

---

Theses and Dissertations

---

2019

**Military veterans in the federal civil service: a qualitative descriptive study using Schlossberg's transition theory and appreciative inquiry to improve reintegration and retention**

Marco Reburiano

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/etd>

---

**Recommended Citation**

Reburiano, Marco, "Military veterans in the federal civil service: a qualitative descriptive study using Schlossberg's transition theory and appreciative inquiry to improve reintegration and retention" (2019). *Theses and Dissertations*. 1089.  
<https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/etd/1089>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Pepperdine Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Pepperdine Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [Katrina.Gallardo@pepperdine.edu](mailto:Katrina.Gallardo@pepperdine.edu), [anna.speth@pepperdine.edu](mailto:anna.speth@pepperdine.edu), [linhgavin.do@pepperdine.edu](mailto:linhgavin.do@pepperdine.edu).

Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

MILITARY VETERANS IN THE FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE: A QUALITATIVE  
DESCRIPTIVE STUDY USING SCHLOSSBERG'S TRANSITION THEORY AND  
APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY TO IMPROVE REINTEGRATION AND RETENTION

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
Of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Marco Reburiano

July, 2019

Paul Sparks, Ph.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Marco Reburiano

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Doctoral Committee:

Paul Sparks, Ph.D., Chairperson

Martine Jago, Ph.D.

Leo Mallette, Ed.D.

© Copyright by Marco Reburiano (2019)

All Rights Reserved

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
DEDICATION.....	ix
VITA.....	x
ABSTRACT.....	xi
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Background.....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Purpose Statement.....	5
Research Questions.....	6
Research Approach.....	7
Significance of the Study.....	9
Delimitations and Limitations.....	9
Assumptions.....	10
Definition of Terms.....	11
Summary.....	12
Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	14
Introduction.....	14
Overview of Veterans' Employment Studies.....	15
Theoretical Background on Transitions.....	17
Schlossberg's Transition Theory.....	21
Self.....	24
Situation.....	28
Support.....	36
Strategies.....	40
Uses of Appreciative Inquiry.....	45
Summary.....	53
Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology.....	56
Introduction.....	56

Re-Statement of Research Questions .....	56
Research Design .....	57
Participant Selection .....	59
Human Subject Consideration .....	61
Data Collection .....	63
Interview Techniques.....	64
Methodology .....	65
Interview Questions .....	67
Reliability and Validity.....	69
Statement of Limitations and Personal Bias .....	70
Data Analysis.....	71
Summary .....	72
 Chapter Four: Results and Findings.....	 73
Introduction.....	73
Participants.....	74
Data Display .....	80
The transition from the military to the federal civil service .....	80
Discovery: Appreciating .....	83
Dream: Envisioning what might be .....	87
Design: Determining the ideal.....	89
Destiny: Creating what will be.....	91
Overview of the Findings .....	94
Summary .....	97
 Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations .....	 98
Introduction.....	98
Summary of the Study.....	98
Summary and Analysis of the Findings .....	101
Major Findings.....	107
Implications .....	109
Recommendations .....	112
Concluding Remarks.....	113
 REFERENCES.....	 115
 APPENDIX A: Recruitment Letter .....	 132
 APPENDIX B: Participant Informed Consent .....	 134

APPENDIX C: Background Information Questionnaire ..... 138

APPENDIX D: Appreciative Interview Questions ..... 139

APPENDIX E: IRB Approval Notice ..... 141

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Demographics and Time in Military Service of Participants.....	78
Table 2. Participating Veterans' time in Service in the Federal Government.....	79
Table 3. Summary of Interview Questions: Discovery .....	86
Table 4. Summary of Interview Questions: Dream.....	89
Table 5. Summary of Interview Questions: Design .....	91
Table 6. Summary of Interview Questions: Destiny.....	94



## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Overview of the literature studies .....	15
Figure 2. The integrative model of the transition process.....	22
Figure 3. The individual transition framework.....	24
Figure 4. Two paradigms for organizational change .....	51
Figure 5. Appreciative Inquiry 4-D model .....	66
Figure 6. Summary of the major themes from the interview process.....	96
Figure 7: Organizational change framework.....	112

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all the men and women who served this country and continue to serve in the federal civil service. Thank you for your dedication to public service.

## VITA

### EDUCATION

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA	2019
Master of Arts in Management University of Redlands, Redlands, CA	2010
Bachelor of Science in Management and Administrative studies Excelsior College, Albany, NY	2008
Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and English San Carlos Seminary College, Cebu, Philippines	1995
Professional Courses:	
Global Business International Studies Institute of Economic and Political Studies Graduate Program University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK	2009
Human Resources Certificate Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY	2014

### EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

#### Federal Civil Service:

Compliance Program Analyst	2014 - Present
Management Analyst	2013 - 2014
HR Assistant	2011 - 2013

#### Military Service:

Personnel Specialist United States Navy	2003 - 2007
--	-------------

#### Corporate Experience:

Sales Reservation Agent Marriott International, Santa Ana, CA	2002 - 2003
Pharmaceutical Sales Novartis Healthcare Philippines	1997 - 2002

## Abstract

Military veterans are facing difficulties when finding jobs after leaving active duty. In November 2009, President Barack Obama signed into effect Executive Order 13518 to establish a hiring initiative to recruit more veterans in the federal government. As a result, the employment opportunities of veterans improved as the number of veterans increased in the federal workforce. However, data from 2008 to 2012 revealed that the number of veterans leaving federal civil service was at the same level as the number of hires (Partnership of Public Service, 2014). According to Rein (2015), veterans who find employment in the federal civil service leave their job within two years of being hired. The reason is connected to a significant number of veterans who are struggling in their transition to their new workplace (Schafer, Swick, Kidder, & Carter, 2016).

This study used Schlossberg's transition theory to assess the transition of veterans from the military. The transition theory is a framework consisting of four factors: Self, Situation, Support, and Strategy. The literature studies about the transition of military veterans are focused mainly on the factors of Self (the identity of veterans), and Situation (the challenges of veterans when transitioning). There is a lack of studies in supporting veterans as well as creating strategies for their retention and integration after obtaining employment.

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to interview military veterans with leadership status in the federal civil service. The aim was to examine and learn from their experience to develop strategies for the retention of newly hired

veterans. Ten military veterans with a leadership position and a minimum of five years of work experience in the federal government participated in the study. Interview questions were derived from the Appreciative Inquiry method.

Results of the data collected revealed that veterans have a profound public service outlook, which is why they joined the federal civil service. Conversely, veterans wanted federal leaders to value and recognize their military experience as well as to support their professional career. Additionally, the participants in this study provided advice to veterans who want to work for the federal government.

## Chapter One: Introduction

This dissertation is a topic of interest for the researcher as a veteran and a federal employee for more than seven years. It is the opinion of the researcher that the recommendations discussed by the participants in this study are not difficult to implement. Although the experience and recommendations from the participants do not represent all veterans, ideas from this research may serve as a basis for gaining a better understanding of veterans' needs, allowing action-oriented ideas to be more precise and targeted specifically to veterans. The researcher believes that it is necessary to retain military veterans not only for their knowledge, skills, experience, and strong work ethic but also due to the sacrifice of their service.

Studies about veterans reported that they have difficulty transitioning after leaving the military because of their unique and challenging experience when they served on active duty. Thus, their retention is critical for their reintegration in civilian life as it renders a broader and comprehensive understanding of their successful transition. In addition, the transition of military veterans should be regarded as a process and not merely a single phase or event when they leave military service. According to Ainspan (2011), employment imparts veterans with meaning in one's life. The veterans in this study find meaning in their employment in the federal government because they have the opportunity to serve again. It is the hope that the recommendations in this study will not only greatly influence and affect the future generation of veterans who want to serve in the federal government after leaving military service, but will also widen the potential for more research opportunities about military veterans to enhance further discussions.

## **Background**

The drawdown of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan caused more than 2.5 million military personnel to leave active duty after serving multiple deployments from Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn (Minnis, 2017). As military members leave active duty to find civilian employment, those who specifically served after the September 11, 2001 event, are facing transition challenges. According to Harrell and Berglass (2012), the unemployment rate of veterans is at a significantly higher level compared to their civilian counterparts. For this reason, President Obama signed in 2009 Executive Order 13518, the Veteran Employment Initiative, to help those who served during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars find employment in the federal government. The initiative directed federal agencies to develop hiring programs for veterans to address their unemployment rate which has reached 22% in 2009 (Harrell & Berglass, 2012). Executive order 13518 (2009) stated:

Veterans have served and sacrificed in the defense of our Nation. When they complete their service, we must do everything in our power to assist them in re-entering civilian life and finding employment. The government, as well as private employers, should play a prominent role in helping veterans who may be struggling to find jobs. As one of the nation's leading employers, the federal government is in need of highly skilled individuals to meet agency-staffing needs and to support mission objectives. Our veterans, who have benefited from training and development during their military service, possess a wide variety of skills and experiences, as well as the motivation for public service that will help fulfill Federal agencies' staffing needs and to support mission objectives. (p. 267)

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) reported that there are more than two million employees in the federal government in 2017. The report also identified the following government agencies having the largest employees: Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice, Department of Air Force, Department of the Army, Department of the Navy, Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Veterans Affairs (OPM, 2018). Job seekers consider federal government employment because of its benefits that include competitive pay, job security (Damp, 2008), stability (Lewis & Frank, 2002), and a generous defined-benefit pension plan which is now uncommon in the private sector (Falk, 2017). These benefits attract veterans as well to work in the federal government than non-veterans (Blank, 1985). Veterans want to have the same work security and stability as the military and can use their military service towards federal retirement if they did not stay long enough for military retirement (Vanderschuere, 2016).

Data from the Office of Personnel Management (2016) revealed that the Federal Government continuously increased the hiring of veterans from 481,223 or 25% of the federal workforce in 2008 to 623,755 or 30% in 2015. The different hiring programs for veterans both in the private and in public sector resulted to the significant decrease of the unemployment rate of veterans at 4.3% in 2016, the lowest since 2007 according to the Department of Labor (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017).

However, in spite of the hiring efforts and the veterans' preference for employment in the federal civil service, veterans are leaving within two years in the job (Rein, 2015). Kopp (2015) affirmed that the retention of veterans in the federal government is worse than non-veterans. The retention rate of newly hired veterans in



2014 was 77% compared to 83% of newly hired non-veterans. In 2015, the retention rate of newly hired veterans was at the same level as the previous year (OPM, 2015).

While veterans leave for different reasons that may involve better pay, higher job responsibility or a better fit, there are a significant number of veterans struggling to integrate into a non-military culture (Schafer, Swick, Kidder, & Carter, 2016). This problem, according to Minnis (2017) stems from the rigidity in the military and the effects of war. The Department of Labor (2008) reported that 16% of veterans employed by the federal government have service-connected disabilities. Apparently, the transition of veterans from active duty does not end when they find employment in the federal government. Veterans also need support in maintaining their employment (Stone C. & Stone L., 2014).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Finding employment for veterans is crucial for their transition and integration in civilian life as it imparts mental, social, and financial well-being (Adler et al., 2011). Employment of veterans is an indicator that their transition is successful and that they have adapted into civilian life (Bullock, Braud, Andrews, & Phillips, 2009; Figley & Southerly, 1980). Unfortunately, veterans continue to struggle after they find employment. The problem is largely on the focus of the transition and hiring of veterans than on their retention and integration after being hired (Schafer et al., 2016).

As the number of veterans in the federal workforce continues to grow, there is also an increase of veterans leaving federal service. Data about federal departures gathered by the Partnership of Public Service (2014) noted that veterans accounted for 30% of all federal employees who left the government from 2008 to 2012. The data also

reported that while there were 39,400 veterans hired from 2008 to 2012, there were also 39,100 veterans who left the federal civil service in that same period.

Although the hiring of veterans may have improved significantly, there are no programs or initiatives in the federal government to integrate and retain veterans. The dismal rate of the retention of veterans significantly affects the federal government and taxpayers as the hiring and training of new employees are tedious and costly (Vanderschuere, 2016). Likewise, Pitts, Marvel, and Fernandez (2011) pointed out that “job turnover creates turmoil and causes disruption in service delivery” (p. 751). Thus, there is a need for substantial research that focuses on those veterans who have been able to obtain employment and learn the skills they used to maintain their employment (Harrod, Miller, Henry, & Zivin, 2017). Exploring the transition of these veterans in the federal service can determine strategies to retain newly hired veterans.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this research study was to explore the experience of those veterans who transitioned successfully into the federal civil service. These veterans have attained a leadership position in a supervisory, managerial, or executive capacity. The goal was to elicit insights and ideas from veteran leaders based on their experience to develop a strategy to retain newly hired veterans in the federal civil service.

The employment of veterans is necessary for their reintegration into society since employment offers them purpose and structure (Harrell & Berglass, 2012). The federal government has succeeded in hiring more veterans in the federal civil service since 2009 but disregarded the data that veterans are also departing in numbers as revealed in the low retention rate. With no empirical studies or data from the government on the

integration and retention of veterans in the federal workforce, the problem continues to grow. Minnis (2017), in a study about veterans' career transition, reported that organizations need a better understanding of what happens to veterans when entering employment. Minnis also suggested that "veterans who have already transitioned and have a successful career can provide critical insight about their preparations and their experience in leaving the military behind" (p.4).

### **Research Questions**

According to Saldana (2011), the statement of purpose brings guidance in formulating the research questions of any study. In other words, the purpose of the study needs to correspond with the research questions. For Creswell (2014), research questions in qualitative research explore the factors surrounding the central phenomena under study, which begins with what or how. Creswell further explains that research questions beginning with why are usually associated with quantitative methods to identify the cause and effect of variables.

In accordance with the purpose of this study, the research questions were the following:

RQ1: What are the reasons military veterans decided to remain in the federal civil service and established their career to become leaders?

RQ2: How can military veterans with a leadership position in the federal civil service support the federal government in developing strategies to integrate and retain newly hired veterans?

## Research Approach

To answer the stated research questions for this study, Appreciative Inquiry was the approach used to develop the interview questions. Appreciative Inquiry was a suitable research approach in this study because the purpose of this study is the development of retention strategies of veterans in the federal civil service by identifying what is working well for veterans who decided to remain employed in the federal government and made it a career. Shuayb, Sharp, Judkins, and Hetherington, (2009) wrote that AI's "main purpose is to introduce and implement change successfully" (p. 14). Elements of AI were used in the interview questions with a positive orientation to explore the perception of participants under study which is the focus of any qualitative study (Saldana, 2011), and during data analysis to uncover the positive factors of the transition of participants from the military to the federal government. The interview questions are detailed in Chapter three.

A study by Reed (2007) defined Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a change process that focuses on positive experiences, or what is working well, rather than the deficiencies in an organization. For Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) AI is "the study and exploration of what gives life to human systems when they function at their best" (p. 1). AI specifically highlights strengths and possibilities through positive inquiry and appreciation which brings more about effective change as opposed to criticism (Lewis, Passmore, & Cantore, 2008)

According to Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003), David Cooperrider developed the method of Appreciative Inquiry when he was a doctorate student at Case Western Reserve University. As David Cooperrider was exploring leadership studies at

Cleveland clinic, he noticed the positive collaboration in the organization when the discussion focused on strengths and positive experiences. With the assistance of his adviser, Suresh Srivastava, David began to study exclusively on what gives life to the organization. The study became a process that involved positive analysis in facilitating change (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008).

To comprehend Appreciative Inquiry better is to explore the meaning of both terms. Cooperrider et al. (2008) defined appreciative as coming from the word *appreciate*, which means:

Ap-pre'ci'ate, v., 1. Valuing; recognize the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems. 2. To increase in value, e.g., the economy has appreciated in value. Synonyms: value, prize, esteem, and honor. (p.1)

The second term, inquiry, stems from the word *inquire* which means:

In-quire' v., to explore and discover. 2. To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities. Synonyms: discover, search, systematically explore, and study. (p.1)

The process of Appreciative Inquiry is based on the 4-D cycle method: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. The four phases bring change in an organization in the direction towards a positive approach by appreciating what gives life to the organization when the organization operates at its best (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). Each cycle of the 4-D model is thoroughly discussed in chapter three

while the use of Appreciative Inquiry in other studies and research are discussed in chapter two.

### **Significance of the Study**

With combat operations ending in Iraq and Afghanistan, a significant number of service members are leaving active duty to pursue careers in the civilian sector. Because of the high unemployment of veterans, President Obama in 2009 directed the federal government to expedite the hiring of veterans in the federal government. In spite of the unemployment rate improving due to the surge of the hiring of veterans in the federal civil service, veterans are also leaving their jobs in numbers within the first two years of being hired (Kopp, 2015).

This research study contributes to the study of military veterans transitioning into the federal civil service. In a survey of literature reviews conducted by Robertson, Miles, and Mallen (2014) from 2000 to 2013, they found that the majority of research about veterans significantly focused on three issues: challenges of student veterans, the mental and medical health issues of veterans, and veterans' career transitions. Studies on the success of retaining veterans after obtaining employment are minimal including the retention of veterans in the federal civil service. There is more research conducted on the transition challenges of veterans when they leave active duty.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

Delimitations and limitations are boundaries associated with any research study (Sampson, 2012). The purpose of these boundaries is to narrow the scope of the research (Roberts, 2010). To distinguish between the two terms, Mauch and Birch

(1993) stated that “a limitation is a factor that may or will affect the study in an important way but is not under the control of the researcher; a delimitation differs principally, in that it is controlled by the researcher” (p. 103).

**Delimitations.** There were two delimitations identified which refers to the population of the study. First, the participants of this study consisted specifically of military veterans who decided to work for the federal government and have at least five years or more of job experience in the federal civil service. Second, veterans in this study have attained a leadership position. The position varied from supervisory, managerial, to executive capacity.

**Limitations.** Limitations of this study included the scarcity of literature on the transition and retention of veterans in the federal civil service. Another limitation was the focus of this research, which applied only to military veterans who volunteered to participate in this study. Hence, there was the possibility that they may have inflated their experience by sharing only what the researcher wanted to know, or they may have withheld some information by not telling the truth. As the study progressed, a new limitation was uncovered: the government shutdown, which happened on December 23, 2018. The shutdown, due to a federal budget impasse, was a factor that was beyond the researcher’s control.

### **Assumptions**

This study assumed that the participants were cooperative and truthful in the interview process. Also, the responses received from the participants were solely based on their experience and professional opinions. Since the interview process was

conducted through the Appreciative Inquiry method, it is assumed that the results of the interview questions were reliable.

## **Definition of Terms**

The following are key terms associated with this research:

**Veteran.** Veterans Benefits of Title 38 in the United States Code (2006) defines a veteran as “a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable” (p. 12). The discharge from active duty could either be honorable, medical or general discharge.

**Post-9/11 Veterans.** Refers to service members who served after the events of September 11, 2001, and were deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan for Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (Robertson, Miles, & Mallen, 2014).

**Federal Civil Service.** Refers to civilian employment in the federal executive branch where “regulations are promulgated under congressional authority by the Office of Personnel Management” (Grandjean, 1981, p. 1063).

**Appreciative Inquiry.** Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) defined Appreciative Inquiry or AI as “a research perspective that is uniquely intended for discovering, understanding, and fostering innovations in social-organizational arrangements and processes” (p. 151).

**Transition.** Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) considered transition as a “life event entailing change” (p. 22). This change for veterans is a stressful major turning point in life.



