisted members. E1-E4 are based upon time in service, time in grade, and the completion of technical training. To E5 – E9, the previous requirements apply, plus addition technical training, leadership development, official testing, and boards to select the next members.

It is worth noting that the U.S. Congress dictates the annual potential promotions in each grade through the National Defense Authorization Act (116th U.S. Congress, 2019). This is limited to ensure that the force stays balanced and selection criteria is based on peer-to-peer competition.

Appendix D: Qualifying Survey

Participants must complete the branching qualifying survey sent via a Qualtrics survey, which will gather basic information to be used during the analysis. Furthermore, this survey will identify the appropriate participants for the recorded interview process. The survey will utilize a web-based collection method and utilize branching to gather specific information on the veteran and managers of veterans. The questions below are separated into four categories. First is the basic information, military information, current position, and demographics. The asterisk denotes mandatory fields that participants must complete.

Qualifying Survey:

Subject	Question	Response Options
BASIC INFORMATION		
Name*	Please provide your First and Last Name	Free Text Box
Contact Information*	Please provide an E-mail Address	Free Text Box
	Please provide a Phone Number	Free Text Box
MILITARY INFORMATION		
Veteran Status*	Did you separated or retired from the service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Separated ▪ Retired
Type of Discharge*	What type of discharge?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Honorable ▪ Other, Than Honorable ▪ Dishonorable
Branch*	What Branch did you serve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Army ▪ Air Force ▪ Navy ▪ Marines ▪ Coast Guard
Type of Service*	Were you Active Duty, Guard or Reserve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Active Duty ▪ Guard ▪ Reserve
Years separated or retired*	How long since you retired or separated from the service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 0-1 ▪ 2-3 ▪ 4-5

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 6-7 ▪ 7-8 ▪ 9-10 ▪ 10+
Rank upon separation or retirement*	Were you Enlisted or Officer?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enlisted ▪ Officer
Enlistment or Commission Date*	What was your enlistment or commission date?	Free Text Box
Years in service? *	How long did you spend in the service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Options will range from 1 – 30+ years
Deployments	How many deployments did you complete?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 0 ▪ 1 ▪ 2 ▪ 3 ▪ 4 ▪ 5 ▪ 5+
AFSC/MOS*	What was your career field (AFSC/MOS) during service?	Free Text Box
Career Field Title*	What was the title of your career field?	Free Text Box
CURRENT POSITION INFORMATION		
Current Profession	What is your current Profession?	Free Text Box
Current Level	What is your current Title/Position?	Free Text Box
People Leader	Are you a current people-leader?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes ▪ No ▪ If yes, please define how many people you directly leader and indirectly lead. Please break out the two numbers.
Length of Service	How long have you been with your current company?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 0-2 years ▪ 3-5 years ▪ 5-7 years ▪ 7+ years
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION		
Age	What is your current age?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 18-25 ▪ 26-30 ▪ 31-35 ▪ 36-40 ▪ 41-45 ▪ 46-50

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 51-55 ▪ 55+
Ethnicity	What is your ethnicity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ White ▪ Hispanic or Latino ▪ Black or African American ▪ Native American or American Indian ▪ Asian/Pacific Islander ▪ Other
Gender	What is your gender?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Male ▪ Female ▪ Other (Text Box)
Education Level	What is the highest level of education that you have completed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High school diploma ▪ Some college, but no degree ▪ Associate degree ▪ Bachelor's degree ▪ Master's degree ▪ Doctoral degree

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

RECRUITMENT:

A fortune 500 healthcare company's employee resource group will be utilized to locate 20 veterans (5 per branch) and up to 20 managers. The veterans will use the qualifying survey and informed consent to participate in the study. The consent form must be signed and returned to the researcher prior to starting the interview. All interviews will be recorded and conducted via WebEx or Zoom.

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

The below comment will be sent to the participants to provoke thoughts after they have completed the survey. The goal is for the participants to reflect on their results and have an idea of researcher is what the interested in discussing during the interview.

“In preparation for the interview, please think back to when you first transitioned from your military career to your career at _____. You had gained leadership training and experiences in the military. Then you entered a managerial role here at _____. I'm interested in hearing about your experiences transferring your military leadership skills to the civilian workplace. I'd like to hear about specific experiences, both “positive” and “negative” – what you did, how people reacted, how you interpreted their reactions, etc. I hope you'll be able to share several stories with me during the interview.”

The goal for this study is to gain a deeper understanding on what leadership skills transfer and were adapted from the military to the corporate environment.”

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The Ethics Memo covers in-depth the ethical considerations. The below is a snapshot of the ethical implications for this research.

While performing the interview I do not anticipate handling any propriety, or private information, documentation, or data. However, given the nature of the study, it is probable that conversation regarding deployments that may consist of traumatic events. If a participant divulges an intent to harm themselves or others then the researcher will immediately contact the appropriate authorities to intervene. I do recognize as personal examples of military service are discussed, some emotional or sensitive information may be divulged from the participant. If any sensitive information should be come up in the conversation, the researcher will protect that information by removing any identifiers and using pseudonyms. Finally, the researcher will handle the situation with the utmost empathy and care.

