

Veterans Transition: Analyzing the Potential for Vocational Voucher Programs as Targeted Workforce Development & Trauma Mitigation Strategies

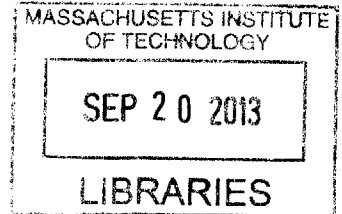
By

Justice Mya Castañeda

Masters of Arts in Policy, Organization & Leadership Studies
Graduate School of Education, Stanford University
Stanford, CA (2011)

Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies & Planning
University of California, San Diego (2010)

ARCHIVES



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Signature of

Author: _____
Department of Urban Studies and Planning
August 19, 2013

Certified

by: _____
Professor Amy K. Glasmeier
Department of Urban Studies and Planning
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted

by: _____
Associate Professor P. Christopher Zegras
Chair, MCP Committee
Department of Urban Studies and Planning

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Abstract

The Post-9/11 GI Bill was designed as a way to integrate the returning veteran population into the workforce through the vehicle of higher education. Standing to cost in upwards of \$200 billion, it is not clear whether college campuses have the internal controls and processes in place to effectively assist the veteran population in maximizing their return on their GI Bill. Through an intensive review of the literature surrounding veterans' transition services, interviews with veterans service providers, veterans service experts, a historical account of how the different iterations of the GI Bill have interfaced with each era's veteran population, and an intensive case study of an exemplar program, this project will examine the core functions of effective university transition services through a democratic wealth generation framework, providing recommendations for universities preparing for the growth in their student veteran population. As currently structured, the current GI Bill will in fact expand existing disparities within the veteran population, with veterans experiencing trauma or who had limited educational experiences pre-military service standing to gain the least from the current legislation. In addition to student-veterans' services in higher education, this project also contributes to the literature on effective community and economic development practices, workforce development policies, and important insights into the challenges we continue to face mitigating violence in other institutional settings.

Thesis Supervisor: Amy K. Glasmeier
Title: Professor of Urban Studies & Planning

Acknowledgements:

Dedicated to the life & service of Sergeant Oscar Canon

Insert: 9 June 1982

Extract: 15 February 2012

Until we all come home.

Abbreviations

ACE	American Council on Education
AVF	All-Volunteer Force
CDR	Cohort Default Rule
Chap. 30	Montgomery GI Bill
Chap. 33	Post-9/11 GI Bill
CO	Certifying Officials (positions on a college or university campus that serve as the liaison between the VA and the university)
CO	Commanding Officer (senior officer in a military command)
DoD	Department of Defense
DoEd	Department of Education
DoL	Department of Labor
EAP	Educational Assistance Program
FPI	For-Profit Institution
GWOT	Global War on Terror
HEA	Higher Education Act
IA	Individual Augment
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
PTSI	Post-Traumatic Stress Injury (ies)
SVA	Student Veterans of America
SVO	Student Veterans Organization
TAP	Transition Assistance Program
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
VA	Veterans' Administration
VEAP	Post-Vietnam Era Education Assistance Program
WWII	World War II

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Chapter I. Introduction

Context: Veterans onto the College Campus

Over the next decade, 2.5 million US veterans will return from the ongoing conflicts Operation Iraqi and Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF). Even with a very conservative estimate of 50% participation¹ in the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Program, or Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33 of the GI Bill of Rights), the US will spend in the neighborhood of \$200 billion USD on veterans' education benefits over the next decade.² This represents a huge investment, the return on which remains to be seen in terms of whether veterans or the university campuses will benefit more.

Due to the structure and administration of the current GI Bill, those individuals who are best positioned to effectively utilize its services are officers who already have four-year college degrees (Knapp, 2013). The result is the perpetuation of an unequal system wherein mere access to educational institutions is equated with opportunity. In fact, enlisted veterans are much more likely to have used their entire GI Bill on remedial and lower-level courses before they are able to pursue a four year degree, while officers are able to use the Bill to fund graduate education.

Regardless of the disparate outcomes between officers and enlisted veterans, everyone who comes out of the military faces the struggle of readjustment. Active servicemembers are not only assured food, housing, medical services, and the fulfillment of all other basic needs, they are part of a cohort – platoon – that comes to define their relationship to their environment. When that environment includes combat, the cohesive effects of the unit are even more pronounced. Membership in a platoon fosters a type of trust that is not replicable in most other contexts; leaving military service is more similar to breaking a familial bond than mere departure from a group. While the loss of personal relationships is difficult for all, the loss of basic need fulfillment makes the transition even more challenging for those who are returning to situations where those needs go unmet. For servicemembers who return to economically marginalized, underserved communities upon discharge, military life can be more stable than civilian life, despite the stress and trauma faced in service.

As the number of GWOT-era veterans increases over the next decade, VA and other federal funding for student-veterans will continue to increase, which will financially benefit the universities they attend. As is the case with the student population as a whole, veteran graduates continue to find themselves entering a tight job market with degrees that no longer carry the elite status or job guarantee they once had. For student veterans, it will take unprecedented coordination between Congress, the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Labor, and Education to effectively address the challenges with the 9/11 GI Bill and the disparate educational outcomes within the veteran population (GAO, 2011, 2012).

¹ This was the participation percentage of the WWII-era Servicemen's Readjustment Act. Later iterations, as is explained in this document, experienced higher participation rates. .

² Initial CBO calculation was \$161 billion; an amendment (Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2010 or "GI Bill 2.0") increased that number by \$56 billion USD.

Working through the basic research question “given the context of today’s Post-9/11-era veteran, what should be the primary perfunctory role of a university in the veterans’ transition process?”, this research addresses four areas: 1) role of the college campus in the student-veteran transition process, 2) challenges with the structure of the current iteration of the GI Bill, 3) implications for approaches to ethically-grounded economic development practices, 4) implications for how we might start looking at the lives of children who are experiencing trauma, and how this intersects with veterans’ abilities to transition out of the military.

In the following chapters I set forth the basis of the lived experience of the men and women of our military who will process out of the service with the goal to return home and reenter civilian life. For a large portion of these individuals they will seek to use their GI Bill to further their education and acquire the means of subsistence as they transition back into their chosen community. In Chapter Two, the discussion moves to an analysis of who goes into the military and explores the social, psychological and material benefits of military membership and describes the support system developed as a member of the key group unit—the platoon.

In Chapter Three I discuss the current issues facing servicemembers upon return from deployment and I expand this to explain how the military’s structure is able to mitigate some of the immediate effects of deployment, and how this exacerbates the challenges faced by veterans upon discharge. The lack of a sophisticated readjustment transition program which addresses their core physical, social, community and psychological needs after completing combat related military duty will reduce if not invalidate the value of the access to education provided by the GI Bill. In chapter four, since institutions of higher education are the primary recipients of GI Bill funding, needed is a standardized set of practices offered to veterans during transition.

In Chapter Four, I lay out the challenges with the current GI Bill, which sets the context for the remainder of the paper. Through a detailed chronology of the GI Bill’s iterative changes, Chapter Four delves into the transition process for veterans leaving the military and entering college campuses, highlighting why certain programs and procedures have been developed or changed in order to address the specific needs of each era’s veteran population.

Chapter Five the study moves to the challenges with the current workforce reintegration programs offered by the federal government, culminating with an understanding of how universities have become the default transition program in for incoming student-veterans. The penultimate chapter discusses what an ideal transition program might consist of, using case-study evidence from exemplar programs for student veterans. In the concluding chapter, I offer suggestions as to what an effective transition program should contain, and postulate five main challenges the US is going to face with the current iteration of the GI Bill, and then move to relate the current challenges in veterans transition to college, with contemporary issues in economic and youth development.

While focusing on veterans and veterans’ services, at the core the analysis of this paper is on economic exclusion, and workforce development. The GI Bill is, at its core, a targeted workforce development program. Individuals enter the military, and by virtue of their dedication and service to the country are given a set of benefits which supposedly compliment their military training in order to make them better suited to enter the workforce than their counterfactual.

However, the data presented suggests that instead, the longer a veteran's service, and the severity of trauma experienced prior to and during that service will actually amount to a compromising agent, effectively inhibiting a veterans ability to negotiate the institutions (in this case higher education) designed to aid their entry into the workforce. I return to this conversation in the concluding remarks, however it is an important point that should be taken as an undercurrent informing the remainder of the conversation. As with many children coming from segments of the population more prone to exposure of violence and other forms of trauma, instead of military service aiding veterans in their positioning within the larger workforce, my argument is that without intentional programmatic efforts to mitigate the trauma—again, experienced prior to and during their service—a veteran's ability to healthily engage in democratic processes and governing institutions is effectively compromised by their participation in military service. This is a strong statement, however when viewed along with the continuing challenges faced by veterans in securing meaningful employment (meaning not underemployment), and the challenges faced by enlisted combat veterans in higher education (presented here), it is an argument that should be taken in earnest—especially if we expect the investment currently being made in GI benefits to show a return in meaningful engagement in the economy by the women and men who served.

Chapter II. Military Service

Who Goes Into the Military?

To understand the limitations of the current version of the GI bill to support the veterans returning from the OEF/OIF conflicts, it is necessary to understand who enters the military and for what reasons, how their prior life circumstances including their rank while in service influences their ability to use existing educational benefits effectively.

In the second section of this chapter I discuss previous eras of the GI Bill and highlight that evidence exists supporting the use of a programmatic design that emphasizes job placement and remedial education, evident in the Viet Nam era program, which was subsequently reconfigured for several reasons the effect of which was to reduce the utility of the program for non-four year college seeking veterans.

As of 2007, Congress has authorized an end-strength of approximately 2.2 million servicemembers across all four armed services. The force is disproportionately representative of African Americans relative to the civilian workforce, and in the case of the Marine Corps, the same is true for Latinos (Sollinger et al, 2008). The demographics of the individuals entering military service is of note for one reason, in that it has become more accepted that a person's likelihood of experiencing traumatic events *prior to* entering the military, is directly affected by the likelihood and severity of the PTSD symptoms, post-service.

There are a variety of reasons that compel women and men to join the armed services. Military service provides opportunities to travel (albeit maybe not to the destinations of our choosing), pathways out of otherwise dim job prospects or a way out of challenging communities, a chance to serve our country, or simply something other than college following high school. With job prospects dwindling, and the college degree more expensive and elusive than in the past, many youth who otherwise might have attended school find that the military is their only option for post-secondary education (US Comptroller, 1981). Most likely aggravated by the lull in employment nationwide, many youth see the military as providing a temporary period of abeyance following high school.

Undoubtedly, the appeal and accessibility of the military varies from year to year, and fluctuates with other factors in the civilian labor market and the aforementioned availability of federal funding for college. Factors ranging from proximity to military institutions to barriers to employment faced by Black and minority youth contribute to the appeal of military service.

Platoon Dynamics

In order to understand the lived experience of a servicemember decommissioning from the military, and to appreciate the challenges veterans face at this time of demobilization after a decade of unprecedented trauma and conflict, the socialization process of life in the military is critical to understand. As very few of the non-military members of our society know a soldier or veteran or were exposed to the trauma of this war era, life in the military has little if any meaning to them. And yet the ability to be a soldier is foundationally tied to the social-psychological-

cultural *Zeitgeist* of the modern military. In this chapter I use a Wealth Generative Framework to describe the individual benefits derived from membership in the armed services.