**Retention.** The specific measures developed by an employing organization to keep employees in order to fulfill organizational objectives (Frank, Finnegan, & Taylor, 2004).

**Reintegration.** The result of a process when veterans return from deployment and assume their role in the family, community, and workforce (Elnitsky, Blevins, Fisher, & Magruder, 2017). In a study about veterans' community reintegration, Resnik et al. (2012) further defined reintegration of veterans as an "engagement in diverse aspects of role functioning as an independent, autonomous person; family member; friend; spouse; parent; civic and community member; student; and member of the workforce" (p. 89).

## **Summary**

This chapter discussed the background information of post 9/11 military veterans who needed to find employment after leaving active duty. The significant increase in the unemployment rate of veterans compelled the federal government to initiate hiring programs exclusively for veterans to solve the crisis. However, just as many veterans were entering federal civil service, there were also a number of them leaving. The number of departures greatly affected the turnover rate of veterans compared to non-veterans. Due to the limited research on the retention of veterans in the workplace, particularly in the federal government, there is a need to address this issue to improve the retention of veterans in the federal civil service.

Furthermore, this chapter presented the research questions that guided this study along with a description of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) since this study used AI's 4D method as a research approach to develop the interview questions. Also discussed were the delimitations and limitations of this study along with the assumptions. Overall,

this study produced specific knowledge in the transition and retention of military veterans in the workforce, particularly in the public sector.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

Chapter two is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the overview of studies regarding the employment and retention of veterans in the federal government as well as the different research studies conducted about veterans in the public sector. The second section focuses on the theoretical background regarding the concept of transition since the employment of veterans involves a transition period. The objective of this section is to explore and understand the transition of veterans when they leave the military to find employment. Schlossberg's transition theory is thoroughly discussed in this section as it is used as a framework to evaluate the challenges and resources of veterans when coping with their transition that affects their employment. The theory describes the four factors that influence an individual's ability to cope with change during the transition process: Self, Situation, Support, and Strategies. All studies about veterans are categorized in this transition model to understand the challenges in their transition and to identify the factors that needed consideration during their transition process when entering federal employment. The third section of this chapter is about Appreciative Inquiry specifically regarding its uses in other studies as well as its effectiveness and concerns from other scholars who used AI in their studies. The section also includes the historical background and the principles and assumptions associated with Appreciative Inquiry. Figure 1 is an overview of this chapter.

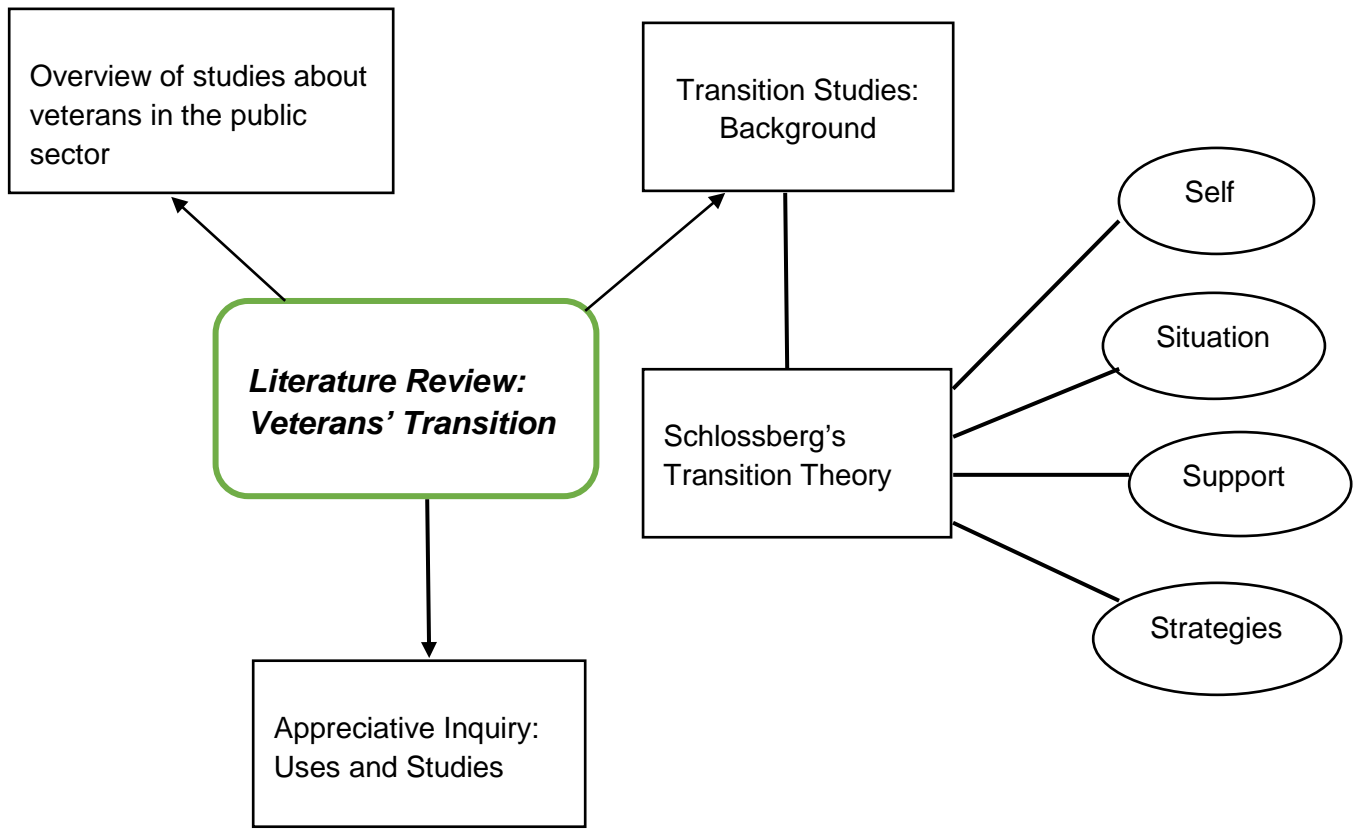


Figure 1. Overview of the literature studies.

### Overview of Veterans' Employment Studies

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive research was to examine strategies to retain veterans in the federal government through Appreciative Inquiry. The aim was to explore the experience of veterans who have made a successful career transition into federal civil service. A search on veterans' employment in the federal service returned minimal results. Studies about veterans, specifically post-9/11 veterans, were more focused on (a) mental and health issues, (b) the transition challenges in finding employment, and (c) transition issues in higher education. One empirical study about veterans in the federal government was conducted by

Lacey (2013), which was the understanding of the work engagement of veterans working in the federal civil service, which can affect productivity, motivation, and retention, using qualitative methods. Five themes emerged from the research that Lacey identified. The themes were: (a) the mission of their job, (b) the significance of their tasks, (c) their status as a veteran, (d) their supervisors and managers, (e) and developmental opportunities. The study, however, did not examine a causal relationship between the five themes that affected work engagement and the retention of veterans in the federal government.

Another empirical study about veterans was a study on turnover intention in the federal government. Through analysis of data and semi-structured interview of a certain number of veterans, Vanderschuere (2016) found that veterans have a higher intention to leave their current organization than nonveterans. The results of the semi-structured interview found that veterans were expressing to leave because a frequent change in job location was a routine in the military. The study offered insights about retention veterans, but it was limited only to the intention of veterans wanting to leave federal civil service. It did not include veterans who left the federal government.

A similar study about veterans in the public sector was conducted by Eldred (2000). The population of the study was specifically targeted to retired Navy officers working for a local government as city employees. The objective of the study was to explore the relevance of leadership traits of veterans learned in the military to their current organization. However, the study did not specify if the leadership traits of veterans interviewed have any effect on their retention.

As these studies suggest, there is a gap in the literature on the retention of veterans in the public sector, particularly the federal civil service. Before developing research on the retention of veterans, it is essential to recognize the challenges in their transition from the military to civilian life. After reviewing studies about the transition of veterans, an examination of transition theory rendered a better understanding of the experience of military veterans who left active duty. Thus, this literature review encompasses studies about veterans' transitions through the lens of Schlossberg's transition theory.

### **Theoretical Background on Transitions**

Studies about transitions reveal that transition is a part of life which involves a change in between periods of stability (Hudson,1991). Every person experiences transition anytime during the person's lifetime. Any transition can be stressful and at the same time transformational, depending on how a person manages it (Merriam, 2005). Holmes and Rahe (1967) who studied significant life events conducted the earliest research about transitions. The objective of their study was to find a relationship between life events and good health. They created a list of 43 life events and asked 394 respondents to rate each life event based on the duration of the readjustment period. The results of the study showed that the death of a spouse was at the top of the scale followed by divorce. Dohrenwend, Askenasy, Krasnoff, and Dohrenwend (1978), challenged the study because the rating was ambiguous and that the sample population was questionable. Dohrenwend et al. then developed a new method called the Psychiatric Epidemiology Research Interview or PERI life events scale which expanded the 43 life events to 102 and included positive events as well as an "improved measure

of stressful life events” (p. 228). Levinson (1977) objected to the number of life events and created a new model where life events were clustered into life cycles based on his study of 40 men ages 35 to 40. According to Levinson, these cycles were developmental transitions between years of stability and transition. :

Pre-adulthood period: Age 0 to 22

Early Adulthood period: Age 17 to 45

Middle Adulthood period: Age 40 to 65

Late adulthood period: Age 60 to 85

Late late Adulthood period: Age 80 and above (p. 102)

For Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the growing interest of adult transitions was nothing more than stress, coping, and adaptation. Their focus was the relationship between the nature of environmental factors that affected stress and the characteristics of the person. Lazarus and Folkman wrote:

Although certain environments, demands, and pressures produce stress in a substantial number of people, individual and group differences in the degree and kind of reaction are always evident. People and groups differ in their sensitivity and vulnerability to certain types of events, as well as their interpretations and reactions. Under comparable conditions, for example, one person responds with anger, another with depression, yet another with anxiety or guilt; and still others feel challenged rather than threatened. Likewise, one individual uses denial to cope with terminal illness whereas another anxiously ruminates about the problem or is depressed. (pp. 22-23)

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) developed the concept of Cognitive Appraisal process. Accordingly, there are three kinds of cognitive appraisal which are cyclical: primary, secondary, and reappraisal. In primary appraisal, an individual's approach to transition whether it is positive, irrelevant or stressful is examined. A good example would be military service members leaving active duty. It may signify the end of deployments for some as it is nothing more than going back home to be with family, while for others, it is about challenges ahead especially in finding new employment.

In secondary appraisal, it involves an individual's options for creating strategies to cope with transitions. It highlights an intellectual exercise to evaluate outcomes of managing the challenges of transition. For example, veterans who recently left the military might consider attending training on how to create a civilian resume to assuage the stress in applying for a new job.

Finally, reappraisals are modified appraisals because of new information leading to a new course of action. For example, when a military service member intends to retire but reconsiders the plan due to the economic situation of the country, the service member then evaluates the decision through reappraisal. Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) stated that reappraisals are common for people making transitions.

As transitions are part of changing life structures that occur multiple times throughout one's life (Basseches, 1984; Levinson, 1978), Super (1957) organized the transitions of life structures based on four development career stages. These stages are trial, establishment, maintenance, and decline. Contrary to life transitions based on chronological age, these career stages are flexible depending on a person's circumstances. Thus, a person can be at any stage and can repeat the cycle when



there are significant changes such as job promotion (Ornstein, Cron, & Slocum Jr., 1989).

The trial stage according to Super (1957) is a chaotic stage because it is where an individual is exploring one job to another in a random manner to find a field that is interesting and suitable. For Ornstein et al. (1989), the trial stage is filled with uncertainty as people are trying to find a career. Employees in this stage are willing to leave their jobs to pursue a more exciting opportunity. After the trial period, the establishment stage follows where it is not only about growth but also about advancement and stabilization (Ornstein et al., 1989). Mobility from one job to another still happens, but it is because of a person's interest to advance in the chosen field. Super (1957) specified an example of a hotel employee who moved to another hotel to obtain a higher position or a young lawyer who decided to leave his job so he can have a law firm of his own. Establishment stage not only can refer to career stability but also stability in one's personal life.

After a successful establishment in the desired occupation, which brings security and stability, a person then enters the maintenance stage. In this stage, the individual is holding on to stability through achievements and accomplishments. Super (1957) describes this stage as the stage where one feels fulfillment and satisfaction because of the accomplishments at work and being able to attend to family needs as well as being involved in the community. As a person continues to be in the maintenance phase, the person then enters into the decline stage or the period of adjustment to a new self. According to Super, significant changes happen in this stage to either a less demanding

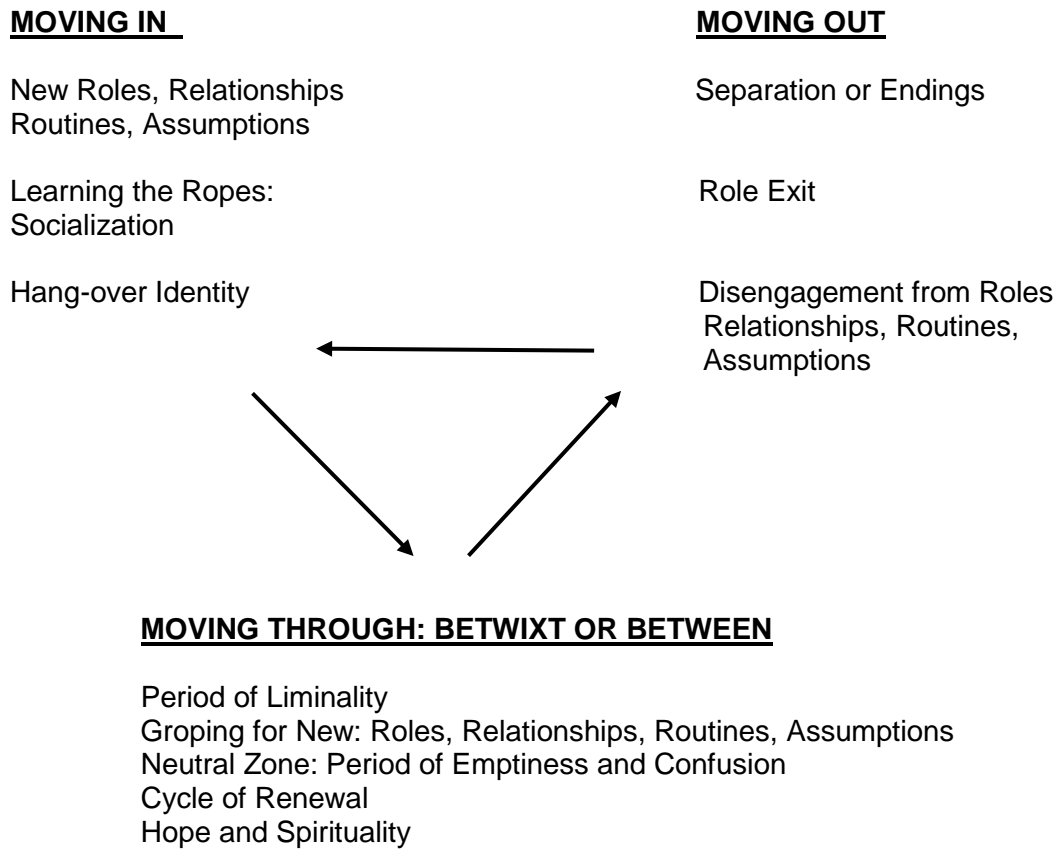
job or self-employment. These changes also affect a person's self-concept and way of life.

Another concept of transition comes from Bridges (1980) who wrote that transition is a cycle that begins during the separation from an old role, routine or relationships, to a period of adjustment called the neutral zone. The cycle ends with the final phase called the beginnings. Similarly, Ebaugh (1988) referred transitions as a change of identity from a previous role to reestablish a new one that begins with doubt and takes time until a new identity is established but still takes into account one's past identity. Raskin (2002), however, proposed for more research on identity formation in adult development to better comprehend adult identity.

### **Schlossberg's Transition Theory**

Researchers about transitions view transitions as a process that adults regularly experience and part of human development and growth. The process is both challenging and complicated. An individual's reaction to cope with any transition can result in either resolution or despair. Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) developed an integrated model of transitions based on previous studies. They contended that transitions involve either a moving in or a moving out. In between these moving in and moving out process, an individual experiences a moving through or a learning process similar to what Bridges (1980) called the Neutral Zone. For example, a veteran who finds employment after military service will need to learn the rules, regulations, and expectations of the new organization. Once situated, the veteran undergoes a moving through process that leads to confusion and self-doubt about organizational commitment. The moving out is considered an ending of the transition

and moving on to take a new role. As illustrated in figure 2, this transition process is the integrative transition model:



*Figure 2.* The integrative model of the transition process. From *Counseling adults in transition: Linking practice with theory* (p. 50), by J. Goodman, N. K. Schlossberg & M. K. Anderson. New York: Springer publishing. Copyright 2006. Reprinted with permission.

The transition process is better understood by identifying the types of transition. Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) stated that there are three types of transitions: anticipated, unanticipated, or a non-event. In an anticipated transition, the event is an expected outcome such as the birth of a child, or retirement from a job. For veterans, an anticipated event may refer to the end of the service contract with the military. However, not all transitions can be called anticipated. A transition can also be unanticipated: events that are not expected to happen such as a divorce,

unemployment due to being fired, or sudden death of a loved one. Some veterans experienced this type of transition especially when they received discharged orders from the military after findings of a medical examination. In a non-event transition, there is an expected event but did not happen. A good example would be an expected promotion but did not occur or when military service members were preparing to go back home after several months of deployment but were extended due to government needs.

For Brammer and Abrego (1981), Fiske and Chirigoba (1990), and Lent and Brown (2013), any transition that happens, whether anticipated, unanticipated or non-event, the successful outcome depends mainly on the person's ability to cope with the stress associated with the transition. Conversely, Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) reported that based on their study, coping is a dynamic process involving a complex relationship between a person and the environment. From these concepts, Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) developed the factors that affect an individual's ability to manage the challenges of transition. These factors are specific assets and resources formed together to determine one's ability to cope: Self, Situation, Support, and Strategies. Goodman et al. called the four factors as the 4S, which served as the model for Schlossberg's transition theory. Schlossberg's transition theory is used mostly for counseling. In this study, the model serves as a framework to assess the resources and challenges of veterans when they transition from the military. Related literature studies about military transitions were reviewed and categorized based on these four factors. This transition theory is vital in exploring and understanding the transition challenges of military veterans. Figure 3 is an overview of the transition model.

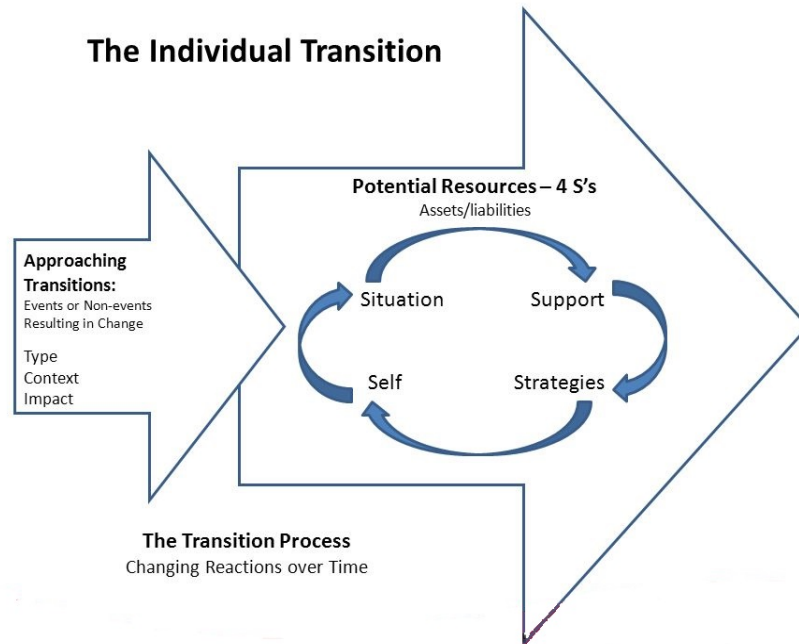


Figure 3. The individual transition framework. From *Counseling adults in transition: Linking practice with theory* (p. 33), by J. Goodman, N. K. Schlossberg & M. K. Anderson. New York: Springer publishing. Copyright 2006. Reprinted with permission.

