

What Factors Influence Veterans Returning to Civilian Life to Go Back to School:

Grounded-Theory Study

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ABSTRACT

Grounded Theory Study

The primary aim of this study was to identify factors associated with positive reintegration and continuing education for the veteran population to better assist those going through reintegration in the future.

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INTRODUCTION

- Approximately 2.5 million veterans have been deployed and returned home since the war on terror began on September 11, 2001. (Leipold, 2013)
- Complex challenges of processing combat experiences and re-entering community life
- Minimal research on the long-term outcomes that reflect positive reintegration into civilian life, such as continuing education. (Sayer et al., 2011)
- The Veterans Administration in 2016 was appropriated \$163 billion for operations which include \$71.4 billion in discretionary funding. (Shane, 2015)
- Taxpayer Dollars

METHODS AND ANALYSIS

- Qualitative grounded theory method based on responses from veteran students who were enrolled and attended Robert Morris University from August 2015- December 2016.
- Voluntarily participated in an audio recorded interview/focus group session after signing informed consents.
- Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and observations were recorded as field notes. Multiple sessions
- Total 7 informants; saturation was achieved at 5, 2 more informants participated to ensure theoretical saturation achieved.
- Demographic information was obtained in regards to gender, age, branch of service, years served, the number of deployments, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic background.