Platoon Dynamics: Wealth Generative Framework

There are three key concepts essential to the development of effective veterans transition strategies: Income-Volatility, Short-Term Mobility (Boudon, 1986; Hertz, 2006; Wilkenson & Pickett, 2010; Stiglitz, 2012;) and Set-Up time (Bartell et al., 2007; Sennett, 2012). The basis for this typology comes from a general application of organizational mechanics, from which the platoon typology comes. When heterogeneous combinations of individuals are able to (sometimes generationally) expand in their negotiation of complex problems, a requisite foundational tenet is an internalized guarantee of the nature of stability in each individual's (as a sub-function of the group's) acquisition of basic needs.³

Income Volatility signifies the importance of a collective assurance of security in accessing the resources necessary to meet basic needs, over time; or serves as a subconscious point of reference internalized by individuals based on their relationship with security of sustenance. Short-term mobility can be described by whether veterans are efficacious in their negotiation of progress in their environment—do they know how to access the tools or information necessary to excel? Set-up time is the amount of resources necessary for a unit to move from one task to another, while maintaining collective efficacy.

While in the military, individuals are exposed to diverse group dynamics, asked to perform multiple functions, over time. Constant interaction creates a rapport, massaged throughout a career in the form of constant team training, downtime and recreational activities (Honneth, 1993).⁴ This fosters an ethos, requisite for the individual servicemembers to engage broader political functions⁵ as it alleviates degrees of anxiety and fear and creates the necessary space for dissent central to effective unit operations.

In the platoon model, *Income Volatility*⁶ is decreased *and* the nature/behavior of *Short-Term Mobility* is not only apparent, but embedded in the day-to-day processes of platoon behavior

⁴ In his analyses of Horkheimer's "Labor theory," whereby cognition is developed by humans collectively as they engage their environments in order to solve problems, Honneth argues that the recognition of dignity and human worth in social context is fundamental for the development of a culture, more so than just material redistribution. He argues that the development of this type of group interaction is requisite for individuals to engage broader political functions, as without the type of group identification / recognition, people have to engage their environment with a degree of trepidation, anxiety and fear.

⁵ Political in the self-advocacy sense, and not necessarily in the conventional ideological sense; I would argue that these are one in the same and that, in spite of the restrictions on certain types of speech, the military actually provides an optimal space for one to become politically engaged in the traditional sense. However, a caveat would be that the social or peer pressures would reduce the likelihood that servicemembers would become politically engaged.

⁶ Some of the data supporting this was taken from an article review on Tom Hertz's report for the center for American Progress, completed as part of the course requirements for the Master's of City Planning Degree. Additionally, I completed a critical synthesis using this article and Ray Boudon's work as part of a Master's program at Stanford University. In all cases including this project, my argument is that the internalization of

(Castañeda & Teruya, 2012). Much of the individual efficacy developed by the platoon member is developed as a secondary effect of knowing, or having faith in, the unit's efficacy. This means that servicemembers know that they are going to be taken care of, and also know that each person they interact with is also going to be taken care of. This encourages the type of positive interaction necessary for the successful negotiation of obstacles as a group or, it minimizes a unit's set-up time (Whyte, 1988; Bartel et al., 2007; Sennett, 2012).

A low set-up time allows the platoon to negotiate complex obstacles with very little advance notice, or pre-existing resources / infrastructure. The platoon can rely on multiple signals from members within the group to determine: where to eat, where to sleep, the pay / rank structure (power dynamics), where / when to get medical services, where/ when exercise is needed etc. Maybe most importantly, in many cases a servicemember's trust in the platoon is implicitly tied to their understanding of how to be alive.⁷ These components are necessary and paramount to what will be discussed as the requisite components of effective veterans' transition services. Essentially, the core functions of the platoon are what an organization should be trying to replicate if they are interested in maximizing veterans' performance in academic environments.

Important to note is that the "platoon" is an entity different from the sum of its parts, or more than just the aggregate of multiple separate servicemembers. Membership in a platoon fosters a type of trust in a very instinctual sense of knowing how corporeal interaction intersects with the environmental processes of different contexts, over time. When a servicemember leaves the platoon to leave military service, it is much more than just exiting from a social group,⁸ but an abandonment of the unit structure where their own self-recognition is imbedded in their day-to-day activities. This concept of self-recognition by way of group identification effectively functions as the servicemember's ambit of operation through all facets of their life---family, religion, school, social groups, and employment.

While there are volumes written about the organizational theory informing basic platoon dynamics, the point here is that when a servicemember transitions out of the military, it encompasses far more than just physically leaving a group of people, such as might be the case upon graduation from a college or transfer from a job. The pseudo-familial structure developed through the cultivation of unit trust, is essential to the effective function of the military, and becomes an integral component of the individual servicemember's development.

stability in the security of a person's access to basic needs is a critical component of small unit functions, and requisite for the successful negotiation / integration into schools and/or the workforce. The concept of "Set-up" time was taken from Bartel et al (2007), who applied the concept to an example of valve manufacturing as being the time it takes to go from one line of production to another.

⁷ This is particularly relevant with regards to trauma experienced by servicemembers sexually assaulted while in the military. In many cases the perpetrator of the assault is a member of their unit or command, often their supervisor or the person they would report the assault to. As the platoon *can* represent extreme security / peacefulness / trust, the betrayal by the platoon is exceptionally traumatic for the victims.

⁸ Due to the substantial decrease in individual augments (IA) to theatre and the relatively small concentrated population actually experiencing heavy combat in contemporary warfare, I would argue that the platoon interaction may even be more pronounced in today's veterans than in previous conflicts. This increases the likelihood that a Marine will spend the majority of their career in one unit.

Used to being able to ask for guidance, without fear of dishonesty or graft on the part of the person they are asking, each servicemember's transition becomes all at once a reintroduction to a dramatically new way of approaching interpersonal dynamics. This becomes particularly relevant during a veterans introduction to higher education, as many will seek out spaces where they can speak with people who have similar experiences, and potentially assist them in locating necessary resources and pertinent information.

Upon separation each veteran is forced to account for the subtle support systems present at every step of their military career, while also adjusting to their new lives and location. In addition to transitioning out of the military, however, many veterans are also reeling from physical and emotional wounds sustained during their service. To account for both the separation process and the long-term effects of war, I now move to an account of how the trauma of war adds complexity to an already difficult transition process.

Chapter III. The Trauma of War: Redeployment and Reentry in an Era of Conflict

Back From Deployment & Out of The Military

The range of returning veterans with some type of injury has increased with advances in medical technology. Currently, the US has a 7:1 ratio of service members who were wounded compared to killed in combat (Tanielan & Haycox, 2008; Wright, 2012). Additionally, up to 20 percent of all returning combat veterans are likely to experience Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (National Center for PTSD, 2008). Veterans' medical services are set to cost \$55 Billion annually—three times as much as was spent prior to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (CNN, 2012).

Post-Traumatic Stress & Traumatic Brain Injuries

Due to extended deployments, increased uses of improvised explosive devices, increases in TBI, higher survivability from combat relative to past wars, and prevalence (and awareness of) PTSD, it is therefore quite probable that this generation of veterans will experience different consequences from the Post 9/11 GI Bill in terms of future earnings via education than did the WWII era veterans, simply based on physical limitations upon return from theatre (Schnell & Tanielan, 2010; Gans 2011).

The challenges with PTSD and TBI are particularly pressing in terms of veterans transition onto college campuses, as one of the main areas where university campuses continue to lag is in providing adequate services for veterans who are experiencing difficulties as a result of either or both (Cook & Kim, 2009; Steele et al., 2010; McBain et al., 2012). Therefore, in addition to university campuses being asked to aid in the transition from the military to a college campus, an absence of a solidified, universal transition program for all veterans means that universities become the default entity responsible for addressing these, sometimes severe, afflictions (Cook & Kim, 2009; Steele et al., 2010; McBain et al., 2012). And this is only for the veterans who are able to find their way onto college campuses. For those who do not, and who are not able to successfully enter the workforce directly out of the military, the challenges are that much more severe.

Access to Medical Care

Particularly challenging is that the veterans having the hardest time with the transition process—veterans under 25, with no college experience coming from or returning to volatile and/or impoverished communities—are the least likely to access medical treatment. (Hillemeier et al., 2011; Lipton, 2012; Brodsky 2012)⁹ In addition to this group potentially not receiving the treatment that might assist them through the transition process, their lack of interaction with current channels of support potentially serves as a harbinger of a ballooning problem that will continue to grow if not addressed.

Recent legislation such as the Mental Health Screening and Assessment Act, and the Joshua Omvig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act, have aimed at addressing post-deployment evaluations for suicide and at creating improvements in VA outreach and access for at-risk veterans (Library

⁹ The most common age groups receiving services, according to representatives the veterans service organizations, were between 30-45.

of Congress 2012). However, access and willingness to seek out care is an issue that continues to present challenges for the veteran population (Hillemeier et al, 2011; Magruder et al. 2012).

Veterans' access to health care in general is largely determined by geographic context (i.e. rural vs. urban), with younger veterans again being less likely to seek out care from the VA (Hillemeier et al., 2011). This is particularly troubling for younger veterans who leave the service and immediately attend school, as many college campuses are either ignorant of the experiences of veterans or show a blatant disregard or disdain for the veteran population as a whole (Scurfield, 2006; Blumke, 2011; Donahoe, 2011).

Veterans Health Care & Academic Success

While there is definitely a need for access to health care for all veterans following discharge from the military, it is widely accepted that health care—particularly psychological services—is in increased demand with larger numbers of combat veterans coming home from war to find college campuses largely unaware of the physical, emotional or socio-economic realities of the student-veteran population (Cook & Kim, 2009; Steele et al., 2010; McBain et al., 2012). This provides a challenge to student-veterans in at least two ways.

First, it remains common knowledge that many veterans either do not know how, or where to receive adequate counseling while at college campuses (Borus 1975; Scurfield 2006; Steele et. al 2010). Second, having it be common knowledge that these services are required can have the secondary effect of creating a stigma around veterans as a whole (Blumke, 2011; Magruder et al. 2012; Schlueter, 2012).¹⁰

This leaves veterans in a precarious position where they have to advocate for services while simultaneously trying to prove that they are capable and ready to take on the challenges of higher education and professional life. Left without the adequate support during the transition process, and without prospects based on the skills attained through military services, for these veterans college is the most viable option; both as a way to get ahead tomorrow while also being the only way to pay the bills today (Schlueter, 2013; Gilbert, 2013).¹¹

¹⁰ J. Schlueter is a transition / admissions counselor, who has worked in a variety of community colleges, colleges and universities in the San Diego area over the past decade, particularly focusing on veteran's academic success. Jed's contributions via interviews, phone calls, and emails were integral in capturing the day-to-day experience of the veteran transition process from the time they leave the military, through community college, and then into a traditional university atmosphere. In this particular case, his note was in reference to the internalized aversion many of the veterans he has worked with have towards psychological healthcare.

¹¹ While not making it in entirety into the final draft, worth noting is that the majority of the enlisted personnel who separate, do so after completion of their 1st enlistment (~22-24 y/o), and of those, most have under two weeks upon separation before they are no longer receiving any benefit from the military for sustenance. Thus, according to many of the service providers interviewed, the primary reason for many veterans attending school—especially at the community college level—is that it is the only way they have to make any money immediately upon separation. Referring to the GI Bill as a vocational voucher program, and this becomes very troubling as the return on investment cited by those lobbying in favor of the current Bill was that of someone who used the GI Bill as a way to enter the workforce, not as a welfare program aimed simply towards providing money to survive. (See: Investment vs. Simple / Pure consumption)

There remains dire need for information dissemination at all levels regarding the nuances of veterans' medical needs (Tanielan & Haycox, 2008; Hillemeier et al, 2011). One of the disconnects noted between staff interviewed for this thesis, was that veterans (often reluctant or stubborn when it comes to asking for help) who experienced traumatic brain injuries (TBI), severe concussions, or different iterative effects of PTSD, had troubles completing or following what, to university staff, seemed like otherwise routine or rote administrative functions (i.e. meeting administrative deadlines for forms, scholarships, etc.). This is compounded with "hidden curriculum" issues, with veterans not always arriving on campus with the pedigree of traditional students. As will be discussed case-study in Chapter 5, this creates a very frustrating experience on the part of the veteran who may not understand what exactly is being asked of them in any given academic scenario.