## Self

Veterans entering federal civil service represent a unique identity with shared experience in comparison to other federal employees (Vandershuere, 2016). The study of Self, according to Goodman et al. (2006), refers to the different characteristics of an individual which include demographic and personal characteristics, gender, age, health, socioeconomic status, stage of life, ethnicity/culture, and psychological resources. These factors present a better understanding of veterans' identity that leads to their transition challenges (Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Wheeler, 2012).

Experiences shape a person's identity and the ability to cope with transition periods (Goodman et al., 2006). Military veterans share a common experience that began during basic training or boot camp. The military considers boot camp a rigid process where recruits are subjected to physical training and learn about military norms,

terminologies, customs, traditions, the importance of teamwork, and the values of duty, honor, and country. Recruits learn to follow military standards from the folding of clothes, grooming, proper wearing of the uniform, saluting, and even the making of their bed. They also learn about discipline and following orders from their chain of command which is necessary in the military to function as a cohesive and collective force during times of crises (Redmond et al., 2015). The purpose of boot camp is to replace the civilian personality of individuality to a new military identity of uniformity (Demers, 2011; Jackson, Thoemmes, Jonkmann, Ludtke, & Trautwein, 2012). After surviving basic training, service members become part of the military culture and take on their new identity, depending on their military branch. The Army calls them soldiers, the Navy calls them sailors or marines, and the Air Force calls them airmen. Their own identity is also replaced with their rank in the military hierarchy, as they are no longer called by their first names but are addressed by their rank. Daley (1999) believed that image in the military is crucial. Part of this image is the wearing of military uniform which represents belonging to an organization that is traditionally committed to sacrifice and excellence. That is why uniforms must be crisp and in order, so they can be worn with pride. Uniforms in the military are always worn when on duty and depending on the occasion.

The intent of the military in recruiting young men and women is to develop healthy abled bodies and a warrior spirit mindset so that they become mission-ready for combat anytime there is a direct order that calls for it. (Demers, 2011; Dunivin, 1994). The mission of the military is to protect the nation and its interest. Article 1 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Armed Forces clearly states, "I am an American, fighting in the forces which guard my country and way of life. I am prepared to give my life in

their defense” (Cutler, 2002, p. 99). The mission and the unit in which they belong are the two most important components of every service member (Hall, 2011). As part of the organization, they are called to selfless service while in the military. The Navy has, for example, established a standard in accomplishing its mission: ship, shipmates, self. This standard calls for every sailor to always adhere to the ship’s mission first, second to shipmates, then to self (Kelly, 2014).

Being part of the military is an occupation that requires being on duty at all times for 24 hours, and all through the year while active duty (Daley, 1999). Working hours and shifts vary, and duty locations can change anytime within short notice (Soeters, Winslow, & Weibull, 2006). Daley (1999) wrote that accountability in the military is highly crucial whether on duty or when on leave. Any infractions even outside duty area or when on vacation, such as a drunk driving incident, is punitive by military policy. Personal issues including financial negligence or domestic violence merit military involvement for corrective action.

Another characteristic of the military is its culture of mobility and exclusivity. Service members and their families frequently relocate depending on the needs of the military. Despite the frequent relocation, there is always an assurance that basic needs of military personnel and their family are being taken cared of wherever the mission brings them for every military base has housing, grocery stores, department stores, hospital, post office, elementary and secondary schools, and recreational facilities (Daley, 1999). These establishments are exclusive only to military personnel and their families. This exclusivity implies that the military world is isolated and alienated from the

civilian way of life (Hall, 2011). Wertsch (1991) compared military society similar to living in a fortress.

The Department of Defense in 2012 reported that there was an increase in enlistment after the September 11, 2011 terrorist attacks on the United States. Caldwell and Burke (2013) reported that most of those who joined were young men and women in their 20's. They were placed in leadership positions with immense responsibilities and authority while serving missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Because of the military's emphasis on mission accomplishment, these young men and women experienced multiple deployments and multiple relocations depending on where the mission took them. This way of life placed a strain on their families due to frequent separations (Clemens & Milsom, 2008; Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003; Hall, 2011).

All these studies about the identity of veterans suggest that they have an attachment to their organizational identity because of their experience and acclimation of the military culture. Schein (2010) suggested that to understand people and the aspects that define them is to understand their culture. Throughout the veterans' time of service while on active duty, they become part of the military organization that influenced their life. When service members leave active duty, their military experience and identity still have a long-lasting effect on them even when they enter the labor market (Jackson et al., 2012). They still prefer consistency and uniformity (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000), the warrior spirit mentality, the rigidity, the conformity, and the camaraderie (Hall, 2011). Consequently, a downside of this mindset is the difficulty in expressing one's feelings of fear and the need to ask for help or request for assistance (Wertsch, 1991). Research suggests that when veterans are holding onto



their military identity, it creates a lack of fit with their new work environment that causes anxiety (French, Caplan, & Van Harrison, 1982).

## **Situation**

Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006), described Situation as the trigger that sets off the transition involving the timing of the situation; the role change or the change of responsibilities and duties; the duration whether it is temporary or permanent; similar experiences; concurrent stresses that the individual is facing; and assessment of the situation whether it is positive or negative. Situation can also mean an individual's sense of control (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renk, 2010).

Job seekers generally consider pay, job security, career advancement, challenging work, and the work environment to be the most important aspects when applying for a job (Kilpatrick, Cummings, & Jennings, 1964). Lewis and Frank (2002) conducted a study using the General Social Survey (GSS) to ask participants whether they would consider a job in a private organization or the government. They also requested a set of questions to rate the importance of pay, job security, career advancement, working hours, and other job attributes. Lewis and Frank found that job security has the highest concern among the respondents and more likely to want to work for the government. The study claimed that veterans have a high preference to work for the federal government than nonveterans since the federal government offers job security and competitive pay that is similar to the military. Employment in the federal government also means that veterans can serve again in a different capacity.

The federal government has a pay system that is different from the private sector. Federal pay is based on two major pay systems: the General Schedule (GS)

system plan and the Wage system (WG) rate. Majority of the federal employees belong to the GS pay plan since most of them are white-collar employees classified in the clerical, administrative, technical and professional occupations. The GS pay system establishes wages for federal employees. It consists of fifteen grade levels with ten pay steps within each grade level. Each grade level depends on the qualifications and responsibilities of the position. Congress and the President decide on the pay increase of federal employees every year. Employees receive pay raise when promoted to a higher pay grade or within-grade increase. In general, employees receive noncompetitive promotion up to their full performance grade level. After that, they compete for promotion. Otherwise, they receive a within-grade increase once a year from step one to four, every other year from step four to seven, and every three years from step seven to ten. Although pay grade increases require a fully successful performance and within-grade step increase a satisfactory performance, most employees usually receive them (Oh & Lewis, 2013).

A study by Asch (2001) was conducted to examine the relationship between pay, performance, and promotion with the retention of federal employees. Asch used data from the Department of Defense involving 19,000 of its employees. The study found that federal employees stayed longer when they receive better performance rating because they are promoted faster and paid more. However, the results were different for employees with higher education. Lewis (1986), in his study on the impact of gender and promotion in the federal government, agreed that education has a small effect on promotion probabilities. The chances of promotion are better at the lower grade level than at the higher grade positions. Most federal employees are promoted in their first

and second year of federal employment, and their salary increases almost ten percent after the first year of work (Oh & Lewis, 2013).

In spite of all the studies about job security, competitive pay, promotion, and other employment benefits in the federal civil service, Rein (2015) reported that veterans are still leaving within two years in the job. A study conducted by Ahern et al. (2017) claimed that when veterans join the federal government for employment, they bring with them their military identity, culture, and unique experience which have a significant influence on their transition to their new job. Veterans have always considered the military as their family. For the majority of veterans, the military has been their first job since graduating from high school. They may never have looked or applied for any other position except the military, which means that they do not have any knowledge about the civilian work environment. Hazle, Wilcox, and Hassan (2012) stated that the military has its own culture that promotes unity and collaboration as opposed to the individualistic and competitive environment in the outside world. As previously stated, military personnel are focused on their mission. They do not leave their job unless they have accomplished their mission. In their new workplace, they find that civilians do not work past 5 pm whether their task was completed or not. Because veterans are not familiar with the civilian environment, they feel uncomfortable when trying to integrate into their new life (Anderson & Goodman, 2014). Hence, veterans are struggling when leaving their familiar role and adjusting to their new workplace.

A study conducted by Orazem et al. (2016) involving more than 400 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan found that these veterans had difficulty when leaving their military identity where they spent most of their adult life. The veterans feel they do not belong in

civilian life and still prefer the military culture and the structured lifestyle where their leaders are also their mentors who always find time to take care of them. An article by Moore (2014) stated that veterans are feeling disengaged in the federal civil service due to transition issues. Veterans feel that supervisors and managers are not taking care of their subordinates, but are taking care of themselves for self-promotion unlike in the military where leaders look out for their troops.

Veterans also feel isolated and disconnected in trying to relate with their co-workers who do not share the same experience with them (Redmond et al., 2015). Kraimer, Shaffer, Harrison, and Ren (2012) called the conflict between a veteran's former identity and as a new employee in the civilian workplace an *identity strain*. Stern (2017) supported this concept when conducting a review of the literature to examine the career transition of post-9/11 veterans. Stern found that veterans are indeed experiencing career identity conflict. Another study by Demers (2011) about veteran reintegration found that veterans feel disoriented in their new environment and a lack of respect from their civilian peers. Veterans were in leadership positions while serving in the military but are relegated to regular jobs in their new employment because hiring managers do not understand the leadership skills veterans can bring to the workplace. This mismatch of skills can lead to underemployment and consequently a high turnover (Caldwell & Burke, 2013).

Moreover, veterans find meaning and purpose on their mission and responsibility in the military that cannot be found in the civilian workplace (Orazem et al., 2016). Simpson and Armstrong (2010) wrote that veterans experience culture shock when comparing civilian jobs to their military experience. With less authority and fewer

responsibilities that require urgency outside the military, many veterans question their self-esteem and self-worth, including veterans working in the federal civil service (Davis & Minnis, 2016). In an article in Washington Post about veterans and federal jobs, Rein and Wax-Thibodeaux (2015) reported that veterans working in a federal office desk job could be a bad fit for them along with the feeling of frustration with the bureaucracy and career advancement which is based mainly on tenure rather than on merit. Davis and Minnis (2016) found that there veterans who are frustrated with the lack of a defined career path in their new organization unlike in the military and are reluctant to approach senior leaders because it is not permitted in the military environment.

Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964) noted that transition involving role change could be stressful. As a result, there is a desire to return to the previous role to preserve the past. Gonzalez (2016) argued that because veterans are still holding on to their military identity, their transition becomes difficult unless they reformulate their identity in their new environment.

Another situation that veterans find a challenge in their transition from the military is their mental and physical health. The U.S. Census Bureau (2011) reported that in 2009, there are more than five million veterans in the workforce with a diagnosed disability, and can even be higher by considering under or undiagnosed disabilities. An important aspect of the military is the deployment of service personnel overseas when needed to support combat operations (Redmond et al., 2015). The Institute of Medicine of the National Academies (2010) noted that those who served after 9/11 were deployed multiple times to meet the demands of conflict in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The report also stated that “exposure to combat, other war-zone stressors, or even deployment

itself can have immediate and long-term physical, psychological, and other adverse consequences” (pp. 3-4). Many veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are coming back with emotional, physical and psychological issues (Seth & Buzzetta, 2014). These mental health issues are commonly called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), which are caused by the exposure to a terrifying event or grave physical harm experienced in combat (Collins et al., 2014). The number of those who are diagnosed with PTSD and TBI are significant that these mental health issues have become known as the *signature disabilities* of veterans coming home from Iraq or Afghanistan (Burke, Degeneffe, & Olney, 2009). Unlike physical injuries, PTSD and TBI are unnoticeable that they are called the invisible wounds of war (Tanielan & Jaycox, 2008). A study conducted by Hoge, Auchterlonie, and Milliken (2006) involving more than 300,000 soldiers and Marines found that 19% of those returning from Iraq and 11% of those returning from Afghanistan have mental health issues. Another study of veterans who have been seen at the Veterans’ Affairs health care system after September 11, 2001, found that veterans who were deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan and between 18 to 24 years of age are more at risk for PTSD and TBI than those who are 40 years or older (Seal, Bertenthal, Miner, Sen, & Marmar, 2007). Aside from PTSD and TBI, veterans of post 9/11 also experience depression that can lead to suicide (Kelty, Kleycamp & Segal, 2010).

However, not all veterans who were deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan are diagnosed with PTSD and TBI. Some of them have physical injuries such as fractures or physical pain that may have a lasting effect (Sayer, Carlson, & Frazier, 2014). Other veterans have underdiagnosed disabilities after gaining employment (Rudstam, Gower,

& Cook, 2012) while some veterans consider psychological treatment as a weakness (Reger, Etherage, Reger, & Gahm, 2008). In a study of more than 6,000 veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan found that many of them are concerned about being judged by their peers that they avoided mental health services (Hoge, Auchterlonie, Milliken, 2006).

Studies have shown that veterans who experienced combat have difficulties adjusting to civilian life (Morin, 2011; Sayer, Carlson, & Frazier, 2014), which lead to depression and substance abuse (Ramchand, Schell, Jaycox, Tanielian, 2011). Veterans with mental health issues specifically PTSD and TBI have problems obtaining meaningful jobs (Seal, Bertenthal, Miner, Sen, & Marmar, 2007; Seth & Buzzetta, 2014). For veterans who are able to secure employment, studies have shown that their mental health status has a significant negative impact in their performance and productivity at work (Adler et al., 2011; Sayer et al., 2010). For this reason, it creates a barrier towards a successful career (Bullock, Braud, Andrews, & Phillips, 2009).

**Women Veterans.** An underserved group of people in the military service is the recognition of women veterans. The lack of recognition of women veterans is mainly because the current career programs and policies have the general assumption that veterans are men (Greet, 2017). According to Foster and Vince (2009), women veterans are not receiving the same respect and recognition as their male counterparts. They added that women veterans are now considered the fastest growing population of veterans who need attention and support after the elderly veterans. Women veterans actually have a higher risk of physical ailments such as back and muscular issues because of their equipment that is designed for men, and a higher risk for gender

discrimination, sexual harassment, and post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD). While they may not have direct combat experience, many of them were exposed to hazardous environments and indirect hostile threats, leading to symptoms of PTSD and depression similar to male veterans (Alfari et al., 2015). According to Street, Kimerling, Bell, & Pavao (2011), the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault of women is unfortunately not extensively studied

As women veterans struggle with their transition to civilian life, they do not show any indication of mental or health issues (Baechtold & Sawal, 2009). The reason is that women veterans hardly need the time to adjust after leaving the military because they have to fulfill their domestic responsibilities as mothers, wives, partners, caregivers, or workers (Foster & Vince, 2009). As a result, women veterans deal with loneliness and the feeling of being left out which are their common transition issues (Skinner et al., 2000). Foster and Vince (2009) also reported that most women veterans are experiencing depression and that they continue to struggle in their adjustment to civilian life even when they have successfully found employment.

In summary of this section, it is necessary to understand the situation of both men and women veterans when considering their transition from the military to obtain employment in the federal civil service. The overwhelming change of identity resulting to inability to adapt to the new work environment and the injuries veterans have sustained mentally and physically have a compelling effect on their transition and reintegration in the civilian life (Ostovary & Dapprich, 2011). These issues are imperceptible and unknown to employers when veterans enter the civilian workforce.



## **Support**

The type of support that veterans receive when they leave the military is crucial to the success of their transition. Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) stated that social support is necessary for handling transitions. The support can come from relationships such as family, friends, organizations, and communities. Veterans need these types of social support specifically from coworkers and employers where they feel not only a sense of belonging but also moral support in accomplishing their job (Vogt, Dutra, Reardon, Zisseron, & Miller, 2011).

Military veterans receive many types of support when they leave active duty. Before service members transition to the civilian life, the military is required to provide pre-separation assistance at least 90 days from separation by requiring them to attend a workshop called Transition Assistance Program or TAP class (Clemens & Milsom, 2008). The Department of Defense, the Veterans Affairs and the Department of Labor administer the program that includes job counseling, employment opportunities, job search skills, skill assessment, financial planning, resume writing, and job interview skills (Foster & Vince, 2009). The purpose of the program is for service members to have a successful transition when leaving the military and be able to reintegrate into civilian life. The program, however, is criticized for its limited effect mainly because it is only about assisting service members in finding their first job after leaving the military (Anderson & Goodman, 2014). There is also insufficient empirical data to support the effectiveness of the program and does not address transition issues when adapting to a new work environment that has its own organizational culture (Bascetta, 2002).

In support of the military for its transitioning personnel, private organizations or Fortune 500 companies are actively recruiting recently separated veterans. Incentives in the form of tax credit were given to private companies who hired veterans through the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act (VOW) and Hire Heroes Act (Harrell & Berglass, 2012). Home Depot, for example, has an active recruiting campaign (Operation Career Front) that resulted in the hiring of 26,000 veterans (Ruh, Spicer, Vaughan, & Rockville, 2009). Acknowledging the difficulty of military personnel finding employment when leaving active duty, the military likewise has created and promoted programs such as Warrior Transition Command, Combat to Careers, and Wounded Warrior Project to assist veterans to gain employment (Arendt & Sapp, 2014). Moreover, the U.S. Department of Labor (2010) published guidelines and online training for employers in handling veterans with PTSD and TBI. The guidelines encourage mentoring and providing special accommodations to veterans such as flexible work schedule, task checklists, rest breaks, schedule reminders, and a low noise environment.

The government organization that assists qualified service members when they leave the military is the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The VA provides benefits and services from medical care, education, vocational rehabilitation, to disability compensation (Foster & Vince, 2009). The VA hospital treats veterans with their service-connected disabilities without cost to the veterans and other health issues unrelated to their service at a minimal fee, depending on the veterans' household income. To meet the medical needs of combat veterans, the VA has upgraded facilities for a more comprehensive rehabilitation service (Sayer, Carlson, & Frazier, 2014).

A study by Stecker and Fortney (2011) regarding barriers to military and veterans seeking mental treatment at the VA found that scheduling an appointment is the most common problem, followed by concerns in their careers, and the belief that they do not need treatment. Boyer (2016) reported that the overwhelming number of veterans wanting to receive medical care became a public issue because of the falsification of the VA's waitlist. There is also a backlog of veterans wanting to apply for benefits and compensation (Foster & Vince, 2009). Aside from delays, access to a VA office or clinic is a concern for many veterans who live in rural areas where they feel they are not receiving any type of support (Hazle, Wilcox, & Hassan, 2012).