To reduce bias, the researcher will not provide any personal information until the conclusion of the interview. The researcher will partake in due diligence of protecting all identifying information, no matter the format (hard copy, audio file, video file, scanned documents, etc.).

Recorded Interview Questions to The Participants:

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening _____. Thank you very much for participating in this research study. As you know this interview is to gather data on how you use your military leadership development skills in your current position within the corporate environment, this interview will be recorded. Do you have any questions before I start the recording?

(Answer any questions).

(Start recording)

I have started the recording.

Introduction:

The goal of this study is to understand how veterans use military gained leadership skills in the corporate environment.

*Note to interviewer: If participants speak about operational or proprietary data, remind the participant that information is beyond the scope of this research. The participant will be warned once, and if it happens again the interview will be terminated.

Do you have any questions?

(Answer Questions)

Excellent. Let's dive in with the first question"

Transition:

Key Questions for Veterans:

Military Background and Stories:

- Please provide me with a snapshot of your military career
- In your words, define leadership.
- What leadership development courses did you attend while you were in the service?
 - o What rank/grade were you when you attended each of those?
- Based on your last completed course in the military, what was your major takeaway?
- Describe the informal leadership development you received in the military
- Please provide a story of how you utilized your leadership development training in your military career.

Corporate Background and Stories:

- Tell me about when you first transitioned from the military to the civilian corporate environment. What was happening then and how were you generally feeling about the transition?
- You had a lot of/some military leadership training and experience. Then you entered a civilian managerial leadership role. What do you remember standing out about that transition?
 - o Potential follow-up / clarification questions:
 - What did you expect would happen? How did you feel?
 - What did you make of that?
 - What did you notice about their reactions that led you to that conclusion?
 - How did you decide what to do next?
 - o Once that story is exhausted, ask for another; repeat.
- Tell me a story about how you use your military leadership skills in the corporate environment?
- In regard to leadership skills, what do you wish you would have known about the corporate world prior to separating or retiring from the service?
- How has military leadership training impacted your abilities in your current position?
- What is one piece of advice you would give to veterans on how to discuss leadership skills in the corporate environment?

Key Questions for Managers:

*Note to interviewer: If participants speak about operational or proprietary data, remind the participant that information is beyond the scope of this research. The participant will be warned once, and if it happens again the interview will be terminated.

- How many veterans have you directly managed in the last five years?
- What are your thoughts on veterans transitioning into the corporate environment?
- What skills do veterans bring to the team?
 - o Explore both positive and negative
- In your opinion, what is military leadership development?
- Tell me about the leadership skills that you have seen veterans' display.
 - o Explore both positive and negative
- In your opinion, where were those leadership skills learned?
- What is one piece of advice that you would give to veterans entering the healthcare industry?

Conclusion:

- Is there anything that you would like to share or that you feel is important but has not been discussed during this discussion?
- Thank you very much for your time today. I really appreciate your honesty and openness. I will send you a follow-up survey once the interviews are complete and the data has been aggregated. The goal is to validate the insights gained from the interviews. Please reach out to me if you have any questions or additional ideas you would like to share on this topic.

CONTINGENCY QUESTIONS:

- If an individual chooses to stop the interview, then ask,

- Why do you want to stop the interview?
- Can we reschedule the interview?
- Is there a part of the interview that we may use?

Appendix F: Ethics Memo

The goal of the present study is to identify how individuals utilize formal military leadership development in the corporate environment. The purpose of this memo is to discuss and explore any ethical concerns or considerations regarding the participants and protection of personal information. The intent of this research is to answer four research questions: (1) what skills transfer directly to the civilian business environment? (2) What skills require adaptation to the civilian business context? (3) How are these identified skills transferred or adapted? (4) How do managers view veterans' leadership skills?

This study will be conducted by Casey Jensen, UMSL Doctor of Business Administration Class of 2021, who will conduct all participant communications, interviews, and data analysis. There is no expectation of encountering potentially propriety, private documentation, or company data. However, there is some potential that veteran participants may discuss lived experiences during combat or other potentially traumatic moments. The researcher will empathize and provide an option to pause the interview. Participants will be select via a qualifying survey and then a one-hour phone interview.

Participant Risks & Vulnerability: The researcher will maintain hard copies of all signed consent forms. All identifying information will be redacted before submittal and publication. No identifying information will be shared. All research information, whether hard copy or electronic, will be handled with the utmost attention to security and privacy, including password-protected technology and locked office space for storage. No one will have access to interview data other than Casey Jensen.

Privacy/Confidentiality: The researcher will destroy all interview files after all interviews have been conducted, and all video and audio files will be deleted after the research data are analyzed. Signed consent forms will be saved by the researcher in electronic form. All identifying information will be stripped and coded to protect the privacy of the participants.

How we plan to mitigate risks: The researcher will partake in due diligence of protecting any identifying information, no matter the format (hard copy, an audio file, video file, scanned documents, etc.).

In conclusion, the goal of the present study is to identify how veterans utilize formal military leadership skills in the corporate environment. All measures to provide confidentiality will be taken.

Casey Jensen

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