This chapter highlights the tremendous effort required on the part of veterans to obtain required support services to address both visible and invisible wounds of war. In addition I discussed the problems of misalignment between program configuration and institutional delivery service and the needs of members of our military. In the next chapter I suggest that any gesture to revise existing protocols of service provision requires an intimate understanding of the *Zeitgeist* of the modern military, that enshrouds members of the armed forces allowing them to engage in armed conflict in where life and limb are lost.

Chapter IV. Servicemember to Student-Veteran: the Transition Process

The design of transition programs requires understanding the individual experience in the context of nested systems including the person's reality prior to enlistment, experience while in the military itself, and the external world in which support services operate. Currently configured like a funnel, at the narrow throat of the funnel resides the veteran-recipient of support services from the military and civilian worlds. He/she receives what is given, what makes it through the funnel. Effective transition however, requires inverting the funnel with the veteran supported on a foundation of effective transition services, designed with an awareness among service providers, medical health professionals and academic administrators, of the layers of experience of life before, during and after service.

In this chapter I first present the current situation highlighting the myriad means by which the system derails and fails to serve the soldier during transition. I use this introduction as a platform for an extended discussion of the GI bill, arguably the largest support system offering transition benefits to veterans. In this discussion I unpack the GI, exposing the wide array of services available to veterans while shedding light on both the complexity of the system of benefits and their potentiality of receipt. Critical to transition system design is the transparency required to determine who has access to what benefits and how those benefits are funneled through existing institutions and organizations. Careful examination of this issue reveals a web of conditions, portholes and blind alleys that serve to confuse and deter access to benefits and the design of efficient transition supports. This detailed discussion sets up subsequent chapter VI where I take the lessons of the GI history deconstruction and apply it to the experience of one model program, which through trial and error has configured a system of transition that addresses many of the missing linkages among program elements and missing elements of an effective program.

Conceptualizing the Soldier in Transition

In thinking about military transition and transition programs, it is important to not just think about the physical body of the veteran, but to conceptualize the administrative "body" they occupy as well. Their medical and personnel files also transition out of the military, and both take on their own "transition"; as different remnants are sent to different federal agencies and tracking entities for processing. Therefore, aside from the actual legal or administrative transition from being in the military to becoming a veteran, an adequate transition process also has to account for the health and well-being of the service member, the adequate transfer of files and information from the military to the VA, and a transition from being accounted for as part of a military family to a home community.

Each service is required to provide a 5-day transition program for separating servicemembers. However, as the programs are not executed universally between or within services or individual servicemembers, each servicemember has a unique transition experience (GAO, 2002). Additionally, as with the administration of the transition services, each servicemember's ability to access and utilize resources off-base also varies depending on the military installation, with their ability to access these resources largely dependent on the specific conditions of their

military unit (GAO, 2002).

Under the current transition programs, by default college campuses are expected to mitigate the effects of potentially traumatic experiences, amongst a veteran population who will arrive with varying degrees of prior preparation for their separation from the military. Where this becomes especially challenging is in college environments that have high turnover rates, as the specific needs for any veteran population will change depending on the individual veterans.

The United States expects to gain 2.5 million new veterans over the next 10 years (total of 3.5 post-9/11 veterans), many of whom will utilize some form of the Post-9/11 GI Bill to attend college regardless of whether doing so will actually make them more marketable in a very fragile economy. With an overall dearth of any structured or standardized transition program to prepare them for life after the military, much less situate veterans with the stability necessary to ensure their ability to maximize their engagement with higher education, many arrive on college campuses lacking the capacity to best utilize their VA education benefits (Steele et al, 2010; GAO, 2011, 2012).

Structured as a vocational voucher program whereby veterans are subsidized in their pursuit towards employment, if college is not leading veterans to industry, not only will the Post-9/11 GI Bill be the most expensive educational benefits package in the history of the VA, universities—not the student-veteran—are positioned as the main beneficiaries of the legislation. In terms of assisting the veteran in their transition from the military, this is of particular concern.

The GI Bill: How the Veteran Transition Process Intersects with Veterans Education Benefits

The GI Bill provides benefits to veterans or their spouses¹² with broad discretion with regard to the institution and program to be pursued. The VA does not discriminate between public, non-profit private, and for-profit private institutions. The maximum tuition payment by the VA for any school is limited to the costliest tuition rate of an undergraduate degree program at the most expensive public institution in the state in which the veteran is attending school. In an attempt to avoid overlapping services between agencies, the GI Bill's regulatory exigencies are aligned with those outlined under the Higher Education Act (HEA). The Department of Education is responsible for ensuring compliance under Title IV provisions, even though they are not actively involved with the 9/11 GI Bill process.

While common discourse may suggest a monotypic association with an all-encompassing “GI Bill,” in practice the legislation contains many provisions and multiple areas of intersection at different points of alignment, where responsibilities and actions between entities (i.e. university, VA, DoD, DoL, veteran, etc.) vary greatly (See Tables 1 below). This chaotic interplay is exacerbated during a veteran's transition into the workforce, as there is an equally dismal disconnect between the 6 federal employment and training programs designed for veterans (GAO, 2011). This structure creates a situation in which it could be in a university's financial interest to increase their student veteran population while providing the most minimal service

¹² An active duty servicemember may, prior to separation, elect to transfer entitlement to a spouse. This election is no longer available after a servicemember has separated from active duty.

required to get them out of the institution. The term *out* is used, versus “graduated” or “through,” as both these terms imply completion of some form, whereas the reality is that some universities current practices maximize a veteran’s benefits, regardless of whether the veteran is able to use the university’s credit in a way that would benefit them in the job market (Tierney, 2007; Radford, 2009; Steele & Salcedo, 2010; Deming et. al, 2012; Nelson, Forthcoming).

Differences in GI Bill Reauthorizations:

In addition to the distinct nature of the wars being fought (types of weaponry, availability and advancement of medical technology, proximity to the US, etc.), each GI Bill-era also was unique in terms of the overall political and economic climate in the US. In the following sections I describe pertinent facets of the GI bill over its life time. Some of the most important distinctions are summarized in Table 1 (below), which can then be contrasted with the same data for the current, Post-9/11 GI Bill in Table 2.

Table 1. Selected Characteristics of VA Education Programs¹³

Criteria	GI Bill of Rights	Korean GI Bill	Vietnam- Era GI Bill	Post-Vietnam Era Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (VEAP)	Montgomery GI Bill - Active Duty	Montgomery GI Bill - Selected Reserves	Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)
Year enacted	1944	1952	1966	1976	1984	1984	2004
Initial authorization	P.L. 78-346	P.L. 82-550	P.L. 89-358	P.L. 94-502	P.L. 98-525	P.L. 98-525	P.L. 108-375
Period of service	September 16, 1940, through July 25, 1947	June 27, 1950, through January 31, 1955	February 1, 1955 through August 4, 1964 (Post-Korean War); August 5, 1964, through May 7, 1975 (Vietnam-Era veterans)	December 31, 1976, through July 1, 1985	Entered active duty after June 30, 1985	July 1, 1985, to present	After September 11, 2001, to present
Period of Use	June 22, 1944, to July 25, 1956	August 20, 1952, to January 31, 1965	June 1, 1966, to December 31, 1989	January 1, 1977, to present	July 1, 1985, to present	July 1, 1985, to present	December 9, 2001, to present
Highest standard benefit amount (current dollars)	\$500 per year maximum, and \$75 monthly subsistence	\$110 per month maximum	\$376 per month	\$300 per month ^a	\$1,101 per month (FY2008) ^b	\$317 per month (FY2008) ^b	\$881 per month (FY2008) ^b
Duration of benefits	One year full-time training plus a period equal to time in service; 48 months maximum	1.5 times the duration of active service; 36 months maximum	One month of education benefits for every month of active duty service; 45 months maximum	Lesser of 36 months or number of months of contributions	Lesser of 36 months or number of months of active duty	36 months	36 months
Contribution	None	None	None	\$25 to \$100 per month; \$2,700 maximum	Pay reduction of \$100 per month for the first 12 months of pay	None	None
Length of service	Minimum 90 days	Minimum 90 days	More than 180 days of active duty service	Minimum 181 continuous days of active duty service, if entered before October 16, 1981; 24 months of continuous active duty service if entered after October 16, 1981	Minimum 181 continuous days of active duty service; 24 months of active duty if enlisted after September 7, 1980	Accepted 6-year reserve obligation after June 30, 1985	Minimum 90 days of consecutive service in a contingency operation
Discharge status	Other than dishonorable	Other than dishonorable	Other than dishonorable	Other than dishonorable	Fully honorable discharge or on active duty	Must remain with Reserve unit	Must remain with Reserve unit
Time limitation on use of benefits	Initiated by later of end of war or two years after discharge	Initiated by three years and completed by eight years after discharge	Within 8 years after discharge; 10 years for Vietnam veterans	Within 10 years of discharge or release from active duty	Within 10 years of discharge or release from active duty	Within 14 years of initial eligibility, if eligible on or after October 1, 1992 (for those first eligible prior to October 1, 1992, benefits must be used within 10 years of initial eligibility)	Benefits can be used after 90-day minimum service period completed — no fixed delimited date; must remain with Reserve component

Source: Table prepared by CRS based on data available from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

- a. Government matches every \$1 the service person contributes with \$2. The maximum benefit available under the program is \$8,100 (\$5,400 federal contribution and \$2,700 individual contribution). The total contribution (service person contribution plus government share) is then divided by the number of months the service person contributed to VEAP.
- b. Amounts shown are for full-time institutional training, and are for individuals who completed a minimum of three years of service. The amounts are less for individuals who served less than three years and who attend less than full-time. The education benefits payment rate schedule is available at [http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/rates.htm].
- c. The monthly amount is a percentage of the MGIB-Active Duty and is based on the number of continuous days of active duty service. The amount shown is for full-time institutional training, and is for individuals who completed at two years or more of active duty service. The amount is less for individuals who served two years or less, and who attend less than full-time.

¹³ Source: Smole, David P., and Shannon S. Loane. *A Brief History of Veterans' Educational Benefits and Their Value*. Report no. RL34549. June 25, 2008. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2008.

Table 2. Selected Characteristics of the Post-9/11 GI Bill¹⁴

Criteria	Post 9/11 GI Bill
Year enacted	2008
Initial authorization	P.L. 110-252
Period of service	September 10, 2001 to present
Period of use	August 1, 2009-present
Highest standard benefit amount (current dollars)	All tuition and fee payments for an in-state student at a public school, or up to \$18,000 per academic year for tuition only (not including Yellow Ribbon Program)
Duration of benefits	36 months
Contribution	None
Length of service	90 days of aggregate service after September 10, 2001, or service-connected disability after 30 days
Discharge status	Fully honorable or on active duty
Time limitation on use of benefits	15 years

Source: VA website

Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944

In an effort to address a population of would-be unemployed servicemen, Congress passed the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill), which provided nearly 16 million returning World War II veterans access to home ownership, business loans, job training, unemployment compensation and higher education. The GI Bill has gone through six reauthorizations since 1944: the World War II Bill (Public Law 78-346); the Korean Conflict Bill (Public Law 82-550); the Post-Korean Period and Vietnam Era Bill (Public Law 89-358); the Post-Vietnam Era Program (VEAP) (Public Law 94-502); the Montgomery GI Bill (Chap. 30); and the Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chap. 33).