When veterans are seeking employment in the federal civil service, the federal government supports veterans by giving them preference in the hiring process over nonveterans. The veterans' preference was established in 1994 to promote the selection of veterans for federal jobs by adding more points to veterans in the appraisal process that is generally on a 100-point scale: ten points for disabled veterans and five points for those who served on active duty (Johnson, 2014). The preference allows veterans to get ahead in the application process than nonveterans and eventually obtain federal employment. The job security in the federal government, the opportunity to serve again and the veterans' preference bring veterans to apply for federal jobs (Lewis, 2012).

The veterans' preference is a huge advantage for veterans to enter federal civil service, but there have been many questions regarding the quality of veterans as employees and the effect on women and other minorities. Johnson (2014) responded to the criticism that the military service of veterans is already considered a competency in

a public organization similar to that of federal civil service due to their military employment which makes them quality employees. When veterans enter federal civil service, they mostly are at the entry level in the clerical and technical positions. They generally have less opportunity in the professional and administrative levels (Lewis & Durst, 1995). Mani (1999) also stated that veterans' preference only helps veterans obtain jobs and do not have a significant advantage that deters women from career advancement. In fact, the number of women in executive leadership has been growing since 1975 (Mani, 2001). Veterans' preference does not guarantee career promotions, as it is only applicable during initial employment (Lewis & Emmert, 1984; Mani, 1999). Research also indicates that nonveterans have better advancement opportunity than veterans (Johnson, 2014; Lewis, 2012; Mani, 1999).

The continuous hiring of veterans in the private sector and the federal government is indicative of support and appreciation for the military service of veterans who voluntarily served the country. These types of support help veterans in their transition from the military. The problem, however, is the lack of support for veterans after obtaining employment. As what these studies suggest, the support veterans received is limited only to help them find new employment through the hiring initiatives and preferences. There are no studies or research on how different organizations are supporting veterans in order to retain them. Organizations fail to realize that when veterans obtain new jobs, another transition takes place (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Thus, veterans need support in their new workplace as much as when they were finding a job.

## **Strategies**

In this fourth factor of the 4S, Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) described strategies as coping methods that a person uses to modify the current situation, control the problem, and manage the stress after it has occurred. Goodman et al. added that since coping is a process that is continuous and dynamic, it is then necessary for an individual to be flexible in utilizing and implementing a variety of strategies. Organizations can alleviate the transition process of veterans by offering assistance and strategies to modify veterans' situation, help control their challenges, and manage their stress.

Previous research and studies on military veterans have revolved around the treatment strategies for physical and mental health disorders and strategies to assist veterans for academic performance in higher education. For example, when Karney, Ramchand, Osilla, Caldarone, and Burns (2008) conducted a study on the long-term effect of veterans with mental health issues, they found a higher incidence of substance abuse, suicide, homelessness, and difficulty in finding employment. As a conclusion of the study, Karney et al. suggested changes to current policies as a strategy to address the problem.

Another study about military veterans consists of strategies for veterans entering higher education. DiRamio and Spires (2009) asserted that colleges and universities should work with military hospitals to support those disabled veterans planning to return to school. For Griffin and Gilbert (2015), a smooth transition for veterans in higher education means universities need to have a veteran-specific group, a veteran representative in the student government body, and a veterans' office with

knowledgeable staff that provides information or assistance in a variety of services.

Griffin and Gilbert made these recommendations to address the challenges of veterans when enrolling for college. The study involved interviews and focus groups with administrators, student affairs personnel, and student veterans from seven different higher education schools.

Wheeler (2012) conducted a similar study which what about student veterans enrolling in community colleges. The study also had similar themes regarding strategies for veterans to cope with their transition: the establishment of a veterans' service office, programs to assist veterans in the transition process, a veterans' club to socialize with peers, mentoring assistance from other veterans, and special events to appreciate veterans. Wheeler also highlighted the importance of training faculty and staff members to address the needs and concerns of veterans.

These studies offer different strategies for veterans that apply only to higher education and not in a work environment. A search online for strategies in the workplace for veterans returned a website by the U.S. Department of Labor, which has a guide for organizations when hiring and retaining veterans. The guide reiterated the value of mentorship from other veterans, appreciation of veterans, and the promotion of a veteran-friendly environment. Aside from the guidelines, the website suggested the importance for organizations to value military service by considering their leadership skills and find ways to complement veterans' leadership capabilities in their job responsibilities. The website, however, did not have studies or any evidence to show the number of companies using the information to determine its effectiveness.

Rudstam, Gower, and Cook (2012) conducted an empirical study about strategies for veterans in the workplace by collecting data from 1,083 human resources professionals. The objective of the study was to explore the willingness of employers to hire and accommodate veterans with disabilities particularly the highly stigmatized PTSD and TBI. The study concluded that employers were willing to hire veterans with disabilities which would be a benefit to their organization, but employers were at the same time hesitant to hire veterans due to costs involved, and the lack of experience in accommodating veterans with PTSD/TBI. The study called for more research about incorporating the hiring and retaining of veterans with disabilities as part of organizational practice and culture.

Ford (2017) also conducted an empirical study for veterans in the workplace by interviewing veterans working in the private sector. The study found that many companies were not using the various veteran program initiatives to attract and retain veterans, such as an onboarding process specific to veterans, because the programs were not directed toward their business needs. For this reason, Ford (2017) created a strategy for organizations to hire and successfully retain military veterans. The strategy is a process in three phases: anticipate, maintain, and sustain. The anticipate phase is the hiring of veterans by matching their skills with the requirements of the job. Otherwise, a skills mismatch can affect the retention of veterans (Amundson, 2007).

When veterans are hired, companies need to shift the phase into the maintenance phase where veterans are introduced to the organization through orientation or what is also called onboarding. According to Ford (2017), the quality of the orientation process can affect the retention of veterans since it is an important factor

in determining that new hires are productive and able to adjust to their new environment. It is also in this phase that assessments are regularly conducted. As veterans are fully integrated into their new work environment, the sustain phase ensures that veterans are engaged in their performance by growing professionally.

Although the study of Ford (2017) offers excellent strategies to retain veterans, the suggested strategies are only for the private sector. There is a need to extend these studies to veterans working in the federal government since there is minimal research on retention strategies for veterans working in the federal civil service. The Department of Veterans Affairs (n.d.) published a guide for their managers to retain newly hired veterans. The guide is an onboarding process that includes the roles and responsibilities of supervisors to integrate veterans in their workplace with the aid of a checklist. The guide highlights the importance of having an experienced veteran as a mentor who needs to communicate goals and performance expectations. There are also required meetings that take place every 90 days to ensure that the newly hired veterans are integrated into the workplace and are considering career development opportunities in the organization.

The strategies formulated by the Department of Veterans Affairs are beneficial to retain veterans. However, upon further analysis of these strategies, there is a need to conduct studies to determine the effectiveness of the program. For example, the comprehensive onboarding program may be an excellent strategy, but it lacks information whether military veterans find the program effective. In a study conducted by Teclaw, Osatuke, and Ramsel (2016) comparing veterans' workplace perception of the Department of Veterans Affairs vis-a-vis nonveterans by using the VA's employee



survey, they found that veterans scored lower than nonveterans. Moreover, as veterans continue to work for the Department of Veterans Affairs beyond the six-month onboarding process, there is no other program that what Ford (2017) recommended as the sustain phase. Ford found in his research that as employees, including veterans, become integrated into their new work environment, they are directed to utilize the organization's Employee Assistance Programs (EAP). Kirk and Brown (2003) wrote that EAPs "provide counseling and consulting services that focus on the prevention or remediation of personal problems experienced by employees, or members of their families" (p.1). According to Masi and Goff (1987), EAP started in the 1940s as Occupational Alcohol Programs to address employees who are dealing with alcohol and drug problems. Since many employees also seek counseling for personal problems outside of chemical dependence, the program widened its scope to other personal issues that affect job performance. The program then became known as Employee Assistance Programs.

There are two studies conducted on the effectiveness of EAPs in the federal civil service. The first study was by Clavelle, Dickerson, and Murphy (2012) who surveyed employees in the Department of Defense to find out the counseling outcomes of the majority of employees who utilized EAP. They concluded that employees who used EAP were able to decrease their distress and concerns. But Clavelle et al. noted that their study had limitations because there were no objective behavioral criteria or ratings. Moreover, the survey outcomes were merely subjective which means that some participants may have inflated their ratings to please the results.

Another study about EAP was conducted by Maiden (1988) for a federal agency, the Department of Health and Human Services. The objective was to evaluate the cost-benefit of the program using quantitative data. The study resulted in a favorable outcome in terms of cost-effectiveness and cost-analysis. Maiden infers that EAP is a useful program for employees dealing with personal problems which in the end benefits organizations.

As these studies on EAP involved employees, the data did not reveal any demographics to determine whether veterans have effectively used the program. The data also did not include the number of employees who used the program. Taranowski and Mahieu (2013) suggested that organizations need to enhance EAP for greater impact in the workplace so employees can fully utilize the program.

Strategies in this section to retain veterans in the workforce is very minimal. There is indeed a lack of empirical studies on strategies to retain newly hired military veterans in the federal civil service. When looking at the different studies about veterans through Schlossberg's transition theory of 4S, there are many studies concerning veterans in the analysis of Self and Situation, but limited studies in the Support and the Strategy factors.

### **Uses of Appreciative Inquiry**

The process of Appreciative Inquiry, or AI, has become popular and widely used for organizational development and change management by large organizations in both private and public sector. Reasons to use AI may vary depending on the needs for organizational development - cultural change, leadership development, strategic planning, management development, redesign of structures, mergers or acquisitions,

team building, valuing diversity (Cooperrider et al., 2008), increasing profit margins, handling poor quality customer service, and addressing high turnovers in organizations (Lewis et al., 2008).

The primary purpose of AI is towards organizational development (Lewis, Passmore, & Cantore, 2008). However, it has also been used for change process outside of organizations. Appreciative Inquiry has been used at a personal level (Kelm, 2005), groups (Bushe & Coetzer, 1995), communities (Browne & Jain, 2002), and even nations such as Nepal (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Thus, Appreciative Inquiry is suitable for this study because the general purpose of this study is to create change for a better strategy to retain veterans in the federal civil service. According to Reed (2007), AI engages people in organizations through a collaborative research setting. For Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003), Appreciative Inquiry is a change process conducted through human interaction grounded on affirmation and appreciation. They believed that organizations consist of people with unique gifts and skills that can create images to serve as a guide for the future. Through Appreciative Inquiry, people are focused on the possibilities.

The process of AI is more of an approach to effectuate change. It is a philosophy grounded in social constructivism. Gergen (1985), who was one of the first to write about social constructivism, defined social constructivism as a “process by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world in which they live” (pp. 3-4). Reed (2007) further explained that the social constructionist perspective is not about trying to find the objective truth or the verification of facts, but about the people’s different stories and interpretations based on their experience which can shape the

future on how people think and act. Social constructivists believe that communication through interaction or dialogue among people is the fundamental process that can achieve the intended transformation (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). Schein (2010) affirmed that communication in any organization is essential for its well-being.

Aside from being grounded in social constructivism, Appreciative Inquiry is guided by five theoretical principles. These principles are what differentiates AI from other organizational change initiatives (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). Cooperrider et al. (2008) described the five principles as the following:

1. The Constructionist Principle – Social knowledge and organizational destiny are interwoven. The most important change is cooperation between the imagination and the reasoning function of the mind (the capacity to unleash the imagination and mind of groups).
2. The Principle of Simultaneity – This principle recognizes that inquiry and change are not truly separate moments; they can and should be simultaneous. Inquiry is an intervention.
3. Poetic Principle – One can study virtually any topic related to human experience in any human system or organization. The choice of inquiry can focus on the nature of alienation or joy in any human organization or community.
4. Anticipatory Principle – The most valuable resource for generating constructive organizational change or improvement is collective imagination and discourse about the future. One of the basic theorems of the anticipatory view of organizational life is that the image of the future guides what might be

- called the current behavior of any organism or organization. In the final analysis, organizations exist because people who govern and maintain them share some sort of discourse or projection about what the organization is, how it will function, what it will achieve, and what it will likely become.
5. Positive Principle – Organizations, as human constructions, are largely affirmative systems and thus are responsive to positive thought and positive knowledge. In important respects, people and organizations move in the direction of their inquiries. (pp. 9-10)

Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) added three more principles which according to them evolved through their experience in using AI in large organizations:

6. The Wholeness Principle – The experience of wholeness brings out the best in people, relationships, communities, and organizations. The whole story is never a singular story. It is often a synthesis, a compilation of multiple stories, shared and woven together by the many people involved.
7. The Enactment Principle – Transformation occurs by living in the present what we most desire in the future. Put more simply, positive change comes about as images and visions of a more desired future are enacted in the present.
8. The Free Choice Principle – People and organizations thrive when people are free to choose the nature and extent of their contribution. It suggests that treating people as volunteers – with the freedom to choose to contribute as they most desire – liberates both personal and organizational power. (pp. 69-75)

Aside from these principles, Hammond (1996) developed assumptions that contribute to Appreciative Inquiry methods. Reed (2007) believed that these assumptions clarify the process of Appreciative Inquiry:

1. Something works in every organization, society or group.
2. Our focus becomes our reality. When participants focus on what works, they see possibilities instead of limitations. On the contrary, when the focus is on problems, they create a reality of failure.
3. Reality is created in the present moment with multiple realities. Based on the poetic principle, AI explores the participants' stories accounting for multiple realities rather than searching for the one actual reality subject to verification of facts.
4. Asking questions of a group or an organization influences the group in some way. This assumption contends that the process of Appreciative Inquiry leads people to a new way of thinking and a new way of doing things.
5. People are more confident and comfortable to journey to the future (the unknown) when they bring forward parts of the past (the known). Exploring the future from negative past actions incites fear and apprehensions.
6. Thinking of the past should be what is best about the past. This assumption is related to the previous one but with an emphasis on the best of past actions which set the direction of Appreciative Inquiry.
7. It is highly meaningful to value differences. The process of Appreciative Inquiry highlights different views and perspectives from different people. AI does not aim for consensus, but for differences.

8. Language creates our reality. The principle of social constructionist theory places importance on the value of language in constructing reality. (p. 28)

While the method of Appreciative Inquiry is widely received by different groups and organizations, AI is not without criticism from researchers and scholars because the approach to strengths and positive experiences seems to differ from conventional methods (Coghlan, Preskill, & Catsambas, 2003). Barge and Oliver (2003) argued the use of the term appreciative, which only refers to those related to positive experiences without considering other types of emotions or conversations that can also be potentially important and meaningful to organizational change. Fitzgerald, Oliver, and Hoxsey (2010) also argued that AI seems to be promoting polarities, “positive versus negative, strengths versus deficits, life-giving versus deadening, mysteries-to-be-embraced versus problems-to-be-solved” (p. 220). A case study by Pratt (2002) using Appreciative Inquiry, commented that the process of focusing only on the positive frustrated participants because of unexpressed resentments.

Egan and Lancaster (2005) also conducted a study regarding Appreciative Inquiry by interviewing Organizational Development (OD) practitioners. In their research, the OD consultants identified three challenges when utilizing Appreciative Inquiry. First was the problem of identifying difficult situations. The second was the disregard of negative feelings such as anger or frustration. The third was the concern of some members of the organization who felt isolated in the AI process because they were not able to voice out their dissatisfaction.

The traditional method of organizational change is to address the problems of concern, which is contrary to the Appreciative Inquiry method (Bushe, 2012). When

addressing an issue, organizations usually identify and recognize the problem through a collection of empirical data, form a diagnosis, implement change, and then evaluate the intervention process (Egan & Lancaster, 2005). Bushe (2010) agreed that AI is an intervention, but such intervention is “not supported by, or supportive of rationality, and managerial control” (p.236).

In response to the criticisms surrounding Appreciative Inquiry, Cooperrider et al. (2008) stated that AI challenges the traditional approach of deficit-based process in solving problems. They argued that AI is an alternative approach to solving problems, which seeks the positive and strengths in an organization through its success stories. Figure 4 by Cooperrider et al. shows the difference between problem-solving and Appreciative Inquiry paradigms for organizational change:

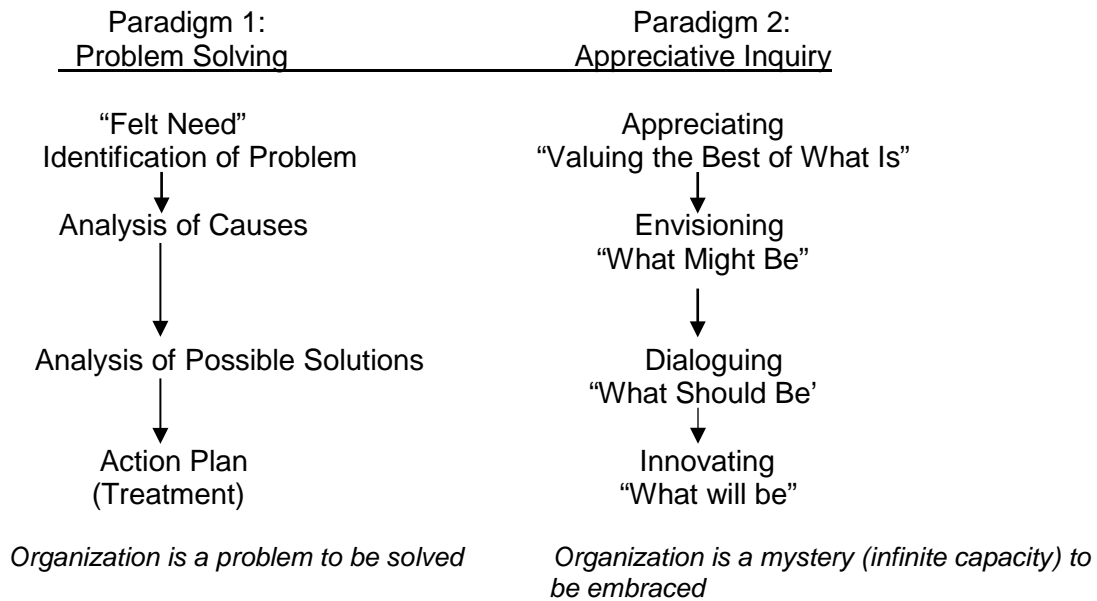


Figure 4. Two paradigms for organizational change. From *Appreciative Inquiry handbook: For leaders of change* (p. 16), by D. L. Cooperrider, D. Whitney & J. M. Stavros, Brunswick, Ohio: Crown Custom Publishing. Copyright 2003. Reprinted with permission.



Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) also argued that Appreciative Inquiry does not ignore problems. They believed that AI's focus on strengths is much better in creating transformational change and cooperation rather than focusing on problems where it creates conflict. They specifically stated:

We do not dismiss accounts of conflict, problems, or stress. We simply do not use them as the basis of analysis of action. We listen when they arise, validate them as lived experience, and seek to reframe them. For example, the problem of high employee turnover becomes an inquiry into magnetic work environments or a question of retention. (p. 18)

McNamee (2003) also responded to the critiques of AI by stating that “problems and weaknesses are often much easier to address when evaluation takes an appreciative stance” (p. 37). Hence, AI is not about avoiding problems or challenges but identifying strengths that can lead to improvement of things that are not working.