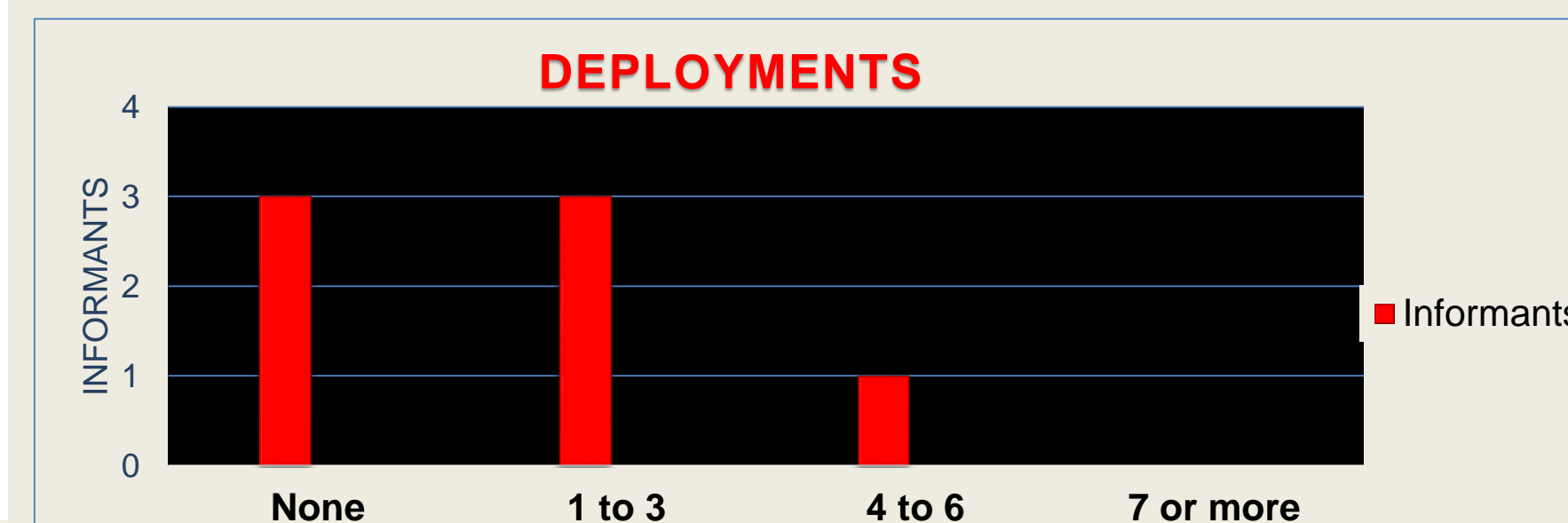
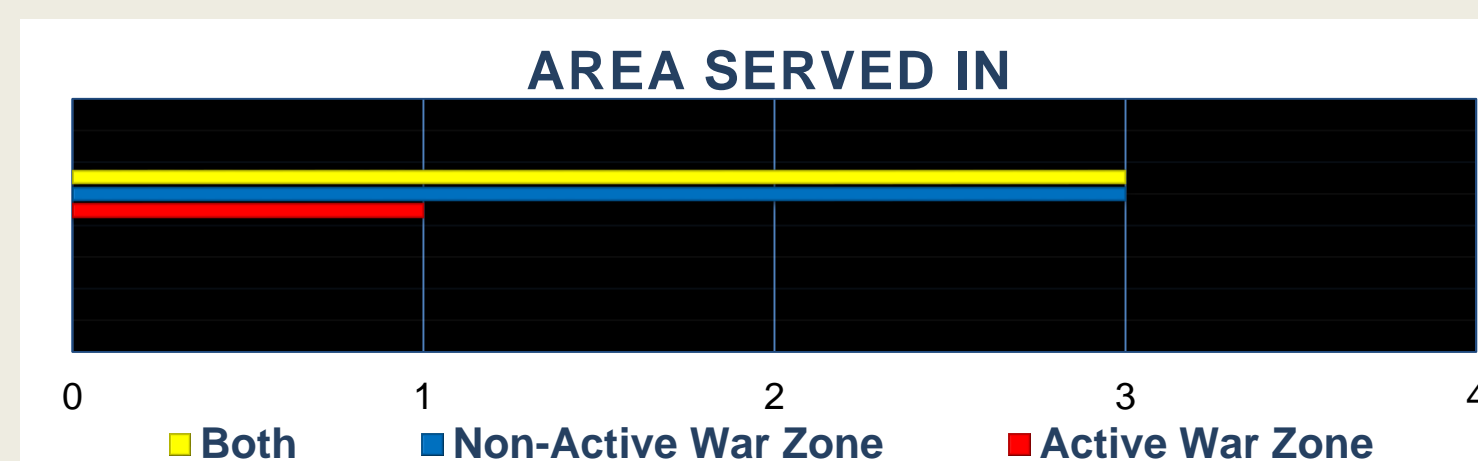