It is estimated that roughly 2.5 million veterans attended post-secondary education from 1944 – 1960 on the original GI Bill (Rudolf 1962; Adams, 2000). During this time the US spent approximately \$7 billion on the GI Bill (equivalent to roughly \$40 billion today), and made back close to seven dollars for every dollar spent in terms of GDP (Reed, 2001). The GI Bill’s education provisions provided funding for tuition to veterans who were granted access to colleges, universities and vocational schools. With the military predominantly comprised of poorer, uneducated rural populations at the time, this created a dramatic change in the demographic composition of America’s institutions of higher learning. The original educational compensation was tuition for up to four years of college, money for books and a monthly allowance for living expenses (Smole & Loane 2008).

Although Black servicemen were also eligible for the educational provisions, there was no requirement for colleges or universities to adjust their admissions practices to explicitly accommodate this population therefore, the benefits of the education provision also disproportionately benefitted white servicemen over service members of color (Onkst, 1998; Turner & Bound, 1999, 2002). This highlights the way by which the GI Bill has always been limited as a universally beneficial federal program (Canaday, 2004).

When, in 1952, the Veterans Readjustment Act of 1952 replaced the WWII era Servicemen’s Readjustment act, a notable change was that instead of paying universities directly for tuition, as

¹⁴ Source: VA website

in the original legislation (and as the Post 9/11 GI Bill does today), Congress changed the Korea-era GI Bill to pay the service member directly, due to reports of fraud by colleges and universities trying to attract veterans to their campuses without providing a marketable education in return (Chapman 1983, ACE 2008, Smole & Loane 2008).

Vietnam-Era GI Bill: A Model Version?

The changes in the Vietnam-era GI Bill are noteworthy, as this iteration of the legislation had the highest participation percentage (VA, 2006). During the 1970s, there was growing concern outside the military about college not being worth the investment in terms of return on wages for the time spent on campus (Freeman, 1976). The restoration of the Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act (Vietnam GI Bill) of 1966 also had a profound impact on veteran's readjustment, specifically after 1970. This version of the GI Bill included provisions for alternative options for on-the-job and vocational training that had immediate job placement and career counseling; and many of the options did not require veterans to utilize their GI Bill during the training.

During the Vietnam-era iteration of the GI Bill, the legislation became effective as a federal voucher program aimed at vocational training that led directly into job placement. The majority of the firms offering the vocational training were private companies, regulated by the VA. The private nature of the training was not as important as was whether the firms could offer the job-placement and career counseling required to make the completion of a vocational course a viable method of entry into the labor force. The Bill was effective at integrating veterans into the work force, even in comparison with their nonveteran counterparts. Vietnam Era veterans had higher income, educational achievement, and unemployment rates than nonveterans. On average, veterans in 1978 made more (\$14,250 compared to \$11,310) than their nonveteran counterparts, and had more years of education (12.9 compared to 12.6) (O'Neill, 1977).

Vocational training was particularly effective and beneficial for Vietnam-era veterans in terms of having a direct affect on income (O'Neill, 1977). Black veterans in particular benefitted from the vocational placement provided by the Vietnam-era GI Bill, with the wage gap between Black veterans and their white nonveteran counterparts reduced to almost zero.¹⁵ Furthermore, in groups of comparable education, Black veterans used the GI Bill at higher rates than their white counterparts.¹⁶

The Vietnam era GI Bill, in many ways, was the most successful iteration of the original legislation in terms of decreasing wage inequalities between Black veterans and the white population in general. This was partially due to the structure of the bill offering services that benefitted those who entered the service from disparate outcomes, and from the incorporation of lessons learned about the occurrence of fraud among university practices when the VA paid them directly. Central to this version of the Bill was the deliberate emphasis placed on job placement and career counseling for veterans. Furthermore, to address the educational differences between many veterans leaving the service, there were numerous programs aimed at preparing service members to attend college. Veterans were given additional allowances for preparatory work that

¹⁵ "Blacks in particular showed substantial increases in income after GI Bill-sponsored vocational training. Whereas before training, blacks' incomes were about 15 percent below those of nonblack counterparts, after training the gap closed."

¹⁶ This is not suggesting that many Vietnam-era veterans did not have difficulties upon separation. It instead speaks to those veterans who were able to attend school post-service.

did not affect the length of eligibility for benefits, and offered on-the-job training programs, which extended into the agricultural industry (O’Neill, 1977).

Though legislators made efforts to mitigate the presence of fraud experienced during the initial Bill in the implementation of Vietnam-era GI Bill, these benefits and procedures were later stripped from the Montgomery GI Bill and remain absent from the current Post-9/11 GI Bill. In the Vietnam-era, in addition to changes being made to minimize fraud and abusive practices on the part of the institution, the legislation had a direct focus on vocational training, remedial education, job placement, and job counseling—all of which allowed those who were least likely to experience social mobility without the GI Bill, to potentially benefit the most under its provisions. As a result, the Vietnam-era GI Bill was one of the most successful workforce development programs in the history of the United States.

This should not be taken to mean that Vietnam Veterans, writ large, were received well, or that the veterans from this era were in any way “better off” than in other conflicts. As has been thoroughly documented and demonstrated through contemporary challenges with the veteran population, Vietnam veterans faced (and continue to face) a litany of obstacles, unique to their conflict. All this says, is that compared to other iterations of the GI Bill, a higher proportion of eligible veterans used the Vietnam-era GI Bill, and those that did were successful in entering the workforce, relative to other conflicts’ educational assistance programs.

Montgomery GI Bill¹⁷

Ambivalence surrounding the value of the college experience in the 1970s did not deter a growing number of students from enrolling in higher education in the post-Vietnam era, and servicemembers were participating in the GI Bill to attend college at record rates. With the Cold War at the forefront of Reagan’s foreign policy, the increase in students attending college presented a challenge to the administration’s national defense strategy. And even during some of the economic lulls of the mid-1970s and early 1980s, the transition to an all-Volunteer recruitment was proving difficult, as the services were unable to compete with higher education (US Comptroller, 1981). In a memo to then Chairman of the House Committed on Veterans Affairs, Rep. G.V. Montgomery (D-MS), acting comptroller W.J. Socolar advocated for a targeted reallocation of funding from Department of Education to Department of Defense to address shortcomings of the all-volunteer force (AVF)(US Comptroller, 1981). By shifting DoEd funds otherwise earmarked for education assistance programs to the DoD, the government was able to finance the reinstatement of the GI Bill. The result was that military service became one of the only routes to a college education for those otherwise unable to afford it.

H.R. 1400 (later named the Montgomery GI Bill after the Bill’s sponsor) (Chap. 30) (1984-2008) did not offer vocational training or job placement, and instead paid veterans a flat rate with annual cost of living adjustments. The original legislation cited demographic trends provided by the Department of Education, indicating that many of the students who would otherwise be optimal recruits were not only enrolling in college, but also dependent on some type of financial aid. In fact one of the defining criteria for “high-quality” recruit as identified by the report was

¹⁷ As noted in Table 1., The Montgomery GI Bill is comprised of two components: MGIB-Active Duty, and MGIB-Selected Reserves.

that they were in receipt of some form of educational assistance program or federally backed financial aid.

As with the Vietnam-Era GI Bill, the Montgomery GI Bill also paid a flat rate directly to veterans, however the increase in the cost of college and fluctuations in costs of living made it very difficult for veterans to use the money to pay for school. What it did was subsidize the living expenses of veterans, who then had to find other sources of funding in order to cover the costs of attendance.¹⁸

Post 9/11 GI Bill & Administrative Challenges

To understand the challenges of transition, it is necessary to first examine the benefits stream available to soldiers as they cycle out of the military and seek reentry into civil society. In this chapter I begin by reviewing relevant aspects of the GI Bill while highlighting the misalignment of the current context including benefits available to the returning soldier through the GI bill and the economic circumstances evident in the labor market. I discuss differences in probable effective utility of the dominant program GI education benefits, given differences in status of membership in the military—enlisted versus officer.

Function or Form?

It is important to note that the GI Bill is structured as a vocational voucher program, and not an educational attainment program, meaning the goal is to get veterans into the workforce with meaningful jobs and careers. This speaks to the Bill's broader purpose of securing stable employment and providing access to functional support networks. Far beyond mere enrollment in traditional educational institutions, veterans should be afforded the opportunity to thrive under current economic and social conditions, which might entail less conventional conceptions of the role of the university system in job placement.

Though there are steps that university administrators can take to make it easier for veterans to navigate through their programs, such recommendations do not address the issue of veterans for whom the traditional four-year brick-and-mortar experience is not appropriate. From a policy perspective, creating veteran-friendly campuses is only one part of a much larger set of objectives to alleviate the stress and trauma of both military service and reintegration to civilian life.

The Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2008 (Post-9/11 GI Bill or Chapter 33) is the current iteration of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944.¹⁹ At the behest of lobbying from vocal veterans advocacy groups, Virginia Senators Warner and Webb successfully drafted and passed the 9/11 GI Bill in order to make veterans education benefits better aligned with

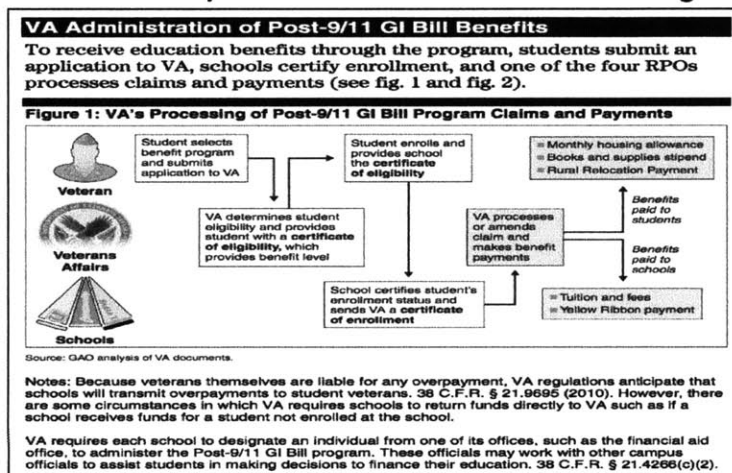
¹⁸ This was a major point of contention around the conversation of changing to the Post-9/11 GI Bill, as many veterans felt like the monthly allowance was insufficient to actually help a veteran complete their four-year degree.

¹⁹ While the GI Bill has been iterative in terms of changes made specific to each era of veterans, it is not accurate to suggest that the versions are reauthorizations of the same legislation, (i.e. Elementary and Secondary Education Act), however it is iterative in that many of the provisions overlap from one era to the next, and the main governmental entities serving as administrative custodians and service delivery are the same.

contemporary education costs and to better mitigate the stress endured during the transition from a war-time military to the college campus (United States of America, *US Code, Title 38, Veterans Benefits*).

As was the case with the original GI Bill, the 9/11 GI Bill is administered through direct payments from the VA to colleges and universities, who then disburse a yearly book stipend and monthly cost-of-living payment to the veteran through a direct deposit system (GAO, 2012, Table 3). While the Montgomery GI Bill required servicemembers to make financial contributions toward their Bill while serving, the 9/11 GI Bill is given to all servicemembers, with no payment requirement.