Coghlan, Preskill, and Catsambas (2003) also echoed McNamee's contention by stating that “Appreciative Inquiry does address issues and problems, but from a different and often more constructive perspective: it reframes problem statements into a focus on strengths and successes” (p. 6).

For Cooperrider et al. (2008), Appreciative Inquiry works because it is based on the understanding that people are not machines, but social beings who create their own identities and knowledge in collaboration with one another. People are generally curious, and AI encourages people to tell their stories and learn from those stories. By using stories, leaders can then create their visions toward a positive change. A study by Shuayb et al. (2009) suggested that the use of Appreciative Inquiry is not appropriate

for social issues such as racism, or where participants are not familiar with the topic of the study. However, Shuayb et al. agreed that elements or concepts of Appreciative Inquiry, especially the questions in the 4D process, could be integrated into research studies.

## **Summary**

This chapter discussed the limited studies on the retention of veterans after obtaining employment. As a result, literature studies about veterans were compiled and synthesized according to Schlossberg's transition theory to understand the transition of military veterans better. The transition theory encompasses four factors that determine an individual's capability to transition - the Self, Situation, Support, and Strategy. Based on the data and studies about military veterans, a significant number of them are experiencing stress in their transition to their new employment because of their difficulty to adapt to their new identity as a civilian employee (Self). Consequently, these challenges lead to integration issues in their new workplace along with their physical and mental health issues (Situation). Studies about the situation of women veterans were also included in this chapter to show that the transition of women veterans was as much challenging as male veterans.

Although the support that veterans received from different organizations to obtain employment were numerous, there were no studies about veterans receiving support after they have started their new job. Similarly, studies on the strategies for transitioning veterans were limited. Most of the studies and research conducted were more focused on strategies for veterans entering higher education. Other studies were about strategies to overcome physical and mental health issues.

Strategies to retain veterans included a study by Ford (2017) that recommended a theoretical model to hire and retain veterans. The study involved interviewing veterans working in the private sector. After collecting data, Ford recommended a process to retain veterans in three phases: anticipate, maintain and sustain. Since the study did not include veterans working in the federal government, there is a need to expand the research in the federal civil service to verify its applicability.

Two federal agencies have established strategies to retain veterans. The Department of Labor and the Department of Veterans Affairs are the two government organizations discussed in this chapter that provide programs and initiatives to retain veterans. As previously discussed, the strategies offered by these federal agencies may be helpful, but there is a need for empirical studies to show that the programs are effective for veterans.

As this chapter thoroughly reviewed numerous studies about veterans by using the framework of Schlossberg's transition model 4S (Self, Situation, Support, and Strategy) to fully understand the complexity of the transition challenges when finding employment, existing literature reveals a scarcity of studies in developing support and strategies to retain newly hired veterans working specifically in the federal civil service. There is definitely a need for research studies that focus on the retention of veterans in the public sector. When veterans leave military service, many of them consider working for the federal government so they can continue their service and avail employment benefits (Vanderschuere, 2016). For Goodman et al. (2006), it is critical for organizations to formulate a strategy for new hires because another transition happens when an individual enters a new job. Therefore, this study addressed the need for

federal government agencies to support newly hired veterans and create a strategy to retain them.

Finally, this chapter included discussions about Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which was used in framing and conducting the interview process in this study. The theoretical background of AI and its positive approach to effect change in contrast to deficit-based approach were also discussed. The chapter concluded with the different views by a variety of researchers on Appreciative Inquiry. As there were many objections to AI, researchers and advocates of AI were able to establish its uniqueness and effectiveness in solving a problem to bring about positive change.

While many veterans are experiencing transition challenges resulting in retention issues in their employment in the federal government, some veterans transitioned successfully and remained in the federal civil service to establish a career. The focus of this study was the exploration of the experience of those veterans who remained and were promoted to a leadership position during the duration of their career. The next chapter presents the methodology and the appropriateness of qualitative descriptive design.

## **Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the methodology to answer the research questions. It includes discussion on the appropriateness of using qualitative research design in this study particularly its descriptive approach. Also presented in this chapter is the discussion about the selection of participants, the method to collect data, analysis of data, the protection of subjects, the process for validity and reliability, mitigation of personal bias, and the use of Appreciative Inquiry method as the approach for the interview questions to explore retention strategies for veterans in the federal civil service. The use of Appreciative Inquiry explored the experience of veterans and the factors that helped them transition successfully and established a career in the federal civil service.

### **Re-Statement of Research Questions**

The focus of this research was to improve the retention of veterans in the federal government by exploring the transition experience of military veterans who are in a leadership position in the federal civil service. As many veterans leave federal civil service, there are also veterans who decided to remain and moved up in their career with increasing responsibilities. Those who remained and promoted to a leadership position in the federal service were able to share their transition experience from the military to their new work environment. Their experience yielded to insights in supporting the transition of veterans in the federal government and recommendations to improve the retention rate of veterans especially those who served after September 11,

2011. Ford (2017) affirmed this notion by stating that such programs for veterans need recommendations from the veterans themselves.

The following were the research questions of this study:

RQ1: What are the reasons military veterans decided to remain in the federal civil service and established their career to become leaders?

RQ2: How can military veterans with a leadership position in the federal civil service support the federal government in developing strategies to integrate and retain newly hired veterans?

## **Research Design**

Creswell (2013) reported that qualitative study is used when “a problem or issue needs to be explored” (p. 47). For Marshall and Rossman (2006), qualitative studies examine the lived experiences of people through interaction to bring about deeper perspective. Since the focus of this study was to improve the retention problem of veterans entering federal civil service by exploring the experience of those veterans who achieved a leadership position in the federal government, the use of qualitative research design was more appropriate than quantitative approach. The use of qualitative study bolstered the design of this research as qualitative studies enable individuals to share their experience while the use of quantitative study is primarily aligned with numerical or statistical data (Creswell, 2014). Patton (2002) affirmed this contention by stating that the use of “qualitative approach seeks to capture what people have to say in their own words...Qualitative data provide depth and detail” (p. 6).

Considering that this research explored the experiences of veteran leaders to develop retention strategies, this study used descriptive design as the appropriate type of qualitative research design. A qualitative descriptive design examines a situation as it is without modifying anything in the situation and without trying to investigate the cause-and-effect relationships (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). It involves naturalistic data describing the characteristics of a phenomenon that answers the what rather than the why or the how (Nassaji, 2015). Sandelowski (2000) described descriptive research as nothing more than an accurate account of events as experienced by individuals and “organized in a way that best contains the data collected that will be most relevant to the audience for whom it was written” (p. 339). Parse (2001) wrote that in qualitative descriptive research, themes and patterns from data collected are essentially synthesized into descriptive statements.

Creswell (2013) discussed the five most common qualitative research designs: (a) Narrative, (b) Phenomenology, (c) Grounded Theory, (d) Ethnography, and (e) Case Study. These types of qualitative studies are also descriptive in nature, but for Sandelowski (2000), the use of descriptive research is less interpretive, and the researcher is not required to move away from the data collected. Despite Creswell’s recommendation to use one of the five qualitative designs, this study selected descriptive research design to explore the personal experience of veterans in a leadership position in the federal civil service. There are five reasons why descriptive research was more appropriate for this study than the five most common qualitative designs. First, narrative research was not applicable because this study does not collect stories chronologically from individuals that reduce the research into storytelling

(Creswell, 2013). Second, phenomenology may have a similar objective with descriptive research which is to explore lived experiences, but the aim of phenomenology according to Parse (2001) is to uncover the meaning of lived experiences for a comprehensive description of the phenomenology under study, while descriptive research examines personal descriptions of the lived experience of participants under study without further interpretation. Third, grounded theory was not considered in this study because descriptive research is not required to produce a theory generated from data collected (Sandelowski, 2000). Fourth, ethnography was also rejected because this research was not about the cultural values of a group (Parse, 2001). Lastly, case study was not the appropriate qualitative design for this study because the focus of case studies is exploring issues or problems bounded by time and place (Creswell, 2013). In summary, the most appropriate design for this research was qualitative descriptive study because the study obtained data directly from participants to answer questions without any alteration to find meaning or to adapt to a theory (Sandelowski, 2000).

## **Participant selection**

**Target Population.** According to Saldana (2011), the selection of participants in qualitative research involves specific persons who “are appropriate for interviews and those most likely to provide substantive answers and responses to your inquiries” (p.33). Since this study was about the transition and retention of military veterans in the federal civil service, it was appropriate that the target population were veterans who attained supervisory, managerial, or executive position. The participants were recruited in two ways:



1. Members of a veterans' employee organization belonging to a particular federal agency where permission to recruit participants for the study was granted by the president and the members of the board. The name of the agency remained confidential to protect any identifiable information with the participants.
2. Referrals from participants who were interested in joining the study.

**Snowball Sampling.** Creswell (2014) contended that qualitative studies purposely select participants as opposed to quantitative studies which select multiple participants through random sampling. The method used in finding veteran leaders in the federal civil service was through the veterans' employee organization and referrals from the selected participants. To expand the number of participants through referrals is called snowball sampling (Tracy, 2013). In snowball sampling, participants are selected and are asked to identify other possible participants who fit the criteria (Creswell, 2013; Goodman, 1961). Liamputtong (2013) stated that snowball sampling is used when participants are difficult to locate or unwilling to participate unless referred by somebody they know. Recruiting other participants through the network of selected participants, also called chain-referral, is an efficient way to save time finding other participants and can increase the likelihood that potential participants are willing to be interviewed (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010).

**Sample Population.** The sample population of this study was limited to military veterans who have worked in the federal civil service for five years or more. In addition, they have leadership status either in supervisory, managerial or executive capacity.

Saldana (2011) recommended that the ideal number of participants in a qualitative study would be from ten to twenty to ensure credible and trustworthy findings.

In this study, six military veterans from the federal employee organization volunteered to participate. Four other veterans were recruited through snowball sampling or referrals. A total of ten military veterans volunteered to participate in the study.

### **Human Subject Consideration**

Conducting research involves ethical issues from the collection of data to analysis and interpretation of data (Roberts, 2010). Sadler et al. (2010) urged researchers when using snowball sampling to protect the privacy of participants including those referred to participate in the study. In addition, Stringer (2007) advocated precautionary measures to avoid any harm or damage to participants.

This research study was approved by Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is responsible for reviewing proposals to make sure that studies involving human subjects comply with ethical standards and guidelines (Appendix E). It is the policy of the University that IRB request must be approved before commencing research activities. The goal of Pepperdine University's IRB is the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects involved in a research activity conducted under the University's supervision and control in compliance with the federal, ethical, and professional standards for research (Pepperdine IRB, 2009).

In accordance with the University's IRB, the researcher ensured the protection of participants before commencing data collection. A written informed consent was also generated for participants (Appendix B). Stringer (2007) addressed written consent documents, which need to include the following:

- People have the right to refuse to participate.
- They may withdraw from the study at any time.
- Any information (data) will be securely stored so that it cannot be viewed by others.
- None of the information that identifies them will be made public or revealed to others without explicit and written consent. (p. 55)

The recruitment letter sent to the veterans' employee organization included a voluntary statement and the protection of participants by maintaining confidentiality throughout the data collection process. The participants were screened to make sure that they meet the criteria for the study. After determining their eligibility for the study, participants received an informed consent form (Appendix B). The form indicated that participation in the study was voluntary and that they may withdraw from the study anytime. Pseudonyms were used to represent each participant. Names or any identifying information, including the federal agency they work for, were protected and undisclosed. All recordings were destroyed after completion of the study. All transcription files and notes were stored and locked in a file cabinet. The role of the researcher in this study was to ensure that the university's IRB protocols and guidelines were followed.

## **Data Collection**

The collection of data started after receiving the IRB approval on October 16, 2018. The recruitment letter (Appendix A) was sent to the president of the veterans' employee organization belonging to a federal agency, requesting permission to post the letter on their intranet site. The president responded that there had been a change of leadership and the contact information of the new president was sent to the researcher. The new president was contacted through email, discussing the details of the research study. A reply was received that the board approved the request to post the letter. The president also invited the researcher to join their quarterly teleconference meeting on November 12, 2018, to present the proposal to the members of the organization. The researcher was allotted about ten minutes to discuss the study and to solicit for participants. Contact information of the researcher was provided at the end of the presentation for those who wanted to participate.

Seven veterans responded to the invitation, and the researcher contacted them to schedule an interview. Referrals were requested from the participants. One veteran decided not to participate due to a conflict of schedule. Four additional veterans were recommended and were contacted. All four veterans agreed to participate. Interviews were conducted from November 19, 2018, through December 22, 2018. The goal was to increase the number of participants, but the plan was inhibited because of the government shutdown on December 23, 2018.

Prior to commencing the interview process, each participant received and signed the Informed Consent Form (Appendix B). Participants were also informed about the audio recording during the interview. After scheduling the interviews, each participant

received a copy of the interview questions (Appendix C and Appendix D) to help them prepare and understand the Appreciative Inquiry questions.

Access to the majority of the participants for a face-to-face interview was not possible because of their geographic location. As a result, they were interviewed via telephone at a time convenient to each of them. According to Irvine (2011), telephone interviews have been prevalent and preferred when social cues and context are not inherently important to the analysis of information. Since the rest of the participants lived within a distance from the researcher, they were interviewed at a time and location convenient to them where they feel comfortable to share information (Stringer, 2007).

The interviews started with the researcher describing the purpose of the study and the highlights of the Appreciative Inquiry method. The Informed Consent Form (Appendix B) was also discussed. Moreover, participants were reminded that the interview was being audio recorded and that the data would be deleted after transcription.

### **Interview Techniques**

A semi-structured interview guide was used in collecting data for this study. Grady (1998) stated that qualitative research often uses semi-structured interviews with pre-determined questions that serve as an interview guide. Patton (1990) explained that “the interview guide helps make interviewing across a number of different people more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues to be explored” (p. 283).

The intent of the interview process in this qualitative research was to gather insights and viewpoints from participants as recommended by Creswell (2014),

Rossman and Rallis (2003). The researcher made sure that during the interview process, participants were able to express themselves freely as suggested by Stringer (2007), Creswell (2013), and Patton (1990). As a courtesy to the participants, the interview ended within the agreed specified time. The expected amount of time for each interview was 30-45 minutes. Sending out the interview questions ahead of time shortened the interview process, which worked well for the participants and their hectic schedule. The interviews lasted between 20 to 30 minutes. Two of the interviews lasted for more than 45 minutes as the participants wanted to share more information.

## **Methodology**

Appreciative Inquiry was the method used to construct the interview questions for this study. The principles of Appreciative Inquiry is focused on the strengths, success, and possibilities of an organization contrary to a deficit-based approach of solving a problem that seeks blame and creates defensiveness (Barge & Oliver, 2003). As what Cooperrider et al. (2008) noted, "Appreciative Inquiry is based on the simple assumption that every organization has something that works well, and those strengths can be the starting point for creating positive change" (p. 3). Thus, based on this principle of Appreciative Inquiry, the focus of this study was more towards the retention of military veterans in the federal civil service rather than on the high turnover rate.

The process of Appreciative Inquiry does not use the traditional and systematic problem solving of organizations that begins with the analysis of the problem, developing a solution, and creating an action plan (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Instead, AI has a method called the 4-D cycle, a process that serves as a guide for change in the direction of what teams or organizations study (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). Figure

5 depicts the 4-D model. The cycle begins with an affirmative topic and proceeds with four essential phases: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. Cooperrider et al. (2008) defined each phase as:

Discovery: Appreciating what gives life

Dream: Envisioning of what might be

Design: Co-constructing the ideal

Destiny: Sustaining innovation and action (p. 6)

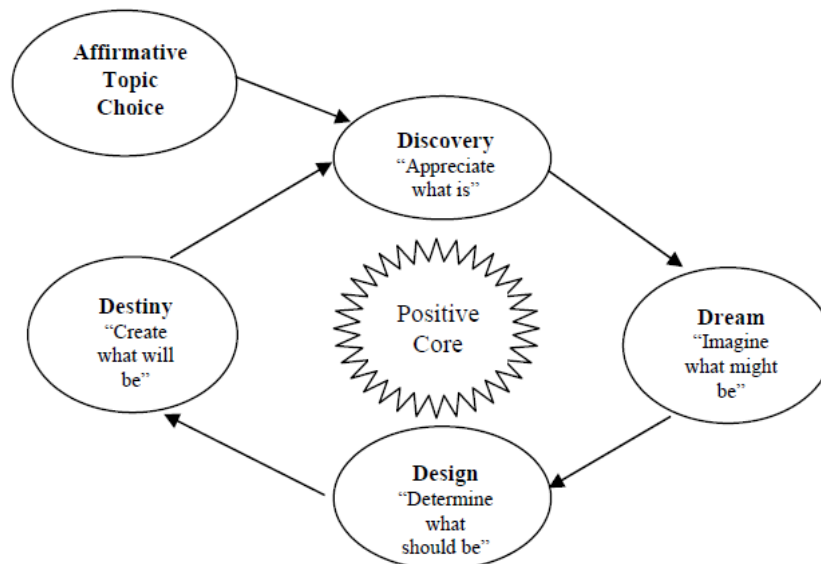


Figure 5. Appreciative Inquiry 4-D model. From *The power of Appreciative Inquiry: A practical guide to positive change* (p. 6), by D. Whitney & A. Trosten-Bloom, 2003, San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler. Copyright 2003. Reprinted with permission.

**Discovery.** In this phase, strengths and positive experiences are explored to determine the strengths and what gives life to an organization. People in this phase share through interviews what they like about their organization. (Lewis et al., 2008).

**Dream.** The second phase of the AI process is about envisioning what might be by looking into possibilities in the future, of potentials, and opportunities. After

recognizing the strengths, people are to imagine a better future (Whitney & Trosten Bloom, 2003).

**Design.** Cooperrider et al. (2008) suggested that in this phase, “attention turns to creating the ideal organization so that it might achieve its dream” (p. 162). This phase asks about the needs of the organization so that the dream becomes a reality (Lewis et al., 2008). It is in this phase where dreams are supported by ideal actions.

**Destiny.** The final phase of the process according to Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) consists of action plans to support and sustain the desired positive change. This phase aims to move the organization to where it wants to be through innovative and detailed actions (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Change is possible through the 4-D cycle because it serves as a guide for organizations to identify their positive strengths to achieve their vision and their goals (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). The use of the 4-D process in this study revealed the positive experience of the participants and their vision for future veterans who want to make a career in the federal civil service. The process established recommendations that will support newly hired veterans and develop strategies to retain them.

### **Interview Questions.**

Interviewing is a practical and enjoyable method when collecting data (Grady, 1998). Cooperrider et al. (2008) affirmed that with appreciative inquiry, interview questions bring out best practices and positive possibilities instead of analyzing deficiencies and determining their causes. When interview questions are carefully formulated, criticisms and negative reactions are constrained (Stringer, 2007). For



Patton (1990), the process of interviewing participants about their positive experience and life-giving stories through AI's 4D method integrate inquiry and action.

Patton (1990) recommended that interview questions must be prepared and crafted with appropriate words since the quality of the interview process depends on the details of the questions. Before asking participants from the interview guide, Patton also suggested asking participants about background information so that participants will be at ease and will be encouraged to be open and descriptive in the course of the interview. A questionnaire about demographics and background information from participants was included (Appendix C) in the interview process.