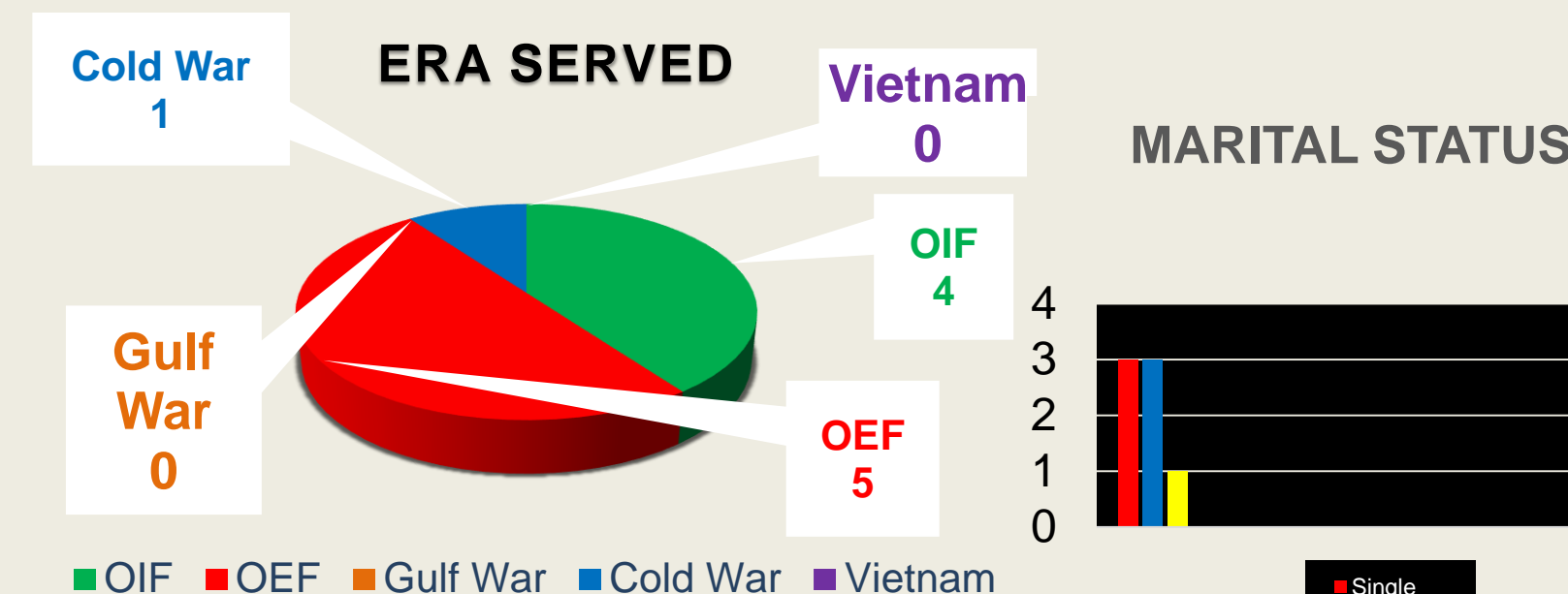
Analysis