Table 3. Post 9/11 GI Bill Administrative Processing²⁰



WWII through Enduring Freedom: Contemporary Challenges with the GI Bill

An analysis of the current challenges with the contemporary veterans education benefits under Chapter 30 (Montgomery GI Bill) and Chapter 33 (Post 9/11 GI Bill), informs this discussion for at least three reasons: the disconnect between the underlying policy problem of the two eras; the lack of an evolved delivery system capable of linking the myriad programs and services available into a seamless web of support; the large differences in the socioeconomic status of members of the modern military and the acute inequality which characterizes the contemporary economy.

The early challenges of the 9/11 GI Bill are relevant for at least three reasons. First, as the demographics and prior life situations of veterans, pre-service, are at least somewhat correlated to their ability to successfully transition out of the military (Cook & Kim, 2009; Meredith, 2012), universities have to compensate for these differences in their veterans' programs. One

²⁰ Source: GAO, *VA Education Benefits: Actions Taken, but Outreach and Oversight Could Be Improved : Report to the Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Military Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 2011*

significant difference between the WWII context and the Global War on Terror (GWOT)-era is that income disparity and its effects are much more pronounced (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010; Stiglitz, 2012). Especially in the case of universities that have a diverse population of students in general (i.e. community colleges), this can create particular challenges, as unlike other historic conflicts, there is not necessarily an “archetype” GWOT-era veteran.

Second, lack of systems alignment in the delivery of veterans’ benefits continues to be a hindrance for student-veterans (GAO 2011, 2012). Much of this has to do with lack of collaboration and oversight within different governmental entities. With universities bearing the brunt of veterans’ lack of access to, or availability of VA medical services, the confusion caused by a lack of systems alignment between federal agencies—namely DoD, VA, and DoEd—is exacerbated by veterans having to add college administrative procedures to the growing litany of middlemen between them and their benefits (Cook & Kim, 2009; Steele et al., 2010; McBain et al., 2012; Fairbanks, 2011).

Third, there is little incentive for universities to be proactive in supporting the well-being of their veteran population, and less for them to increase the diversity of their veteran population; as long as universities are in compliance with GI Bill regulations, they will receive VA funding. Regulatory devices enacted to prevent fraud and abuse within higher education practices, such as the 90/10 rule, actually create opportunities for universities to abuse the Post 9/11 GI Bill to secure funding without fully investing in the student-veteran experience. As the current regulations do not include any stipulations about providing veterans’ services, few universities have established comprehensive (or even adequate) support mechanisms for veterans. Further exacerbating these challenges is an increasing backlog of unprocessed educational and medical claims at the VA; as of Fall 2012 there were 58,000 unprocessed education claims and 865,000 of unprocessed medical claims (Shane, 2012, 2013; VA, 2013).

Two Different Eras

The framework for the original 1944 legislation was not solely intended to get veterans into school, so much as it was seen as a necessary policy maneuver to prevent 16 million veterans from aggravating a still-fragile US economy. One of the ancillary effects of this was the expansion of the education sector due to veterans’ enrollment; however, when it became apparent that veterans could be a source of income or growth for the university, fraudulent practices eventually caused Congress to amend the program to give money directly to veterans. This incentivized universities to offer programs that were competitive and gave veterans the best chances of employment upon graduation, which was one of the reasons the Vietnam-era GI Bill was more concentrated on job training and vocational rehabilitation than the midcentury GI Bills. In terms of today’s GI Bill, this suggests that there should be as much a focus on vocational placement as there is in getting veterans into schools.

The administration of the GI Bill by all of the systems involved or responsible in the handling of the transition process for veterans into the workforce highlights the level of chaotic potential within the organizational processes around veterans care. This trend of governmental systems not aligning, often due to contractor specificities versus those of the veteran, is pervasive in other areas of veterans’ care, preventing even some of the more innovative approaches from realizing their potential (GAO, 2011, 2012; Houston et. al, 2012; Bird, 2012). When a veteran gets to a

college campus, problems with systems alignment are intensified because, in addition to the administrative procedures in place at the federal government entities, veterans also have to negotiate the specific administrative requirements for their institution.

A Hostile Economy and Growing Inequality

One of the main challenges with the contemporary GI Bill versus the WWII-era GI Bill is the greater variance in the socio-economic status of today's veteran population compared with the population of the WWII-era. Particularly, the overall levels of inequality and the nature of the interaction between inequality, social mobility, access to basic needs, and overall health of the population, are much more pronounced today than was the case 60 years ago. This not only has implications for universities struggling to find ways to support growing veteran populations, but also for the overall efficacy of the GI Bill to operate as a vocational voucher program, designed to transition servicemembers into the larger economic functions of the country.

Enlisted v. Officer

The demographics of who serves vary between officer and enlisted members, and also by service and occupation. This has a particular impact in terms of the actual value of the GI Bill, as upon termination of service officers are immediately eligible for a deliverable that is worth far more than of an enlisted veteran. The officer is able to use the entire GI Bill on graduate or professional school, while the majority of the enlisted population does not qualify for direct placement into a four-year, degree granting institution.

While it comes up again in this document, and therefore does not require a discursive analysis here, it is important to note why this is of particular concern. When the GI Bill was able to function as an effective Federal Vocational Voucher program, the only such program in the history of the United States that has been able to not only mitigate existing wage disparities between Black participants in the treatment group (veterans) and those representing the counterfactual (Black non-veterans), it was actually able to bring the wages and earnings of the treatment group *above* those of their white non-veteran counterparts as well. The Vietnam-era GI Bill was able to do this because at the time veterans' educational benefits were structured so that the greatest benefits were available (in terms of college attainability) to those who would otherwise fair the worst without any assistance.

Incentives to Exploit Student Veterans?²¹

The current legal landscape operationalizing universities' ability to participate with the GI Bill, which allows them to receive veterans benefits as a form of revenue, is due in part to Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965.²² The HEA was originally structured as a tool for the federal government to subsidize the education costs for low-income students (Nelson,

²¹ Special thanks to Mark Nelson, a second-year law student at Notre Dame Law School. Mark's insight and contributions to this paper—and this section in particular, regarding the legal structure the current GI Bill is operating in—were instrumental in my being able understand and connect the challenges with the GI Bill to the historical context. An invaluable friend and colleague, Mark's article "*Never Ascribe To Malice That Which Is Adequately Explained By Incompetence – How The Federal Government Helps Profit-Seeking Colleges And Universities Exploit Student Veterans*" is forthcoming in the *Journal of College and American Law*.

Forthcoming). Since then, the “college-for-all” mantra has increased incentives for higher education institutions of all kinds to find innovative ways to attract traditionally underrepresented demographics, including minorities, homeless populations, and veterans.

Citing increasing gaps in skills, labor, education and employment, particularly between US and other countries’ labor pools (Levy & Murnane, 2004; Goldin & Katz, 2008) all tiers of educational services have become a new frontier for market competition. With arguably fewer restrictions to entry, for-profit organizations in particular have benefitted from the increased demand for post-secondary credentials, compensating for both for the fiscal strain experienced by public institutions²³, and serving as an accessible option for individuals whose secondary education left them without the requisite tools to engage the “traditional” college campus (Breneman et al., 2006; Hirsch, 2007; Lederman, 2011; Reed, 2012; Nelson, Forthcoming).

Prior to the 9/11 GI Bill, the HEA struggled to regulate institutions of higher learning from predatory practices (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007; Hirsch, 2007). The passage of the new legislation further eroded any leverage the Department of Education had in the provision of education assistance programs, allowing institutions to explore innovative, and legal, avenues through which they could circumvent the main regulatory devices (Harkin, 2010; Nelson, Forthcoming).²⁴

It is important at this juncture to reiterate that these safeguards were put in place as a result of decades of negotiation of different combinations of payment systems. The original GI Bill was paid directly from the government to the institutions of higher learning; however this created an incentive for universities to take in student veterans for the financial benefit without ensuring the education received would lead to employment or other economic mobility; another mechanism through which the WWII-era GI Bill exacerbated inequalities between white veterans and veterans of color (Onkst, 1998 Turner & Bound, 1999, 2002).

In this regulatory context, the importance of the 9/11 GI Bill was that it established a legal distinction between student veterans and other students participating in any number of federally operated educational programs (Harkin, 2010, Nelson, Forthcoming).²⁵ When payments shifted

²³ The distinction between an FPI, Private Institution, and public / state university is subtle however important. While not accurate to bundle all universities into a single category in terms of their mission, my argument is that all of them benefit from having veterans on their campuses, even if they are not providing the services necessary for the veteran to succeed post-graduation. There are, however, some areas that are particularly of note for specific forms (FPI, private, public) of universities, and where these occur I have tried to separate them. Generally speaking in terms of incentives, FPI and private institutions are relatively similar, and public/state universities are similar in their differences from FPI / Private universities. However, as “exploit” might imply intention, my argument is therefore that whether by accident or design, in some cases universities do benefit from the exploitation of the veteran population. This exploitation does not necessarily mean that there is malicious intent, only that the net gain goes to the university while doing very little—and often costing a great deal, in terms of money and/or time—for the student veteran.

²⁴ This report makes a case specifically addressing FPI practices; however, I argue that much of the incentive-oriented data used for the Senate report applies directly to both private and public universities, and in some cases where institutions and university systems are in financial duress, the pervasive practices highlighted in the report are exacerbated in traditional universities, due to an assumption of them being ethically / morally neutral or responsible.

²⁵ Arguing that interplay between regulations under the HEA and benefits afforded by the Post 9/11 GI Bill “incentivizes [institutions] to aggressively recruit and market to veterans and servicemembers”.

to direct disbursement to colleges and universities, it was particularly beneficial to the surging education industry, for which the change was a potentially lucrative and effective way to bypass the regulatory provisions outlined as part of the HEA.

Four years into the 9/11 GI Bill, there is growing evidence that the new legislation is susceptible to the same questionable practices as the original—from for-profit and traditional universities alike—by allowing these institutions to circumvent the regulatory mechanisms set in place.

How does the History of Veteran Transition Processes Relate to Contemporary Employment and Workforce Issues vs. Education Issues?

In summary, this brief chronology of the GI Bill detailed the nuances of the progression of veterans' education benefits from the WWII-era Servicemen's Readjustment Act to the current (Post 9/11) GI Bill. Although the Vietnam-era GI Bill was particularly effective at mitigating existing income disparities, the Post-9/11 was designed as a duplication of the WWII-era GI Bill.

Servicemembers enter the military with varying levels of education; their ability to maximize a return on their time in school after their service is largely dependent on their college readiness when they enlist. The GI Bill was not designed primarily as a way to get veterans into college, and in terms of its net present value, it is not effective as a welfare program for veterans who cannot otherwise find ways to get money. If college is not leading veterans to industry, it can potentially be a very costly investment for the US economy. This is exacerbated by the continuing challenges in getting veterans to utilize or take full advantage of transition services and the challenges with the transition programs themselves.

Going to college alone does not suffice as an effective transition process, and the experiences of dealing with trauma can compromise veterans' abilities to succeed in school. If universities are not actively engaged with the veterans' transition process, many veterans will not be able to effectively use the GI Bill to improve their life situation from that when they enlisted and the GI Bill will disproportionately favor veterans who enter the service already coming from means.