The questions for the semi-structured interview were developed from the Appreciative Inquiry Handbook by Cooperrider et al. (2008). The questions were then modified for this study (Appendix D). The interview questions were divided into four categories according to the Appreciative Inquiry's 4D model:

**Discovery**  
*Appreciating*

1. What attracted you to federal civil service that you find most meaningful, valuable, challenging or exciting that you decided to stay and make it a career?
2. What are the things you value most about yourself as a veteran in relation to the nature of your work and your organization?
3. What is the important thing that your organization or agency has contributed to your life?

**Dream**  
*Envisioning*

1. What is your vision for veterans who want to continue serving their country by working in the federal government?
2. Imagine it is five years from today. What possibilities do you see in your organization regarding the hiring and retaining of veterans?

**Design***Determining*

1. What is the ideal strategy to retain veterans in the federal civil service?
2. If you were to design an onboarding process for veterans, what would it be?

**Destiny***Creating*

1. What are the top three priorities that every federal agency needs to do to retain veterans?
2. If you were to create a policy in your organization regarding the retention of veterans, what would that policy be?
3. During the orientation, you were tasked to give a talk to advise newly hired veterans. What would be your advice?

**Reliability and Validity of the Study.**

Validity in a qualitative study is tantamount to trustworthiness, which adds credibility to the analysis of the data (Roberts, 2010). For Sandelowski (2000), qualitative descriptive research seeks validity through the accurate description of events and the meaning participants ascribed to those events. Although descriptive studies are less interpretive than other qualitative approaches, there is still the need to review the content and analyze the themes (Sandelowski, 2009).

Similarly, reliability in qualitative studies is more concerned about the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the data unlike in quantitative studies where reliability is about the consistency of results (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). To strengthen the validity and reliability of qualitative research, Gibbs (2007) suggested a review of notes and transcripts for mistakes made during transcription. The review can be accomplished by a friend or a colleague (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

For the purpose of this study, an interrater validated the findings and the analysis of the themes. Patton (1990) described interrater reliability as a method where another person, or more, reviews and analyzes the same qualitative data and compare findings. This process not only inhibits the potential bias of a single researcher but also ensures that the themes are validated and confirmed, thus, resulting in the reliability of data.

### **Statement of Limitations and Personal Bias**

As all researchers are influenced by an unknown personal bias, the goal then is to mitigate personal bias and not to eliminate it (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). To reduce personal bias during the interview process, Durdella (2019) recommended that a researcher should limit his or her influence by encouraging participants to share their stories and experience, avoiding interjections or follow-up questions that can lead to what the researcher wants to hear. Although the researcher in this study is a military veteran and has been with the federal civil service for more than seven years, the researcher is not an active member of the veterans' organization, where some members of the group participated in the study, and does not have any contacts with any members of the organization. The researcher also does not hold any leadership position in the federal government. Every effort was made to ensure that any personal opinion or bias was set aside to minimize any influence in the study, including the withholding of the researcher's background to participants until all questions have been answered and only when asked to share. An interrater reviewed and analyzed the field notes to validate the results of the data. A peer-review of field notes and the results of data analysis are methods that can reduce personal bias (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

## Data Analysis

In conducting qualitative descriptive research, data collected from the interview consists of verbatim responses where themes and patterns emerge (Given, 2011). Immediately following the interviews, the researcher manually transcribed each of the audio recordings. Any reference to names of participants including their organization was removed to maintain confidentiality. The transcriptions were managed and analyzed using a qualitative data analysis software called HyperResearch, which was provided by Pepperdine University. Zgoda (2007) defined HyperResearch as a “software tool to help researchers organize and analyze qualitative data” (p. 111). Using a computer software facilitates the analysis process efficiently since it can be used for transcribing, coding, storing, data linking, content analysis, data display, conclusion verification, and graphic mapping (Weitzman, 2000). The use of a computer-assisted coding system not only aids in the organization of qualitative data but also saves time while maintaining a close relationship with both data and participants (Smith & Hesse-Biber, 1996).

The responses of the participants were grouped by interview questions, which were then reviewed, analyzed, and coded into a HyperResearch file. The researcher reviewed each textual responses of the participants by reading and re-reading the transcripts during the first pass. The second pass involved identifying significant statements and initially coding those statements using descriptive codes. As stated by Saldana (2011), “for initial analysis, descriptive codes are clustered into similar categories to detect such patterns as frequency” (p. 104). Codes were then examined and categorized to develop themes. Themes derived from Appreciative Inquiry

questions were more concerned about the changes and strategies suggested by participants (Reed, 2007). The final iteration was accomplished using a peer reviewer or interrater. Roberts (2010) recommends the use of an interrater for reliability and validity of the study.

The interview transcripts and coding results were then forwarded to an interrater who recently graduated from Pepperdine University's Organizational Leadership doctoral program. After the interrater completed the review of the data, a telephonic meeting was scheduled to discuss the results. The interrater reported positive feedback and only had a few questions regarding the process. While some minor modifications were made regarding the wording of coding titles, the essence of the codes and themes remained the same.

## **Summary**

This chapter discussed the methodology and research design of the study, which is qualitative descriptive research. Also mentioned is the appropriateness of the Appreciative Inquiry 4D method for the interview process. The questions for the interview were developed from the Appreciative Inquiry Handbook by Cooperrider et al. (2008) and were modified for the purpose of this study. Moreover, this chapter identified the target and sample population, the recruiting strategy, and the inclusion criteria. Ethical practices to protect and maintain the confidentiality of participants were addressed to comply with the university's IRB process. Aside from the discussion of data collection, analysis of the data was presented as well as the method to validate the data and minimize personal bias. The findings and themes developed from the interviews are discussed in Chapter four.

## Chapter Four: Results and Findings

### Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the experience of veterans who transitioned successfully in the federal government and have attained leadership positions in a supervisory, managerial, or executive capacity. The aim was to gain insights from their experience to develop strategies to retain newly hired veterans in the federal civil service. The following research questions were designed to guide the study:

1. What are the reasons military veterans decided to remain in the federal civil service and established their career to become leaders?
2. How can military veterans with a leadership position in the federal civil service support the federal government in developing strategies to integrate and retain veterans?

Chapter one of this study presented an overview of the problem, the purpose, and the significance of conducting this research. Chapter two reviewed and synthesized relevant literature dealing with life changes, using Schlossberg's transition theory as a framework to analyze and understand the transition challenges of military veterans. The last chapter, or chapter three, discussed the methodology and the appropriate research design.

This chapter presents the data collection process, the participants' background and demographics, and data findings. The participants' response to the interview questions were explored and reviewed for specific findings. The findings were then analyzed and interpreted for common themes.

## Participants

According to Creswell (2014), participants in qualitative studies are purposely selected which is in contrast to a random sampling of quantitative studies that choose multiple participants. This qualitative approach allowed the researcher to solicit participants directly from a federal agency that has a veterans' employee organization. The organization has more than 200 members and posts announcements through its intranet site. A recruitment letter for the study was posted on the organization's intranet site detailing the intent of the study, the inclusion criteria, the interview process, and the handling of personal information to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Seven individuals responded by email and were invited to schedule an interview. One individual declined to be interviewed due to a conflict of schedule. Participants who fit the criteria were contacted for an interview and were requested for referrals. As mentioned in chapter three, snowball sampling was also used in this study to recruit other participants. Snowball sampling is an effective method to find additional participants through the network of selected participants, which can save time in finding other participants (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). Four individuals were recommended and were invited by phone and email to make sure they fit the criteria. Overall, ten veterans participated in the study.

The background information (Appendix C) of the participants revealed that the sampling pool of veterans in this study comprised of seven males (70%) and three females (30%). Youngest participants consisted of two veterans between the ages of 30 - 39 (20%), while the oldest was in the age group of 60 – 69 (10%). Five participants belonged to the age group 50 – 59 (50%), and two were in the age group of 40 – 49

(20%). The years of active military service were from two to 27 years. Two of the participants are still in the reserves.

Five participants were enlisted (50%), while the other five were officers (50%). Six of the participants (60%) have a service-connected disability diagnosed by the Veterans Affairs Department. The participants' length of service in the federal government ranged from five to 28 years, and the duration of their years in the leadership position spanned from one month to 25 years. The description of participants and their transition were as follows:

Veteran 1 (male) was on active duty for four years in the Army with the rank of Sergeant. He has been with the federal government for 28 years and currently a supervisor which he has held the position for 25 years. He initially wanted to join the federal government to get a job overseas as he had been stationed outside the country when he was in the military. Since there were no federal jobs available for overseas at the time he left the Army, he submitted several applications to many federal agencies in the United States while waiting for job openings overseas. The agency that he is currently working for was the first one to offer him a position. He intended to take the position as a temporary job but has stayed with the agency ever since. He was promoted to a supervisory position after three years with the agency.

Veteran 2 (female) is an active reservist with the Air National Guard and has a total of 16 years of military service. She has been deployed overseas several times working as a maintenance flight supervisor with the rank of a Captain. Being in the guard as a reservist, she continually transitions back and forth from active military duty to federal civil service. She has been a federal employee for ten years and currently a



supervisor for more than a month at the time of interview. She wanted to work for the federal government for its job security and retirement benefits.

Veteran 3 (female) was in the Army for 14 years serving as a Staff Sergeant before leaving active duty for medical reasons. She has been a federal employee for 13 years. She wanted to join the federal civil service because of its benefits and the similarity of federal organizations to the military. She started working for the federal government as a supervisor after leaving the Army and has been a supervisor for 13 years.

Veteran 4 (male) has been in the federal civil service for five years working as a supervisor. He was in the Army for 23 years, started as an enlisted and retiring with the rank of Chief Warrant Officer. He wanted to join the federal civil service because he believed that it might be a good transition after retiring from the military. He also knew that working for the federal government offers competitive benefits and job security similar to the military.

Veteran 5 (male) was in the Air Force for five years attaining the rank of Staff Sergeant. He has been working for the federal government for eight years, including three years in a leadership position. After leaving Hawaii, his last duty station, he decided to move to Washington DC to apply for a federal job. He previously worked for three different federal agencies before joining his current agency which offered him a managerial position. He wanted to join the federal civil service not only because of its stability but also because of public service.

Veteran 6 (male) served three years in the Army, four years in the Air Force, and three years in the Air National Guard for a total of ten years of military service. He

attained the rank of Technical Sergeant before leaving the reserves. He joined the reserves so he can go back to school and complete his undergraduate degree. He applied for several federal vacancies related to his degree. His current agency was the first one to offer him a job, and he gladly accepted the offer although it meant relocating to another state. The sense of giving back while having a career is the reason he wanted a job in the federal government. He has been a federal employee for 26 years, including 14 years of supervisory position.

Veteran 7 (female) has been in a managerial position for 15 years with a total of 17 years in the federal civil service. She was not able to complete her active duty contract, serving only for two years in the army with the rank of Private First Class due to a medical condition. After her medical discharged from the Army, she was able to go back to school and work for a federal agency while finishing her degree. At that time she graduated, the US economy was in distress. She wanted job security and a stable career. Fortunately, a position with the agency she was working for had an opening and offered her the job.

Veteran 8 (male) has a total of 25 years of military service in the army and currently in the reserves with the rank of a Major. After serving active duty in the Army, he went back to his alma mater, and the dean of the college recognized him and handed him a recruitment flyer from a federal agency. He applied for the position because it was relevant to his degree. He was hired and remained with the agency for 23 years. Through his hard work, he was promoted to a supervisory position in 2011. The main reason he applied for federal civil service is the concept of working for public service.

Veteran 9 (male) joined the Navy after graduating from high school and rose from the enlisted ranks to become an officer. He retired with the rank of Lieutenant Commander after serving 27 years of active duty. He applied for different jobs including private sector positions but specifically wanted a federal position to continue serving the country. After several months of waiting, a federal agency contacted him and was offered a job as a director. He has been in the position for five years.

Veteran 10 (male) has been a federal employee for 16 years, including eight years in his current supervisory position. He joined the Marines six days after graduating from high school. He retired as a Chief Warrant Officer after 20 years of active duty and completed his graduate degree in accounting after retiring. He wanted a federal job that is similar to his work in the Marines. Aside from joining the federal civil service because of job security, he wanted to work for a federal agency that has a similar military structure and mindset.

A summary of the participants' background information is illustrated in tables 1 and 2. Table 1 shows the participants' demographics, including their military branch, time in service, rank, and affirmation of their service-connected disability. Table 2 established the participants' time in service in the federal government along with their leadership position and reason/s for joining the federal civil service.

Table 1. *Demographics and time in military service of participants*

Participant Identification	Gender	Age Group	Branch of Service	Years of Active Duty	Rank	Service Connected Disability
Veteran 1	Male	50-59	Army	4	Sergeant	No
Veteran 2	Female	30-39	Air National Guard	16	Captain	No

(continued)

Veteran 3	Female	50-59	Army	14	Staff Sgt.	Yes
Veteran 4	Male	40-49	Army	23	Chief Warrant Officer	Yes
Veteran 5	Male	30-39	Air Force	5	Staff Sgt.	Yes
Veteran 6	Male	50-59	Army/Air Force/Air National Guard	9	Tech Sgt.	No
Veteran 7	Female	60-69	Army	2	Private	Yes
Veteran 8	Male	50-59	Army	25	Major	No
Veteran 9	Male	40-49	Navy	27	Lieutenant Commander	Yes
Veteran 10	Male	50-59	USMC	20	Chief Warrant Officer	Yes

Table 2. *Participating veterans' time in service in the federal government*

Participants	Years of Federal Employment	Leadership Position Title	Years in Position	Reason/s for joining Federal Civil Service
Veteran 1	28	Supervisor	25	Wanted overseas assignment
Veteran 2	10	Supervisor	1 Month	Benefits, job security & retirement
Veteran 3	13	Supervisor	13	Benefits & the similarity of the federal government to the military structure
Veteran 4	5	Supervisor	4	Benefits and job security
Veteran 5	8	Associate Deputy Administrator	3	Job stability and public service
Veteran 6	26	Supervisor	14	Career and public service
Veteran 7	17	Manager	15	Career and job security
Veteran 8	23	Supervisor	7	Public service
Veteran 9	5	Director	5	Public service and the similarity of the federal government to the military structure
Veteran 10	16	Manager	8	Job security and the similarity of the federal government to the military structure and mindset

## **Data Display**

Appreciative Inquiry was the method used to develop the interview questions in this study. Responses to the interview questions were analyzed to uncover common themes. The following were the questions asked during the interview including the responses from the participants and the emerging themes:

### **The transition from the military to the federal civil service**

*Can you provide a brief summary of your transition from the military to the federal civil service and the challenges you encountered?*

The transition from the military process and entering the federal civil service was not difficult for most of the veterans. Although eight veterans find the transition smooth, two of them had insignificant adjustment issues. Veteran 1 stated, “almost every other word you had to change your language, how you talk to people especially the language you use to be more politically correct.” Veteran 3 also had some adjustment issues:

My transition from the military was not as difficult compared to what some folks might have experienced. The part of the transition that was a little different was the some of the mindset that you have when you were in the military. When your boss tells you to do something, that’s what you do with the expectation that you will complete the task and that you are there until the task is done. So it was a little different for me when five o’clock came, and it was like a ghost town. And it is also not unusual in the military to work through lunch. You certainly were a soldier 24/7, and so you know that if something is needed to do on the weekend, it gets done on the weekend. Whereas in the civilian side of the house, the end of the workweek was the end of your workweek.

Other participants, veteran 6 and veteran 9, did not have any problem in their transition from the military to the federal government but had difficulty when applying for positions.

Veteran 6 expressed the limited availability of jobs and the numerous applications he has submitted, while Veteran 9 commented:

From the actual time of my retirement to the actual time I got a GS job was about eight months. The only thing that was challenging was not going to work every day. When you work all the time, workaholic or whatever, it's hard just to sit around not doing anything just waiting for phone calls. That was not only on the GS side. I also put in some applications for regular companies, too. It's just the process of waiting and not knowing what is going on. They don't tell you that they are looking at your resume. You just submitted and sit back and wait. And that was probably the biggest challenge because I am not used to that. That was the only challenge I would end think of having – just not knowing. From time to time, you put in 20 applications, and you might get a call here and there. Sometimes it was a month before you got a call. You just put in so many, yet you don't get any feedback or any calls or anything. So it was kind of a challenge.

Only two participants expressed difficulty in their transition to the federal civil service. Veteran 4 remarked that his transition was not smooth, "In the military, everybody has a job, has a position, and they know what that is. You know where you fit in the scheme of things. Here in the civilian world, you don't know that. You have to figure it out all over again. So it can be frustrating." Veteran 2, who is a reservist with the Air National Guard, also reported frustration transitioning particularly when coming back from deployment:

Every time I go out on deployment, and I come back, I'm going from a job where you can see your impact every single day. Being a maintenance officer, I see how what I do every single day, how that affects the people, the citizens. And then you kind of form really this strong brotherhood or family. Those are the people you serve with. So whenever I come back from deployment, really it takes me a little while to find that new motivation in the federal job because I don't see the impact in what I do every day, and I'm kind of cut off like I have coworkers

who are really great and really nice people, but it is not the same connection that you get when you get deployed.

Veteran 5 and Veteran 7 did not experience difficulty when transitioning which they attributed to their supportive co-workers. For Veteran 5, "I've just been surrounded by good folks, and people that were able to groom me and guide me and the flexibility to learn more, do more. As positions open up, I had those opportunities to move forward and up." Veteran 7 shared the same sentiment, "The people I worked with were pretty much open-minded. They were open to suggestions and were open to changes. The group that I worked with, they are really great people. So they did make my transition easier."

Two other veterans associated their smooth transition to the resemblance of their organization to the military. Veteran 9 stated, "The transition was pretty smooth since it was kind of military still." Veteran 10 also commented, "I was able to adjust easily. I worked for a law enforcement organization, and law enforcement tends to have the same type of chain of command, the same type of structure, teamwork, and a lot of the attributes you see in the military. The people are focused on the mission."

For Veteran 6, his transition to the federal civil service was smooth because of his maturity when he started working for the federal government, "I think for me part of that was due to being a little bit older. I graduated from high school at 17, went to the service at 19, did six years and then I was with the National Guard while in college. I was able to start my federal career as a GS 7 after college. I did not have any bumps or anything like that. The transition was smooth." Veteran 8, who is a reservist, did not have any transition problems coming back from deployment and going back to work in

the federal government. For him, it was “kind of just going back to the same job, same desk, same supervisors.” He added that what helped him in the transition was taking time off after deployment, “I take time to decompress, unwind, and be used to having a good amount of food. Rules of life are a little bit different between deployment and home life.”

After the participants shared their transition story from the military to the federal civil service, the interview proceeded with the Appreciative Inquiry questions using the 4D method: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. The interview questions were taken from the Appreciative Inquiry handbook and were modified for this study. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) claimed that Appreciative Inquiry questions are clear, simple, and provocative. The following interview questions were asked sequentially according to Appreciative Inquiry’s 4D process.

### **Discovery Questions: Appreciating**

Question 1. *What attracted you to federal civil service that you find most meaningful, valuable, challenging, or exciting that you decided to stay and make it a career?*

During the interview, the most common response was the ability to serve. Veteran 3 answered, “taking care and helping people that are less fortunate and are in need. That’s what has drawn me to the position.” Another participant, Veteran 10, concurred, “It’s amazing how my work in the department impacts people’s lives every single day.” Two veterans also shared that the federal civil service is an opportunity to serve again.