- Phase 1 consisted of collection, recording, and transcription of data from the interviews.
- Phase 2 the data was grouped, coded, and classified according to the domain of inquiry.
- Phase 3 involved searching the data for recurrent patterns of meanings and saturation.
- Phase 4 involved finalizing the patterns to develop theme statements and developing a theoretical model.

RESULTS

MILITARY BRANCH	
AIR FORCE	3
ARMY	3
COAST GUARD	0
MARINES	2
NAVY	0

GENDER / RACE / AGE	
AFRICAN AMERICAN	1
CAUCASION	6
MALES	5, AGES: 30,34,34,35,58
FEMALES	2, AGES: 25,37

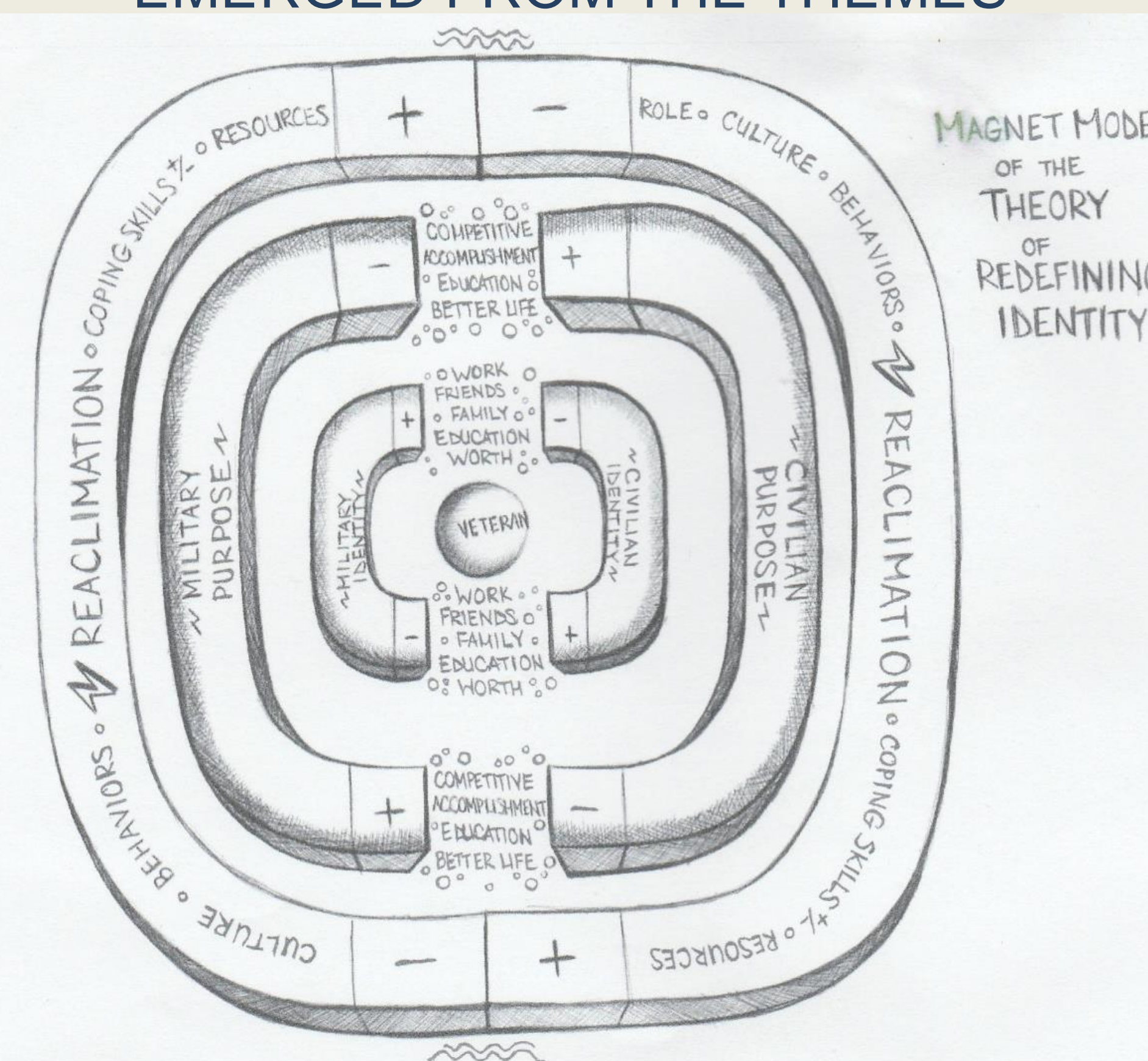


RESULTS

Theory of Redefining Identity

- Veterans experience the need to redefine **identity** when reintegrating into the civilian role.
 - Family, Friends, Employment, Self-Worth
- Veterans experience the need to find **purpose** when reintegrating into the civilian role.
 - Purpose, Competitive, Sense of Identity, Sense of Accomplishment, Better Life
- Veterans experience the need to **reacclimate** when reintegrating into the civilian role.
 - Culture Shock, Individual Behavior / Coping Skills, Role in Society, Chain of Command, Resources

ABSTRACT MODEL WHICH EMERGED FROM THE THEMES



DISCUSSION

LIMITATIONS

- Sample size was relatively small, but consistent with qualitative pilot studies.
- The mental health status of the informants was not assessed.
- The degree of trauma exposure and its impact on reintegration was not qualitatively assessed.
- Gender specific impact on reintegration was not qualitatively assessed.

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

- As health care providers having a better understanding of the unique and complex experience the veteran undergoes during reintegration into civilian life will help us to better serve this population.
- Identify area of needed support and follow up
- Help the veteran to transition through this period more efficiently and lead to a healthier transition.

CONCLUSIONS

- Provided insights into the obstacles and challenges veterans face during reintegration into civilian life.
- Identified that during reintegration veterans experience the need to redefine their identity, find purpose, and reacclimate to have successful reintegration into their civilian role.
- Produced the Theory of Redefining Identity
- The three principal needs identified should not be considered discrete but as overlapping and complementary issues. They also embody a range of subthemes that represent topics for future research and/or intervention.

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