In this chapter, some of the major challenges with using the GI Bill in lieu of an effective and universally applied transition program were examined. In the next chapter I postulate as to what a university's role could be in aiding the transition process. Informed by case-study information effective veterans' services on college campuses, I provide a detailed typology of what exactly they are doing to ensure veterans are able to negotiate the academic life, while also preparing for entry into the workforce.²⁶

It could very well be argued that this section has been particularly indicting of institutes of higher education, relative to the other entities (i.e. VA, DoD, DoL, etc.). This is not in any way intended to mean that higher education is the sole responsible agent for any shortcomings in a

²⁶ An area that is implicitly present, however not examined in greater detail in the section, is that barriers to entry into the workforce are very real for veterans, educated or not. This is a critical piece of the reentry/transition puzzle, and was omitted because the heart of the research conducted was specific to the campuses, and was not as thorough in examination of the challenges in employment.

veteran's assimilation, or that universities are inherently exploitative towards vulnerable populations, and / or veterans in particular. What it does suggest is that higher education continues to be challenged in its ability to meet the needs of a diverse study body, and that when there are financial and / or political incentives for any institution to take on a demographic not included in the majority, it is an operational imperative to ensure universities are then held responsible for ensuring a healthy progression through degree-completion, and are responsive to the subsequent success of their graduates in securing permanent employment. Without this, as I have discussed, there is ample opportunity for (and the existence of) exploitation.

Chapter V. Potential for Efficacious Transition Programs?

Given the continuing reliance on higher education as a primary means of transition, with all the reservations aside, there are examples of successful transition programs hosted by institutions of higher education. Having evolved largely through trial and error, these programs are beginning to demonstrate the elements of program design built upon the model of operation of the military welded onto a model of one-stop-shopping service provision emblematic of today's displaced worker and workforce development programs.

The aforementioned model of platoon dynamics gives us a great deal of insight as to what a college campus might be looking for as an effective transition program for student veterans: essentially something that can replicate the type of tangible group dynamic that allows for a type of self-recognition through group identification. The programs that are effective at incorporating transitioning veterans tend to be the programs that find ways to mimic different aspects of the functions previously provided by the platoon. Important to note is that "platoon" in this sense refers to the implicit recognition of stability in a student-veteran's access to basic needs, and access to the knowledge base from which they can best utilize their resources for short-term mobility.

As there are not the expansive employment opportunities in multiple tiers (positions) of multiple industries across the total labor force, much of the stories of veterans' innovation / engagement with industry revolve around veterans providing veterans' services. These jobs inevitably will be needed, as will all jobs associated with veterans' transition, considering the increasing population of veterans. However, if it were possible to use some of the jobs as incubation-type training, they could serve a critical component of the transition piece.

Maybe most importantly, however, is that these groups serve as a collective resource center, much in the way a sorority/fraternity might operate, yet more professionalized. In a unit-environment, where rank structure, MOS and billet assignment provide much of what a service member needs to negotiate his or her day, social capital is nurtured through proficiency, professionalism, athletic ability, and basic social prowess or charisma, all of which complement a military unit's prescribed training plan, however none of which can be taught at the range or school house. In terms of veterans' services on college campuses, one of the key takeaways from the platoon model is a need for pseudo-structured spaces where veterans can begin to establish their norms again, while also being around trusted confidants who can aid them in navigating the litany of federal, state and local transition programs.

Case Study: San Diego

In order to capture an example of what some of the effective procedures a university can provide in terms of transition services, this section will provide a case study of one of the earliest and most-often cited cases of an effective university veterans program. San Diego is unique and an outlier in terms of contexts, as it is home to the US Pacific fleet, three major military installations, I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF), and a healthy handful of reserve and guard units. With such a large military presence, arguably the foundation of the city itself, industry and the local population are used to the presence of military members, and might be expected to be less likely to be taken by surprise at the subtle nuances between veterans and their civilian counterparts (Davis et. al, 2003; Baker, 2007).

The university featured has a total student enrollment of approximately 29,000, of which approximately 2,394 are veterans or veteran-affiliated²⁷ (Putnam, 2013). SDSU, is located in eastern section of the City of San Diego, in the middle of a diverse surrounding, and directly off of one of the main arterial thoroughfares slicing through the San Diego scenery.

In the following section, this discussion was developed based off university material, newspaper articles and multiple interviews conducted of current and former Veterans Center Staff, and Student Veteran Organization members. To get a comprehensive view of what the transition process is, which is mixed into segments of this section, there are also interviews of veterans working in a service-center capacity at a neighboring university campus in San Diego, and at multiple universities in the greater Boston Metro area.

SDSU Veterans Services

November 21, 2006 a Student Veterans Organization (SVO) was established on SDSU campus. The veterans there felt that although there were programs in place, the college campus was so vastly different from the military environment that some of what was often seen as mundane or routine by people who had been in school their entire lives was a world of difference for the student veteran population.

At the start of the program, it was expected that the group would face a long, uphill challenge to become recognized on the campus. After becoming official through the paperwork process, the group had to take multiple avenues of approach to guarantee they would have the support to get the center they were hoping for.

First, they attended local community veterans' events, and framed the issue around the situation of student veterans on their campus. This attracted the attention of local media, which then attracted the campus news articles, who wrote extensively on it (Sauer, 2005). This attention prompted university leaders to reach out to the group, with the SDSU President taking the leading role in getting the campus to embrace the movement, making it a priority of his administration to support the student veteran population.

²⁷ Veteran Affiliated refers to spouses or children, or those in receipt of VA benefits other than actual veterans.

After first addressing the immediate issues of aligning the student's financial aid and GI Bill support, this was followed by establishing enrollment procedures to ensure veterans had their educational needs met and were within the frameworks established by the VA in order for them to receive all available benefits. With the university leadership's support the group established their Student Veterans Organization.

According to the group's leadership, their main goals behind the organization's formation was first to establish the same camaraderie they were used to as members of their platoons, to be able to spend time during their college experience in an "atmosphere of brotherhood for likeminded individuals," (Donnelly, 2013; Banko, 2013) and to provide a space where veterans could continue to develop their leadership abilities. However, at its core, the group needed it serve as a one-stop hub for veterans to get information about all of their benefits, financial aid information and for tips on how to best navigate this new college environment.

In 2008, with the same media approach taken to establish their group, including outreach efforts to nearby military installations, the group's numbers grew from 3 original members to over 50 (today, the group claims over 600 members). To accommodate the growing number of engaged veterans, SVO meetings started taking place inside the Office of the Register. Shortly, it became clear to the veterans and university that an additional space was necessary to meet the need for a collective meeting location. Again drawing on the support of the university's leadership, the President used his executive powers to shift personnel to other areas of campus and ordered the construction of the Veterans Center. Later, made possible by a \$1 Million philanthropic gift, SDSU Veterans Center was created.

Initially functioning strictly as a place for veterans benefits processing, and general information, the center has expanded into other areas, many in-line with what the American Council on Education (ACE) eventually published as the 12 characteristics a "Vets-Friendly" academic institution: Veterans Advisory Board, Veterans-Specific Space, Central Point of Contact, VA Work-Study Program, Admissions and Enrollment Policies, Veteran Orientation and Courses, Peer Mentoring and Student Veteran Organization, Academic Support Services, Health and Mental Health Services, Housing Policies, Faculty and Staff Training and Career Services (ACE, "Toolkit for Veteran Friendly Institutions").

Connection to the Campus Student Veterans Organization

While not the same entity, the Veterans' Center is staffed by work-study positions, filled by veterans who are active in the university's Student Veterans Organization, and the Veterans' Center staff frequently sends representatives to group meetings and functions, and is in constant contact with SVO leadership about current issues students are dealing with (Donnelly, 2013; Banko, 2013). At different times there have been questions regarding the best balance between the organization and the Veterans' Center; however at the core, what is important to the veterans is that the Center remain responsive to the SVO as its functioning liaison to the administrative functions and capacity of the university at large. Serving as the requisite "One-Stop-Shop" for all questions (which can be answered at the Center or transferred to the appropriate party), through the staffing of its work-study positions and its permanent staff with student veterans, the Veterans' Center retains close ties with the student organization, while maintaining a separate entity for the use of all student veterans regardless of their affiliation with the SVO.

Academic and Career Counseling

Upon discharge, veterans have a variety of skills and training experiences that they may not understand how to translate into terms readily understood terms for potential employers or how their coursework compliments existing skill-sets in ways that can be expressed as relevant experience. Not used to working with populations with the work and life experiences veterans bring with them to the campus, traditional counseling services are not always familiar with how the nuances in this difference affects a student's best use of the resource.

Coming to a college campus after a half-decade hiatus from the traditional classroom, where many may not have been outstanding scholars, let alone having gone through the experiences of war, veterans have particular challenges with the "hidden curriculum." Intangibles such as creating outlines, understanding how to apply systemic note taking techniques compatible with capturing the main ideas for exams, or even how to best approach the correct resources for assistance—routine for many students who have never been anywhere but in academic environments, particularly those who were academically inclined as children—can become seemingly insurmountable points of frustration among the student veteran population (Sherlock, 2013; Banko, 2013; Gilbert, 2013; Donnelly, 2013; Schlueter, 2012, 2013).

Universities may refer a student to career services personnel used to working with 18-25 y/o college students. Unfamiliar acronyms, service jargon, and lack of military rank structures, are common misunderstandings within these university staff (Donnelly, 2013; Banko, 2013; Nelson, 2012, 2013; Schlueter, 2012, 2013; Gilbert, 2013; Sherlock, 2012, 2013; Matson, 2013).

Although the American Council on Education (ACE) provides a service through which military training and education are explained, along with recommended credit allocations²⁸, these are not always honored at universities particularly university programs that have core-requirements, sequenced over multiple semesters.²⁹ Further exacerbating this frustration, it is not always easy for veterans to understand how their prior experience may best translate into potential careers after college, so their knowledge of what major or what course of study they might be interested in is limited.³⁰

To address this, SDSU has 32 work-study positions all filled by student-veterans, and veterans fill half of the paid staff positions. (25 in the Veterans' Center, 8 at the Veterans' House) This helps foster a learning environment for university personnel to familiarize themselves with the nuances of military acronyms and terminology, while also providing the veterans a trusted

²⁸ I.e. recommendations for transfer as x-credits in a lower-division academic genre.

²⁹ For example, it is not uncommon for universities to have lower-division critical writing, rhetoric and analysis requirements, intentionally introduced in chronological sequencing; albeit, more frequently used as requisites in graduate education. In these cases, if ACE recommends a lower-division writing/humanities credit for a service school/training, the university may still require the veteran to take the required sequence. Sometimes, particularly at community colleges, these credits may still transfer as general electives.

³⁰ For example, in 2012, when the DoD/VA was piloting the new version of the Transition program on a large military installation, many servicemembers would say things like they wanted to go into legal services to be a lawyer, or criminal justice to be a judge, unaware of the multiple academic careers that could lead to law school after they earned their undergraduate education.

translator who will communicate their concerns directly to the people who are responsible with meeting their needs. This also means that for each new veteran walking in to the Veterans center, there is going to be a veteran in the room to answer specific questions.

In terms of administrative and academic processing—something that all interviewed felt was at the core of the functions of the center or Veterans' services staff in general—SDSU's Veteran Center ensures that each veteran is enrolled with the university and VA *prior* to them being expected to be physically taking part in class. Additionally, center staff maintains contact with the veterans in order to conduct follow-up conversations to ensure they are taken care of in terms of housing and other administrative issues necessary for them to excel academically (Donnelly, 2013; Banko, 2013, Williams, 2013).

Due to the variety of injuries sustained in the current conflicts, with many veterans experiencing memory challenges due to TBI and / or PTSD, veterans often have to be reminded of administrative deadlines and other protocol, which the veteran-staff are able to do; furthermore, as the rapport between the Center and the SVO is strong, the Center staff are able to communicate with the veteran population without making the contact feel over-aggressive or overly-intrusive (Schlueter, 2013; Sherlock, 2013; Gilbert, 2013; Banko, 2013).

This results in each veteran being able to complete their required coursework and other academic responsibilities without having to worry about their basic needs (re: Income Volatility => Short-Term Mobility), which then allows them to further contribute to SDSU life, and if they choose to, become actively involved with the SVO or other community organizations and internships (Set-Up time).