The second most common response is flexibility. Veteran 1 defined flexibility as the ability to work with “less micromanagement.” For Veteran 5, flexibility is the ability to



“make the decision whether to no longer work, transfer or to apply to another position.”

Veteran 2 had a similar view, adding that the federal government allows employees to transfer to different agencies without losing benefits specifically retirement benefits.

Veteran 8 referred flexibility as being able to take paid time off in the federal government, “The agency is pretty good on leave if you need to take leave or if you want to take leave to take care of something.”

Other participants answered that the federal government offers job security or stability with excellent benefits. When Veteran 6 started his federal career as a GS 7, he “felt like it was a career starting...a secure position that had good benefits.” Veteran 8 also affirmed that federal civil service is “pretty stable as far as job security.”

*Question 2. Think back over your career as a federal employee through all of its ups and downs. What do you consider the peak experience, a time when you felt most committed, most connected, and most alive in your work?*

The challenge of the job and being able to lead employees were the themes developed from the responses of the question. Veteran 9 noted, “the department when I first got there was not running well. The peak experience was when I was able to convince the leadership to put it all back under me. Now, it’s running more of a family, so things are going well.” Another participant, Veteran 10, asserted, “I’m pretty much committed and motivated every day when I come to work, but I enjoy the projects themselves and seeing the projects come out successfully.”

Veteran 4 shared his peak experience as the ability “to take care of my employees and help them out and see them succeed. Veteran 5 also shared, “I think just working with people. Honestly, as a manager, a supervisor, it’s been great to

develop folks, to give them responsibility and just watch them grow regardless of their age.” Veteran 7 added, “The folks I worked with are just phenomenal. I told them a hundred times that if ever they have any issue, I am right behind them.’

*Question 3. What are the things you value most about yourself as a veteran in relation to the nature of your work and your organization?*

Work ethic was the dominant theme gained from most of the responses, which vary from being responsible, committed, and disciplined. Veteran 2 answered, “the work mentality that you get from being in the military that you know I’m here to do the job, I’m here to work, and I’m here to get things done.” Veteran 1 had a similar response, “the attitude that you learn in the military about responsibility when you were given this, then you do it. That’s the thing I value most.” Three veterans mentioned discipline that has been instilled in them in the military as the value they bring to their organization. Other veterans valued their attitude of commitment to their work with Veteran 6 stating, “The fact that my sense of commitment makes a difference in the work that I do and the field that I work in and what I am giving back.” Another participant, veteran 8 commented, “I am committed every day and every day is a challenge.”

*Question 4. What is the most important thing that your organization or agency has contributed to your life?*

Responses varied in determining the most important contribution that the organization has provided to the participants. Veteran 6 responded that his agency supported his career with advancement opportunities. Veteran 2 stated that she was able to pursue hobbies and education and certifications because of her agency’s

emphasis on work-life balance, while Veteran 5 mentioned leadership, “I have great supervisors and leaders, and they have been guiding me.” Other responses include service and job security. Two veterans stated that their organization provided them the ability to serve people and country, while two other veterans remarked that because of job security in the federal civil service, they are able to receive a steady paycheck.

Table 3 below is a summary of the themes derived from the responses.

Table 3. *Summary of Interview Questions: Discovery*

<i>Question</i>	<i>Interview Questions</i>	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
1	What attracted you to the federal civil service that you find most meaningful, valuable, challenging, or exciting that made you decide to stay and make it a career?	Service Flexibility Job Stability/Security	5 4 3
2	Think back over your career as a federal employee through all of its ups and downs. What do you consider the peak experience, a time when you felt most committed, most connected, and most alive in your work?	The job is challenging Ability to lead and support employees	7 3
3	What are the things you value most about yourself as a veteran in connection to your work and your organization?	Work ethic Knowledge and Experience	9 1
4	What is the most important thing that your organization or agency has contributed to your life?	Ability to serve Job Security Work-life balance Diversity Supportive leaders Career advancement Respect	3 2 1 1 1 1 1

## **Dream Questions: Envisioning what might be**

Question 1. *What is your vision for veterans who want to continue serving the country by working in the federal civil service?*

Two themes emerged from this question. First, most participants envisioned veterans to be successful and fulfilled in their jobs because they have the right skills to do their work. Veteran 5 remarked, “My vision for veterans would be to be in a space where they feel they can thrive and be successful, just where they can match their talents and skills and they have a passion in an area in what they enjoy doing.” Veteran 1 also answered, “If the federal government found a way to hire the right people, the best people from the military, then they would get a lot of people that are driven to get the job done.” Veteran 7 added, “I would really want to see veterans look extremely well into the different agencies that they go to work for or looking to work depending on what their job skills are, and not just pick something because it is close by.”

The second theme that emerged from this question focused on the need for veterans to be valued and respected in their organization. Veteran 6 had this to say:

I think for the most part my personal experience has been working underneath executives who have maybe a fear factor of hiring veterans. I’m not sure if it’s because they are feeling intimidated which they have no reason to or just the fear factor that they are hiring somebody they perceive to have some unknown baggage and my experience has been just the opposite of reality. Veterans bring a can-do attitude; they’re willing to learn; they’re willing to get the job done.

Veteran 3 also talked about the need for agencies to value and respect veterans:

I would like the organization to see the value of the veterans in a different light. So many times a veteran comes on board, and it is apparent that they have a leg

up because they were a veteran and some people frown on that. And I think that is short-sighted because one thing about the majority of veterans that I know is that they bring a level of maturity and insight that you don't get when you sometimes pull from the local community.

*Question 2. Imagine it is five years from today. What possibilities do you see in your organization regarding the hiring and retaining of veterans?*

More than half of the participants spoke of the importance of providing opportunities for veterans from hiring to career advancement. Veteran 10 stated, "Opportunities. With the federal government's hiring rules, giving veterans preference, I think that is important." Veteran 9 also had a similar response, "I can imagine in five years we continue to hire more and more veterans that apply. And based on what we are doing today and what will happen, I'm sure that trend will continue to increase." Another participant, Veteran 7, expressed opportunities for veterans in terms of leadership advancement, "You got people who have been there 30 to 35 years, and they're finally stepping down and let somebody step up. And I think there will be veterans who step into some of those leadership roles."

Veteran 2 recommended better medical benefits for veterans especially those who have mental disabilities such as PTSD, whereas Veteran 4 wanted a better workplace where there is camaraderie similar to the military, "Your squadron, you look at them as a family. We don't really foster the same kind, and it is something we need to work on. The camaraderie is not there." For Veteran 1, there is not going to be any changes in five years as the hiring of veterans is mandated by federal law.

Table 4 is a summary of the questions in the Dream phase.

Table 4. *Summary of interview questions: Dream*

<i>Question</i>	<i>Interview Questions</i>	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
1	What is your vision for veterans who want to continue serving the country by working in the federal civil service?	Veterans are successful and fulfilled in their job because of their skills.  Veterans are being valued and respected.	6  4
2	Imagine it is five years from today. What possibilities do you see in your organization regarding the hiring and retaining of veterans?	Veterans are provided with opportunities.  Better medical benefits  Foster camaraderie  Nothing different	7  1  1  1

### **Design Questions: Determining the ideal**

Question 1. *What is the ideal strategy to retain veterans in the federal civil service?*

Career growth and advancement was the general response specified by six participants. Veteran 3 responded, “I think more opportunities and certainly more opportunities for growth. You see jobs where it tops out at GS 12, and so you are going to spend your whole career as a GS 12 without any opportunity for betterment or advancement, I think that is why a lot of veterans opted to go private sector.” Veteran 5 also stated, “My ideal strategy is to develop them in their professional goals.” Another participant, Veteran 9, added, “If you came in as a GS 7 even though you retired from the military or say you can put in for jobs, you could apply as a GS 13. You can come in

and get that job as a GS 13. But let's say there is not an opening. Now you are stuck at that level, GS 7."

Two participants commented that agencies should utilize the military training and experience of young veterans. Three participants suggested that the ideal strategy is to challenge veterans constantly. Veteran 8 simply stated, "You have to challenge them."

An elaborate response was communicated by Veteran 2:

It would have been nice to have a rotational position so that you do keep that constant challenge. You keep on learning and seeing the impact on how the whole mechanism works. When you think of the military, you kind of get a better picture of how your part plays into the bigger part. In the federal government, you kind of have a hard time understanding that and seeing that. In the military, you get to know a lot of people from other sections whereas in the federal government you really don't get that opportunity too much. You kind of stay in your little department.

Question 2. *If you were to design an onboarding process for veterans, what would it be?*

The participants proposed that the onboarding process should include educating veterans to learn about the new workplace, the culture, the structure, the new benefits, and the comparison between their new organization and the military. Veteran 8 suggested, "Start with the history of the agency, the history, and purpose of the agency. Where does that person fit in with the function of the agency?" Another participant, Veteran 5, recommended, "I think a process where you allow them to keep their mind open about the changes, how structurally different it is from the military. They need to be open to how the civilian side works and what they need to be aware of when interacting with employees and supervisors." Veteran 3 concurred, "A better onboarding process would include some training on what to expect when you become a

federal employee. I think that would be important. Let them know that there are some similarities between the federal government and military service.” For Veteran 7, an open and honest onboarding process is sufficient where veterans are able to ask questions without any hesitation. A summary of the interview questions for Design is shown below.

Table 5. *Summary of interview questions: Design*

<i>Question</i>	<i>Interview Questions</i>	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
1	What is the ideal strategy to retain veterans in the federal civil service?	Career growth and advancement  Utilize military training and experience  Constantly challenge veterans	6  2  2
2	If you were to design an onboarding process for veterans, what would that be?	Educating veterans about the new workplace including the structure, culture, benefits, and the comparison between their new organization and the military  An open and honest onboarding process	9  1

**Destiny Question: Creating what will be**

Question 1. *What are the top three priorities that every federal agency needs to do to retain veterans?*

Although the responses to this question were varied, one common theme emerged from the enumerations, and that is to recognize and value veterans. Veteran 8



stated, "Recognize their ability and contribution. Recognition in both formal and informal quality step increases that is not hard to do." Another participant, Veteran 7, responded, "They need to understand what the majority of veterans have experienced. They deserve a lot of respect. People don't have a clue what we experienced in the military and what we learned in the military." Veteran 1 also suggested that aside from promotion opportunities, veterans should be given a sense of self-worth.

The second theme that came up from this question focused on the ability to challenge veterans continuously. Veteran 8 remarked, "You have to challenge them. You have to give young veterans a challenge." Another theme from this question was about engagement. Veteran 6 made a suggestion, "Supervisory engagement that's just not giving direction daily or weekly but taking a more individual interest in the employee." Other suggestions pertained to engagement include regular feedback or meetings, mentorship, and support.

*Question 2. If you were to create a policy in your organization regarding the hiring and retaining of veterans, what would that policy be?*

Responses to this question resulted in two themes. First, participants advocated for a need to support veterans in various capacity. The support consisted of the following: teaching veterans the federal application process for an opportunity to be hired; improving the morale of veterans in the workplace; establishing a professional development for each veteran; providing resources that include a veteran organization in every federal agency; training leaders to recognize the work experience of veterans; and conducting exit interviews for veterans leaving federal civil service. The second

theme refers to the hiring of the most qualified veterans. One participant, Veteran 9, proposed, "I guess you make it a policy that you are hiring the right people for the right job to do a particular job to allow that person to be good at what he is doing and to like what he is doing." Veteran 8 also had a similar response, "You would always want to hire the most qualified person regardless of the veteran status, but if you were selecting among veterans, then I would say you still go back to the hiring of the most qualified person." One participant was not able to come up with a response.

Question 3. *During orientation, you were asked to give a talk to newly hired veterans. What would be your advice?*

Majority of the participants would advise veterans to learn about the new organization, the duties of the job, and to ask questions. Veteran 3 stated, "My advice to veterans coming in is to be a sponge, be willing to learn even if it doesn't necessarily apply to your job. Learning the organization that you are in requires you to get outside of your bubble. And ask questions." Veteran 8 also commented, "Listen and learn from the people who are here. Pay attention but don't be afraid to speak up and ask questions. I mean there is no dumb question." Veteran 6 added, "My advice would be to embrace your position. Take ownership of both the position and the duties that are required of you and learn that job, and do it well."

The second theme that participants would advise veterans is to apply the military skills in their new workplace. Veteran 10 responded, "I would tell them to stick to the values they learned in the military. Don't get bored and always look for new things to do. Don't sit back and wait to be told to do things. Take the initiative just like you learned in the military." Veteran 1 also shared similar advice:

I think I would tell them that they have the training the civilian people never got, and they should bring those skills forward like, you know, show that they are the responsible one that they are always on time. Show all those skills. Treat it on that level, treat it like it is in the military because, in the long run, people will notice that more than anything else.

Table 6 is a summary of the interview questions for Destiny.

Table 6. *Summary of interview questions: Destiny*

<i>Question</i>	<i>Interview Questions</i>	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
1	What are the top three priorities that every federal agency needs to do to retain veterans?	Value and recognize veterans Challenge veterans Work engagement	6 2 2
2	If you were to create a policy in your organization regarding the hiring and retaining of veterans, what would that be?	Support veterans Hire the most qualified veteran (No answer)	7 2 1
3	During orientation, you were asked to give a talk to advise newly hired veterans. What would be your advice?	Willingness to learn and to ask questions Apply military skills in the workplace Communicate with your supervisor	6 3 1

## Overview of Findings

This study used the Appreciative Inquiry 4-D method to develop the interview questions in each phase. In the Discovery phase, the participants were asked about what they appreciated about the federal civil service, their job, and their value as veterans. The participants acknowledged that they wanted to work for the federal

government not only for public service but also for its flexibility, job security, and stability. When asked about their job as a leader in the federal civil service, the participants responded that they find their work challenging. The participants also stated that they applied the work ethic they learned from the military in their current organization.

During the Dream phase, three common themes emerged from this phase. First, participants envision veterans to be successful and fulfilled in their jobs in the federal civil service. Second, veterans are valued and respected for their knowledge and experience learned from the military. And thirdly, veterans are given opportunities not just in the hiring but also after obtaining employment in the federal government.

The Design phase consisted of creating the ideal strategy to retain veterans. The participants recommended career advancement for veterans and suggested that the ideal onboarding process for newly hired veterans would be to educate them about their new workplace that includes the organizational structure, culture, and benefits. Newly hired veterans also need to learn about the similarities and differences between the military and their new organizations.

In the Destiny phase interview, the themes that emerged comprised of valuing and recognizing veterans in their organization, and providing support to veterans in their job and their career. In addition, veterans who want to work for the federal need to have an open mind after obtaining a position in the federal civil service, which means that they must learn more about their job and their organization, and learn to ask questions without hesitation. Newly hired veterans should also apply their military skills and

mindset, e.g., being responsible and being on time, in their new workplace. Figure 6 is a summary of the major themes from each phase of the interview method.

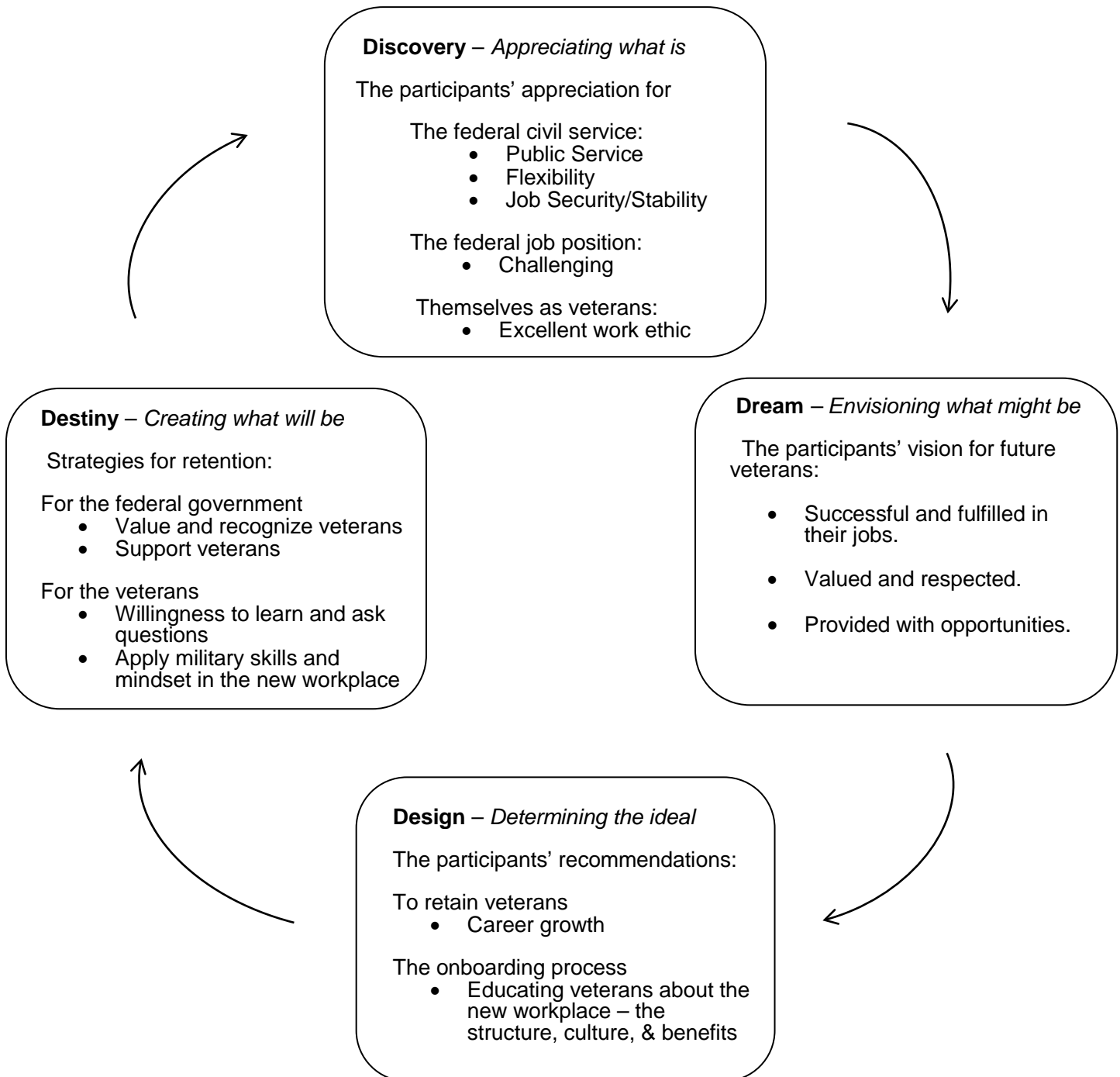


Figure 6. A summary of the major themes from the interview process.

## **Summary**

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to interview military veteran leaders working for the federal government. The aim was to examine and learn from their experience in order to develop strategies for the retention of newly hired veterans. Ten military veterans with a leadership position and a minimum of five years' work experience in the federal civil service participated in the study. Interview questions were created using the Appreciative Inquiry method and were modified for this study as discussed in Chapter three. A summary of the participants' demographics and their transition experience were presented at the beginning of the chapter.

Interviews commenced after IRB approved the proposed research study. Data collected from the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The verbatim transcriptions of each participating veterans' interviews were analyzed and compared using the HyperResearch software tool. Results of the data analysis were then reviewed by an interrater for reliability. The findings of the data collected revealed common themes from each phase of the Appreciative Inquiry 4-D model. A summary of these findings was presented in figure 6. Significance and analysis of the findings, including major findings, implications, recommendations, and conclusions are discussed in Chapter five.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents significant conclusions of the study, including a summary of the findings from chapter four that relates to the literature review from chapter two. It also discusses the major findings, recommendations as well as the implications for action. A summary of the study from chapter one to four is first presented for review.