Housing Information

Located in a relatively expensive housing market, finding housing can be a challenge for incoming veterans. Made possible by a challenge gift of \$50,000 by the same donors who funded the Veterans' center, the University established a 20 room Veterans' House, on the campus' fraternity row. Staffed with work-study positions, and a Veteran Center staff person (who is also a Navy Veteran), the Veterans' House provides a meeting space for the Student Veterans Organization, a convenient space for gatherings or other events, and provides a central space for veterans to congregate in order to study or just to be around other veterans.

In addition to the Veterans' House, the Veterans' Center also provides information about other options for veterans looking for housing upon arrival to the college campus.

Medical Services

A continuing challenge beyond the college campus, is in getting younger veterans to take advantage of the increase in the amount of medical services created for the veteran population (Cook & Kim, 2009; Steele et al., 2010; Blumke, 2011; Hillemeier et. al, 2011; Houston, 2012; McBain et al. 2012). Added to this challenge is the stigma many veterans face even when they are not seeking medical care, thus decreasing the likelihood they are going to walk in to a university-based health clinic if there were issues they are facing from their service or simply from their adjustment into their new life as student veterans (Blumke, 2011; Donnelly, 2013; Burke, 2011; Schlueter, 2013).

By offering liaison services through the Veterans' Center, the University is able to curb some of the apprehension felt by the veteran about accessing care. As is the case in other veterans transition programs, when veterans are working together and in constant interaction with peers who have experienced similar life events, or peers who understand the situations they have gone through, they are more likely to utilize such health services (Blumke, 2011; Mission Continue, 2012; Donnelly, 2013; Schlueter, 2013). To avoid the aforementioned stigma associated with veterans trying to access health care, the Veterans' center also has open communication with the medical services offered by the local VA hospitals and care clinics.

Connections to Employment

While not a primary function of the Veterans Center per se, the coordination between the SVO, the Veterans Center, University Career Services, and outside industries, has led to viable job-placement opportunities through department-led industry connections. In fields of engineering, geosciences, and education, university partnerships exist for interested student veterans. This, combined with an aggravated focus on job-fairs and professional networking, gives veterans comfort in knowing that there are options for them post-graduation (Donnelly, 2013; Banko, 2013).

However, veterans still feel connections to the labor market remain a challenge. Many of the positions created through the partnerships with the university are limited to the defense industry or other veterans/military related fields. While not having a problem with either, some of the veterans understandably did not want to remain on as close a tether with the military or DoD. Some of the graduates have taken advantage of intermediary service organizations such as The Mission Continues™³¹, in order to get the type of job-training-transition services necessary to apply their newly minted educational credentials into the working world.

In particular, the veterans' resource center has been beneficial for the student veteran population in creating a central hub of information and institutional memory regarding how to decipher the requirements of the federal employment programs available to the student-veteran population.

Core Functions

By and large, when asked as to what it is that seems to make SDSU's immersion program effective, and why programs across the country see it as an exemplar program³², student veterans and the center's operating staff's responses boil down to three main categories. The Center:

- 1) Ensures veterans' benefits are seamless from semester-to-semester and year-to-year, so they are able to obtain a quality education without having to worry at all about their access to basic needs (i.e. minimize income volatility).

³¹ Mission Continues™ is a programmatic model that is able to integrate veterans at the *extreme* end of the vulnerability spectrum. If the vocational orientation of the Vietnam-era GI Bill was critical in its ability to increase participation and return on investment, the Mission Continues model may suggest that a targeted focus on project-based vocational training, aimed at the current community/vocational/ technical college level, may have the potential to do the same for this GI Bill.

³² Organizations such as the Student Veterans of America, and local VFWs and Veterans Councils all have recognized the center, which has also received numerous awards from local politicians and municipal groups.

- 2) Provides a veterans' advocacy-intermediary service between the veteran population and the universities administrative requirements, and the opportunities/resources/medical services at the university, which will assist the veterans in their day-to-day operations while on campus (i.e. enable short-term mobility).
- 3) Works with the SVO to establish connections with industry for job placement pre-graduation, and employment post-graduation (i.e. minimize set-up time through cohort interaction).

Case study evidence of what works well³³

Elements for successful transition program emerge at three levels: the administration; the direct service provision to veterans; the existence of a facility for congregation.

Key elements at the university administration are to: a) ensure the veteran is on track with the VA by the time they start classes for the semester, b) provide effective communication between the university administration and the veteran population, c) are openly engaged/invested in the creation of some type of veterans' entity on campus.

From talking with the veterans and center staff the key actions associated with line services are to: facilitate early registration, serve as a central point of reference, and the presence or availability of a veterans "space." These are key elements of the current roles of universities in the veteran's transition process. Some of the literature out of USC's school of social work is showing that different iterations of "virtual centers" are also effective, at least in connecting vets with 1-stop connections to myriad services/career services (Rutherford, 2009; Blumke, 2011; Hemmerly-Brown, 2011).

A good portion of existing university-based veterans services only benefit veterans while they are on college campuses. Further program quality varies widely. Programs at campuses with large numbers of veterans, varying degrees of college/career readiness services, and low available student service resources are often unable to mount true "transition" programs. The resources are being used to temporarily stabilize the veteran, versus allowing the veteran to invest in their long-term futures in a way that will provide them the abilities to increase their competitiveness in the labor market (GAO, 2012; Schlueter, 2012, 2013; Banko, 2013).

The exemplar program at SDSU effectively mitigates the challenges veterans face entering the workforce by providing a canvas from which their veterans' service programs have industry connections, work-study partnerships and internship positions facilitated through the veterans service offices or housed in specific departments and schools (San Diego State University, website). This provides veterans opportunities to work in industry under the guidance and

³³ Other centers at campuses in North Carolina, Boston, Arizona, Wisconsin and California were also reviewed as part of this study. As it was an assessment of efficacious practices, and not a comparison study, the aim of the presentation of the case study is to highlight a par exemplar model. Of note is that while the case study focuses on the one college campus, many of the interviews and other information about the function of each component were corroborated by veterans' services staff across the sample.

tutelage of industry, while also maintaining a direct connection with the services—including financial aid and medical personnel—offered through the university campus.

Referring back to the components of the Vietnam-era GI Bill where it was suggested that the connections to job-placement and counseling were one component that made it effective at improving the mobility among veterans from the most disparate beginnings, this type of job-placement and long-term mentorship played a critical role in assisting that generation of veterans, and in mitigating the lack of across-the-board employment opportunities WWII veterans enjoyed.

However, congruent with veterans' employment opportunities in general, many of the opportunities these programs are connected to are limited to the defense industry, the DoD and VA. Programs such as the Mission Continues™ are using infrastructural development as a way to engage vulnerable populations of veterans (Mission Continues, 2012). Offering one-year fellowships, where veterans are able to work together on public service projects, while developing network connections in myriad of industries where veterans may be able to find that foothold for a career post-graduation.

It is not clear how or if this same type of interim job training program, scaled up as a robust transition program for all veterans would impact sustainable long-term job growth or employability of veterans; however, it would allow for a longer stability period, which is critical for many veterans to be able to maximize their time in any type of higher education or vocational training. Moreover, a strategic program aimed around local service options could provide a way for transitioning veterans to build ties while providing service to their home communities. Based on best practices of successful integration programs, it might be possible to use this project-based vocational training to provide infrastructural improvements in the localities veterans return to upon release from active duty.

Furthermore, while the DoD-related industries are vastly aware of the skill-set brought by veterans, and have been the only industry to jump-in wholesale at veterans hiring, many larger economic development initiatives completely neglect this population altogether. Using conduits created possibly at Veterans Centers such as the one at SDSU, or through transition programs such as Mission Continues, it is possible for community-based development initiatives to also reach out and benefit from the experience and collective knowledge the veteran community brings with it.

Recommendations: What Would a Model Transition Process Look Like for Today's Student-Veterans?

As the VA and others have noted, aside from the critiques presented in this study, the Post-9/11 GI Bill is currently experiencing many challenges in its initial years of implementation (GAO, 2012; McBain et al., 2012). However, in terms of participation, these challenges are not indicative of any aversion on the part of veterans towards college enrollment; the yearly expenditure on the program topped \$8 billion USD in FY 2011 (VA, 2013). Noting that aside from the current 5-day transition service offered by the DoD, veterans are not afforded any other standard transition programs or services; and even accounting for the 5-day program, they may

not be afforded any transition services in the community they return to. For many student-veterans, this means that the university campus, by default, will become their transition service.

The aforementioned discussion of “Basic Platoon Dynamics” provides a great deal of insight into how a university campus might start thinking about how to address the core processes necessary for a student-veteran to be able maximize his/her time on campus. In the example of the platoon, the military is able to provide the type of security in an individual’s access to basic needs necessary, allowing them to focus their energies towards performing at high capacities with minimal resources—all in order to contribute as a member of the collective.

In terms of instruction of ontological organization, a servicemember is also constantly immersed in an educational environment through which they can learn from other members of their unit how to become dependent on the organizational function of the platoon. And if there are any questions as to day-to-day operations or requirements, or if not otherwise explicitly stated, there are accessible manuals (i.e. Individual Training Standards, Promotion manual and MOS manual) that lay everything out in great detail. Each member of the unit learns to understand and negotiate their environment based on their fellow platoon members, with each individual operating with complete comfort in the levels of security in their access to basic needs.

This means veterans know that they are going to be secure in their access to basic needs for the foreseeable future, and that this internalization of stability becomes a critical component of organizational efficacy. Embedded in the developmental process of an individual’s relationship with institutional spaces, are the aforementioned “rules” demanded of them through their understanding of the nature of trust present in that relationship. In summary, the fundamental question to be asked of university administrative staff is, “the student-veteran operating in an educational environment with this same type of confidence that their basic provisions (GI Bill) will be paid accurately, and on a regular schedule, allowing them to maximize their investment in the overall unit (university) setting?”

My argument is that the internalization of stability in the security of a person’s access to basic needs is a critical component of small unit functions, and that veterans are used to operating under such stability. In the platoon, the rapport has to be developed to minimize set-up time of moving through multiple situations, compartmentalized into different parts of the individual servicemembers’ lives; they are of best use to the unit when they are able to manage their personal lives in ways that are healthy and, by extension, contributing to the unit as well. Embedded in the developmental process of an individual service member’s trajectory through their daily interactions are rules that demand them to operate as part of the unit first. With student veterans’ organizations, university-based or otherwise, this same type of organizational identity is recognized as being a requisite component of service dissemination.

So not as to replicate a rote ordering of specific “best practices,” (Cook & Kim, 2011; McBain et al., 2012) but instead to offer universities the basic conceptualization of what an effective environment for the student veteran would consist of, as far as the institutions purview is concerned, I offer the following: ensure the veteran is enrolled and registered with the VA ***prior to the veteran setting foot in their first class.*** This will ensure that the veteran has reassurance that their access to basic needs is going to be met (addresses income volatility). As will be

covered shortly, many universities who are effective at this do so by allowing veterans to enroll well ahead of the first day of class.

The second critical component is to create an entity whereby any veteran can go and get a direct answer about issues that come up during the daily routine of navigating a college campus (short-term mobility). Veterans are highly capable persons, many of whom have demonstrated the capacity to operate under extreme duress with very little resources. However, the university campus is a new environment, full of new jargon and “hidden curriculums” that take time to adjust to. The best programs are not “handouts” but “hand ups” whereby student veterans are able to learn to use their environment as an asset through which they negotiate their immediate contexts. In the case study presented this environment is created through a hyper-responsive Veterans’ Service Center, available to all student veterans as a “one-stop” resource center, where they are assured they are being given accurate information in as timely a manner as possible.

Last, while some veterans will not want to have anything to do with the military, or veterans’ affiliation upon separation from the service, it is important for universities to support the creation and functions of a unified veteran body. Although there are some campuses that will have fewer veterans than others, within the next decade most major universities will see increases in their veteran population. As such, supporting veterans organizations can be mutually beneficial, as the veterans will benefit from the familiarity and exposure with university processes, and the university will benefit from the myriad potential groups of veterans can bring to the campus (Set-up time). In this chapter I have used the example of the Veterans Center at UC San Diego to demonstrate elements of a transition program deemed successful and of which its parts are being replicated in other universities with large numbers of returning veterans. In the final chapter I summarize program implications, implications for a revised GI Bill, suggestions for economic development practice using the democratic wealth generation framework. I conclude the final chapter with a discussion linking the experiences of veterans exposed to the horrors of war to the lives of children, they too living in compromised circumstances, and in need of transition support programs to ameliorate the effects of broken homes, inadequate opportunities, unsafe environments.

Chapter VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

There were four implications I sought to address during the completion of this research through the answering of one research question: Given the context of today’s Post-9/11-era veteran, what should be the primary perfunctory role of a university in the veterans’ transition process? The results to those inquiries are as follows:

Implications for University Campuses

The first two implications involve universities and college campuses preparing to experience a growth in their veteran population over the next decade as the 3.5 Million OEF/OIF veterans leave active duty. In terms of best practices by universities in assisting the veterans’ transition process, this study supports previous research in acknowledging that each university is going to have a unique set of veterans who are going to have specific interests, values, and intentions as to why they are in school, and are going to arrive on campus with an individualized set of needs,

specific to both the individual's experience in service, and their life prior to serving (Cook & Kim, 2009; GAO, 2011; McBain et al., 2012). Based on the data from this study, where I deviate from this research is in suggesting that regardless of any individualized or departmental-specific requirements, the core functions of any university responsible for the education of student veterans are:

- 1) Ensure veterans' benefits are seamless from semester-to-semester and year-to-year, and that they know how much they are going to get paid, with what frequency, and for how long. In many cases, due to long waits at the VA, or other processing entity, this may mean creating the mechanisms by which veterans can enroll prior to stepping foot in a classroom, just to ensure the proper turnaround time has been accounted for.
- 2) Provide a veterans' advocacy-intermediary service between the veteran population the universities administrative staff and the opportunities/resources at the university which will assist the veterans in their day-to-day operations while on campus. Many of the subtle nuances of the institutional differences between the military and the college campus can provide extreme frustration on the part of the veteran, and if there is no one to translate the ins/outs of exactly what is expected of the veteran, they may get lost in the shuffle.
- 3) Work with the campus veterans in order to establish connections with industry for job placement pre-graduation, and employment post-graduation (i.e. minimize set-up time through cohort interaction). Speaking entirely from personal experience and from the interviews conducted as part of this study, veterans are very loyal, and are pre-exposed to a propensity for service; many are looking for any opportunity to provide just that. Engaging them, and allowing them the space and resources to work together can be mutually beneficial to the university and the veteran.

Regardless of the size of the institution, or the nature of the veteran population, these core functions will enable student veterans to maximize their time and opportunities while on a university campus, acknowledging the fact that under current GI Bill provisions and without a standardized and robust transition program, veterans will arrive at campuses with varying degrees of college readiness.

Implications for the Structure of the GI Bill

Based on data, and on the primary sources from the literature, the upcoming challenges with the current structure of the GI Bill fit into the following typology:

- 1) Income disparity and the variance of economic positions between segments of the US population are much more severe now than during post-WWII.
- 2) The "benefits" of the GI Bill and the economic growth post-WWII associated with the GI Bill were not evenly distributed across racial and ethnic groups. Existing racism and segregation in the US disproportionately affected people of color, including veterans of

color (Onkst, 1998; Turner & Bound 1999, 2002).

- 3) Global economies post-WWII were not competitive (if not completely decimated) with the US in major industries, particularly manufacturing, and the growth of the service sector economy.³⁴ Thus, there was an abundance of jobs at all tiers of labor within the United States.
- 4) The nature of higher education has changed drastically from post-WWII to today. The need for (and contentious debate around) regulation provides a picture of the extreme variation within the higher education sector. This is one of the four critical contextual differences highlighted between the Post 9/11 GI Bill era and that of the GI Bill it was modeled after.
- 5) When veterans came back from WWII, mental health issues notwithstanding, they were able bodied (or they didn't make it back). Due to advances in medical technology, the current proportion of veterans who deploy and are severely wounded but still survive and return is higher than any previous conflict in US history.

Much is already being written and discussed about fraudulent practices by different institutions of higher learning. This is particularly relevant for veterans' benefits, as the regulatory structure once created to mitigate fraud in earlier versions of the GI Bill, has all but been abandoned in this iteration. However, fraud and the challenges with the structure of higher education notwithstanding, there are still other serious issues that policy-makers and scholars should watch closely as we start to see more veterans entering higher education on the GI Bill.

The first is the aforementioned problem with this GI Bill being least beneficial to those who need it the most. Unlike the Montgomery GI Bill, where Officers were forced to pay extra in order to receive the GI Bill (and therefore many chose not to, as they already had their initial degree), the Post 9/11-GI Bill is available at the same levels to Officers and Enlisted servicemembers. While this should not be something held against the Officer Corps (in any way), what we are seeing is that Officers are in the best position to maximize their return on investment of the GI Bill. When taken into account the already existing, and continuously expanding gaps between different racial, ethnic and socioeconomic factors that are determining who has access to higher education, this could very well be a harbinger of the Post-9/11 GI Bill exacerbating existing income inequalities between different segments of the population. Thus, the more likely a veteran is to have experienced trauma while in the military, or prior to their service, the more of a challenge they will have in maximizing the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

As was explained with reference to the Vietnam-era GI Bill, this is not necessarily a show-stopper, as there are inroads into emergent manufacturing and advanced vocational skills through

trade-schools, vocational campuses and community colleges (where the majority of veterans will start their academic careers using the GI Bill).

However, something that policy-makers and scholars should look further into, are the potential for a more robust transition process alleviating veterans from having to use valuable months of their GI Bill just to be able to provide basic needs upon discharge. This type of usage is not within the spirit or intent of the GI Bill, and compromises the veteran's ability to invest their GI Bill into long-term career plans or educational goals.

Implications for Broader Economic Development Strategies

As the GI Bill is essentially a form of a vocational voucher program, with the end goal of workforce development amongst a targeted population, the typology presented is worth mentioning, albeit briefly.

Currently trending in economic development are assumptions about specific industries or approaches to localized economy (i.e. manufacturing, energy, food systems, anchor institution connections etc), many with storied tales of firms in far-off countries or empirical data suggesting that the US economy will “look” this way or that way going forward.

Using the democratic wealth generation typology presented here I would argue that the function of *transferring ownership is central to any initiative aimed at equitable economic development* (Policylink, 2013). This alone is no revelation, yet the mechanisms by which to do so remain elusive. What I offer is that the basic foundations of Income Volatility, Short-term mobility, and Set-up time, are paramount to any specific industry or economic development initiative. Whether veterans or any other targeted group, if the goal is upward mobility, increased services, without the parallel mechanics for the intended population to invest—through ownership—any increased revenue can only be used for simple consumption.

Implications for Children

Since 9/11 we have lost in the area of 5500 servicemembers to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, with an additional ~35,000 wounded (CRS, 2010). Since 1979 we have lost 23 times that number of children killed in the streets of the United States due to violent shootings (Children's Defense Fund, 2012; Nocera, 2013). Furthermore, as has been discussed in this study, much of what determines a veterans successful integration into society is his/her life experiences prior to the military; thus, it could be said that the most effective way to assist veterans in their transition would be to increase support to children's services.

In the field of adolescent psychology, researchers are noting that children who experience traumatic events are much more susceptible to the extreme effects of PTSD than veterans who have experienced combat, (Garbarino et. al, 1992; Garbarino 1995, 1999, 2008; Perry, 2008) and that PTSD is not a single pathology, but unique to each person experiencing it, based on the degree and types of trauma involved (Garbarino 1992, 2008). Furthermore, medicine has recognized that the term “post” in children's PTSD is in fact inaccurate, now diagnosing “Complex-PTSD” to account for the contextual exposure to traumatic environments present in many communities (Duncan-Andrade, 2011). When accounting for the ecological effects of exposure to industrial contaminants (Corburn, 2005 2009), and economic isolation (Massey &

Denton, 1993), melding with the violent-residuals of the “hyperghettoized” effects of communal desolation (Wacquant, 2001; Paperson, 2010), all interacting at different moments across temporal contexts, my argument is that the nature of many of our communities is more commensurate with that of a “war”, than what many of our veterans are experiencing.

Thus, similar to veterans coming home from war, it is plausible that multiple children from any given community arrive at classrooms each day with their own individualized PTSD, for which the educator then becomes the only buffer between extreme social toxicity and a child’s success in school.

It is from this framework that I approach this thesis. In other graduate work (Castañeda, 2012, 2013)³⁵ I note that educators are often forced to mitigate extraneous factors that they may have little or no purview over. The complexities resulting from the type of ultra violence many children experience right up to the moment they enter a classroom are much more severe than just basic shelter and nourishment. Thus, this last section addresses the core arguments in two ways. The first is that, as has been discussed, much of a veteran’s success in transitioning out of the service is largely dependent on their health going into the service. Thus, if there were a large-scale effort to seriously minimize the overall trauma within the veteran population, aside from the proverbial “end of war”, serious attention should be paid to the health and lives of children. While this would not necessarily address the needs of current veterans, it would assist veterans in posterity.

The second is that by gaining a thorough understanding of the difficulties veterans face in transitioning into the workforce via the classroom, we can also infer a great deal as to why many children face similar difficulties. Reading through the sobering details of the ecologies of violence universities and medical health practitioners are scrambling through in order to serve the current veteran populations, I thought often of the effects this same type of hyper-volatility must have on children. In fact, after reading the source documents, and then contrasting my experience with combat with that of many youth in *this country*, I do not get the image of community, but rather am constantly reminded of the horror of war.

In popular discourse, it is not with a suggestion or implication of deviance with which we speak of the need for veterans to go through some type of transition program, the intent of which is to mitigate the horrific experiences of war, in order to better assist them in negotiating public spaces and institutions, post-service. Indeed, this thesis has spent a great deal of space trying to go through what could possibly make an effective transition program, allowing veterans who have experienced trauma the opportunity to negotiate institutions, and to live their lives with beauty and passion. From this research, I conclude that for individuals exposed to or who have witnessed the horror of war, the current mandated 5 days for transition may be insufficient; especially if we are expecting them to negotiate the rigors of academic environments.

Thus, exposure to one institutional form (the military), potentially leading up to a servicemember being exposed to combat environments, can effectively compromise that individual’s ability to efficaciously engage one of the core institutions of a functioning democracy—the university. I

³⁵ Unpublished; completed as part of degree requirements at Stanford University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

leave the reader with this analogy, as aside from the veteran specific case study, this is where the larger theoretic application lays. As with veterans who have been exposed to war, individuals who reside in areas constantly afflicted with violent pathologies associated with poverty also would face the same challenges in negotiating common institutions associated with functioning democratic processes, namely education and the productive elements of economy. And as with veterans, for many, the longer they are exposed to these conditions and having nothing to do with intelligence or intellectual capacity, not only are they going to have to mitigate the physiological effects of such exposure, but their participation in democratic processes will be similarly compromised.

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