### **Summary of the Study**

The specific problem of this research study concerned the fact that military veterans have a dismal retention rate in the federal civil service compared to non-veterans (Kopp, 2015). The data about the transition of veterans are primarily on the number of veteran hires. There is limited data regarding the retention of veterans after obtaining employment which is necessary for their integration.

Chapter one discussed the problem and the purpose of the research study. It presented the challenges of military veterans finding jobs after leaving active service. In November 2009, President Barack Obama signed into effect Executive Order 13518 to establish a hiring initiative to recruit more veterans in the federal government. Employment opportunities for military veterans improved as the number of veterans increased in the federal workforce. However, the number of veterans leaving federal civil service was at the same level as the number of hires from 2008 to 2012 (Partnership of Public Service, 2014). According to Rein (2015), veterans who find employment in the federal civil service leave their job within two years of being hired. Schafer et al. (2016) contended that the reason is connected to a significant number of veterans who are struggling in their transition to their new workplace. As veterans are

given preference in the federal hiring process, there is, however, not enough support on their retention and integration after obtaining employment.

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to explore the experience of veterans who are in a leadership position in the federal government. The intent was to gather insights on their transition and integration to federal civil service to develop strategies for the federal government to retain newly hired veterans. The results from the data collected from the ten veterans could serve as a basis for a retention strategy and a resource to support newly hired veterans wanting to have a career in the federal civil service. Two research questions guided this study:

1. What are the reasons military veterans decided to remain in the federal civil service and established their career to become leaders?
2. How can military veterans with a leadership position in the federal civil service support the federal government in developing strategies to integrate and retain newly hired veterans?

Chapter two presented a review of the literature that showed the lack of study in the retention of veterans in the federal civil service. Schlossberg's transition theory was the framework used to gain a better understanding of the transition challenges of veterans when leaving the military. The transition theory has four factors that affect significant life changes: Self, Situation, Support, and Strategy.

The Self analyzed the identity of military veterans and its culture while the Situation examined their challenges when transitioning from active duty. The Support factor explored the resources provided to veterans and Strategies comprised of the different coping methods for veterans to alleviate their difficulties in transitioning. In the



analysis collected from the various studies about military veterans through the transition theory model, it was determined that there is a lack of literature studies in the area of support and strategy for veterans transitioning into their new position in the federal government.

Chapter three described the appropriate design for the study, which was descriptive qualitative approach. Studies using descriptive qualitative method examine a situation as it is without modifications or interpretations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). It involves an accurate account of events experienced by individuals (Sandelowski, 2000). The chapter also discussed the data collection that involved interviewing veteran leaders using the Appreciative Inquiry method. Lewis, Passmore, and Cantore (2008) wrote that the use of Appreciative Inquiry process is a different way of creating change since it replaces the traditional organizational analysis, implementation of a plan, and managing resistance. As a communication tool, Appreciative Inquiry identifies and develops what is already giving life to organizations. It values people by drawing their creativity for a positive outcome to shape a better future.

In Chapter four, data collection and the major themes from the interviews were presented. The data collected were audio-recorded interviews and manually transcribed. A software tool, HyperResearch, was used to manage and analyze the transcription files. The analysis involved identifying keywords and significant statements to develop themes from each question. An interrater reviewed the analysis of the data for reliability. Findings of the data analysis were presented to capture the transition experience of veterans and their recommendations to retain newly hired veterans in the federal government.

## Summary and Analysis of the Findings

The findings of this study may be used as a basis to retain newly hired veterans in the federal civil service. The intent was also to assist the transition of veterans wanting to work and establish a career in the federal government. The analysis of the findings consisted of the data collected from the interview questions through the demographic questionnaires and the Appreciative Inquiry interview questions. Themes from the Appreciative Inquiry inspired questions were matched with Schlossberg's transition theory (4S) to understand the perceived or reported transition of veterans better.

**Research Question One:** *What are the reasons military veterans decided to remain in the federal civil service and established their career to become leaders?*

The participants reported two reasons for working for the federal government and why they decided to make it a career. These reasons are discussed below.

**Reason One.** The participants wanted to join the federal civil service after leaving the military because they wanted to be in a position similar to why they joined the military: job security, stability, benefits, career, and public service. Out of the ten participants in this study, only two of them affirmed having difficulty transitioning from the military to their new job in the federal government with one participant having a service-connected disability. Two other veterans had minor adjustment issues in adapting to their new work environment. These transition challenges confirm the literature review that there are several veterans struggling to integrate into a non-military culture (Schafer et al., 2016). The difficulties stem from role change (Kahn et al., 1964),

culture shock (Simpson & Armstrong, 2010), career identity conflict (Demers, 2011; Gonzalez, 2016; Kraimer et al., 2012; Stern, 2017), and mental and physical health issues (Seth & Buzzeta, 2014).

**Reason Two.** The Discovery phase of Appreciative Inquiry focused on the career experience of the participants. Four interview questions were developed to identify what veterans appreciate in the federal civil service, their job, and their experience as a veteran. The results of the interview questions showed that veterans wanted to remain in the federal civil service because it provided them another opportunity to serve again. They appreciated working for the federal government for its job security, stability, and flexibility. Besides, veterans find their job position challenging and have always maintained the work ethic they learned from the military.

The results of this phase confirm with the analysis of the military identity in the Schlossberg's transition model in the Self factor. Vanderschuere (2016) noted that veterans have a unique identity and experience compared to non-veterans. When they joined the military, they become part of an organization that adheres to uniformity (Demers, 2011), accountability (Daley, 1999) service, rigidity, conformity (Hall, 2011), and mission-readiness (Dunivin, 1994). Thus, when veterans leave active duty, their military identity and experience still have a long-lasting effect on them (Jackson et al., 2012). According to the participants, the federal civil service is a way for them to be able to serve again while receiving almost the same benefits as the military such as retirement, job security, and stability. What was unexpected from the interview was the participants' preference for flexibility in the federal government which seemed contrary to the ingrained culture of rigidity in the military. When asked about their commitment to

their job, the participants shared a common theme that they find their work challenging which is comparable to their experience in the military. Consequently, they were able to move up to a leadership position because of the work ethic they learned from the military, such as discipline, commitment, and responsibility.

**Research Question Two:** *How can military veterans with a leadership position in the federal civil service support the federal government in developing strategies to integrate and retain newly hired veterans?*

The Dream, Design, and Destiny phases of the interview questions from Appreciative Inquiry established answers to the second research question. The participants in this study offered recommendations to retain and integrate veterans based on their experience. Their responses to the interview questions from each phase provided suitable strategies.

**Strategy One.** In the Dream phase, two interview questions were formulated for participants to envision the future of veterans in the federal civil service. The questions elicited for ideas about their hopes and dreams for the incoming generation of veterans wanting to have a career in the federal civil service. Three common themes emerged from this phase. The most common theme revealed that participants have the desire for incoming veterans to be successful and fulfilled in their job in the federal government. The second common theme consisted of participants wanting veterans to be recognized and respected in their workplace. And the third common theme was the participants' desire for veterans to be provided with opportunities for job and pay grade promotion.

The vision for veterans in the federal civil service aligns with the studies about the situation of veterans who are encountering difficulties and challenges in their new work environment. Anderson and Goodman (2014) reported that veterans are not familiar with the non-military environment and feel uncomfortable adjusting to their new job after leaving the military. Moore (2014) also wrote that veterans face transition issues and are feeling disengaged in the federal civil service. Veterans not only feel that managers are just looking out for self-promotion unlike in the military where leaders take care of their troops but also believe that there is a lack of respect from their civilian peers (Demers, 2011). The participants in this study know the transition challenges, and they are hoping that veterans in the federal civil service are respected and recognized for the knowledge and experience they acquired in the military since many people are unfamiliar with military occupations.

**Strategy Two.** The third phase in the Appreciative Inquiry process, Design, is a strategy that determines the ideal. Participants in this study were asked about the ideal strategy to retain veterans in the federal service and the ideal onboarding process for veterans when entering their new workplace. In some organizations, onboarding is called in processing or orientation.

The most common theme in the participants' response to retain veterans is the importance of providing veterans career growth through an increase in job responsibility and the advancement of their pay grade. Participants also recommended that onboarding needed to include educating veterans about their new workplace - the organizational structure, the culture, and the benefits. Moreover, participants suggested

that veterans must learn to compare the contrast between their new workplace and the military.

The literature review explored the types of support that veterans received when transitioning from the military. Studies showed that military veterans do receive support before leaving active duty where they are required to undergo pre-separation class (Clemens & Milsom, 2008). Veterans also receive assistance from the Veterans Affairs Department for health issues (Foster & Vince, 2009) as well as job opportunities in the private sector (Harrell & Berglass, 2012) and in the federal civil service through hiring preference (Lewis & Emmert, 1984; Mani, 1999). However, there is a lack of support for veterans after obtaining employment in the federal civil service. The majority of the participants in this study identified the ideal strategy to retain veterans which is to support the career advancement of veterans. The participants knew that veterans are accustomed to the promotion system in the military where there is career progression through advancement in rank (Moore & Trout, 1978).

Participants suggested that the onboarding process has to be more than merely completing forms as a requirement for federal employment. All military veterans went through the onboarding process in the military called basic training or boot camp. Although the training was rigid, boot camp was an immersion in the culture of the military where everyone learned about military norms, terminologies, customs, teamwork, and the value of the chain of command (Redmond et al., 2015). While the onboarding process in the federal civil service may not be the same as boot camp, the participants wanted a similar process where newly hired veterans not only gain knowledge about their organization but also have a feeling of belongingness.

**Strategy Three.** The Design phase consisted of three interview questions to develop strategies to retain veterans. The purpose of this phase is to generate ideas for goals or action-oriented changes (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). Strategies recommended by the participants were not only for retention strategy but also for veterans who wanted to work in the federal civil service. The majority of the participants wanted federal agencies to value and recognize the knowledge and experience that veterans bring to the organization. Vanderschuere (2016) wrote that all military veterans have a unique identity gained from their military training and experience. However, federal agencies fail to value veterans because of the difference between military training and civilian certifications. When leaders in the federal civil service acknowledge the training and work experience of veterans in the military, the federal government will be able to hire and retain the most qualified veterans.

Participants also agreed that federal agencies need to support veterans after obtaining employment in the federal government. The types of support involved providing resources for veterans' needs such as job training, mentorship, engagement, professional development, morale, and work challenge. Secondly, newly hired veterans need to learn about their job and their organization, and to ask questions without hesitation. Participants understand that veterans have difficulty expressing one's feelings and the need to ask for help or request for assistance due to their experience of rigidity and conformity in the military (Wertsch, 1991). Moreover, newly hired veterans need to apply the skills, discipline, and mindset they learned in the military to their new workplace.

As mentioned in the literature review, studies about the retention of veterans are limited. In the analysis of strategies for veterans, the studies are largely focused on health and mental treatment (Karney et al., 2008), and higher education success (DiRamiro & Spires, 2009; Griffin & Gilbert, 2005; Wheeler, 2015). A study by Ford (2017) to retain veterans was conducted for the private sector. While the Veterans Affairs Department has an onboarding process printed in a manual to retain veterans, it needed studies to confirm its effectiveness. One strategy employed by federal agencies to help employees with personal issues that can affect job performance is the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This strategy has not been proven if veterans find this program effective, as there is no data available to determine if veterans have utilized the program. Hence, the recommendations provided by the participants in this research study may serve as a strategy to retain veterans in the federal government that will eventually expand the literature studies.

## **Major Findings**

There are two significant findings from the data collected that correspond to the research questions of this study. The major findings from research question one comprised of the participants' transition experience and the themes from the Discovery phase of the Appreciative Inquiry interview questions. The major findings from research question two consisted of the themes from the Dream, Design and Destiny phase of the Appreciative Inquiry questions.

Research question 1: What are the reasons military veterans decided to remain in the federal civil service and established their career to become leaders?



Although some participants had transition challenges and adjustment issues adapting to their new work environment, the main reason that participants decided to work for the federal government is the opportunity to serve again while having job security and stability similar to the military. They appreciated the flexibility that the federal civil service offers in terms of leave days and the ability to transfer from one federal agency to another without losing their benefits. According to the participants, they always find their work challenging. They were able to move up in their career because of the work ethic they learned from the military.

Research question 2: How can military veterans with a leadership position in the federal civil service support the federal government in developing strategies to integrate and retain newly hired veterans?

Based on the career experience of the participants, they also wanted newly hired veterans to be successful and fulfilled in their jobs. This vision can be achieved when leadership values and respects veterans in their workplace by recognizing the skills and experience veterans learned from the military and providing them with opportunities for career advancement. The participants also suggested that the onboarding process for newly hired veterans needs to include educating veterans about the new workplace, the organizational structure, culture, benefits, and the comparison between the military and their new organization. Additionally, newly hired veterans must be willing to learn not just about their job but also about their agency and to ask questions without hesitation. The participants' main advice to newly hired veterans wanting to have a career in the federal civil service is to apply the same military skills and mindset in their new

workplace such as being responsible, being mission-oriented, and being on time, as these would be beneficial for their federal career.

## **Implications**

The results of this study confirm Schlossberg's transition theory of 4S: Self, Situation, Support, and Strategy. Data collected using Appreciative Inquiry interview questions reveal that veterans understand themselves and their service outlook in wanting to work for the federal government (Self). Veterans also know the challenges and difficulties in transitioning, and that is why they want to be supported, valued and recognized in their workplace (Situation). Data from this research study identifies the lack of support and a strategy to retain veterans in the federal civil service. The application of Schlossberg's transition theory clearly shows that veterans need support and a strategy to be successful in their transition from the military to the federal government.

**Implications for research.** This study intends to add to the body of knowledge that explores the transition of military veterans in the federal civil service, which has not been adequately studied in the research literature. Studies about military veterans are focused mainly on their identity and transition challenges. There is limited literature on the support and strategy to retain veterans in the federal civil service. The results of this research have the potential to increase knowledge about military veterans that would expand beyond studies about military transition to higher education, civilian employment, mental and physical health, and retirement.

**Implications for the federal government.** Information from this study could be used to educate federal government leaders to effect change in retaining veterans in their organization. The findings of this study are valuable for supervisors and managers since the recommendations are from transitioned veterans assisting future veterans transitioning into federal civil service. The suggestions espoused by the participants for the federal government may not contain specific details. However, the findings are fundamental for useful actions that would encourage leaders from federal agencies to generate a detailed plan to support, value, and recognize veterans in their organization. It is the hope that the recommendations from this study will yield into concrete and specific actions. Planning for strategies to retain veterans may be time-consuming, but part of the responsibility falls to federal government leaders who need to decide a better way to retain and integrate veterans. Just as there are strategies to hire veterans, it is also essential to have a retention strategy to avoid job turnover which is costly and tedious (Vanderschuere, 2016). Veterans will have a better transition and integration if the recommendations from this study are followed.

**Implications for veterans.** The results of this study suggest that veterans who want to work for the federal government must match their skills with the job they want to obtain and be willing to enhance their skills through further training. The participants also suggested that veterans should be able to compare federal civil service jobs with military occupations. Moreover, veterans need to learn about their new organization as much as they can and adapt to the new culture by changing their military identity, including learning to ask questions and learning to approach their leaders which are not usual in the military.

**Implications for organizational change.** Lastly, this study offers a framework for organizational change through the link between Schlossberg's transition theory and Appreciative Inquiry. Schlossberg's transition theory of the framework answers the question on why an organization has a need for change by evaluating the current circumstances of the organization. The transition theory is complemented by Appreciative Inquiry, which serves as an approach to answer the question on how to create change by identifying pragmatic and positive outcomes.

The process of the framework begins with the transition theory of Self where stakeholders assess the background and history of their organization. The stakeholders then proceed with Discovery from Appreciative Inquiry by identifying and recognizing their strengths or what gives life to their organization. The process moves forward with the analysis of the organization by recognizing current problems or challenges and the needs of the organization (Situation). After knowing the organization's current situation, the stakeholders decide on the future of their organization by envisioning and imagining possibilities (Dream). When the direction of the organization has been created, stakeholders then determine the type of resources they need to build the future of their organization, including those who need to be involved (Support). The next step of the process is to construct and describe the ideal organization based on the stakeholders' vision for the organization (Design). The final step is to set specific and measurable goals or objectives to achieve the ideal organization (Strategy). After specifying strategies, stakeholders generate ideas for specific actions to achieve their goals and objectives (Destiny). Figure 7 is the process of creating organizational change.

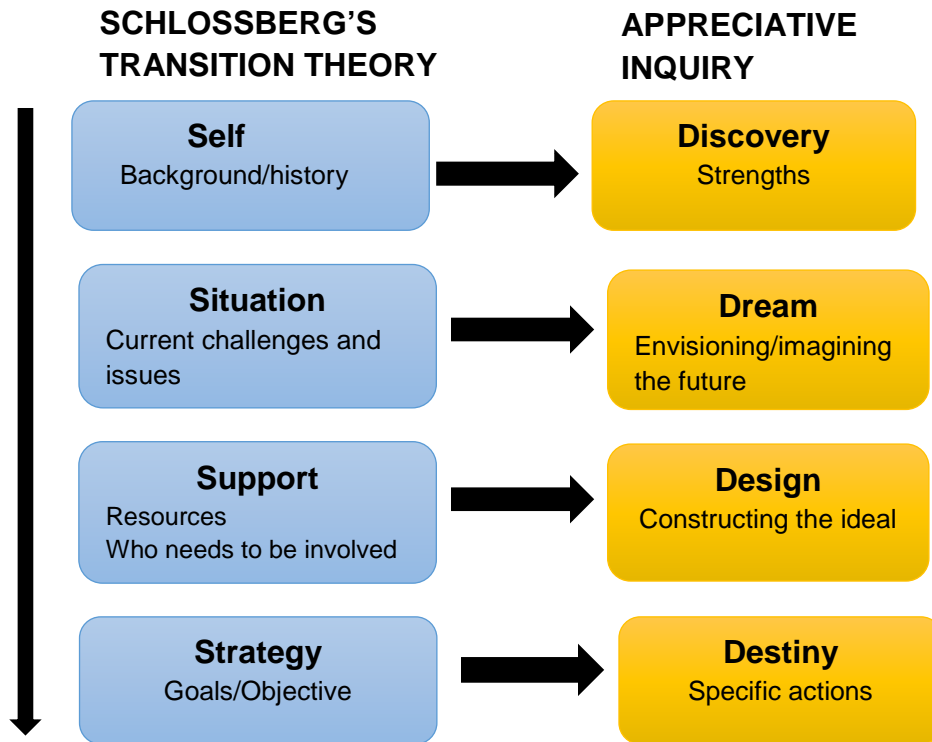


Figure 7. Organizational change framework.

## Recommendations

The lack of existing research on the transition of military veterans to federal civil service prompted the interest to pursue this study. The results of the study could lead to further research. Recommendations for more similar research studies are listed below:

1. This study could be replicated to expand the number of participants. The study could be qualitative, quantitative or mixed-method. Using a different research method could render additional or different insights into the retention of veterans in the federal civil service.
2. Conduct similar research for veterans who left the federal service within two years of federal employment to find out reasons for resigning and then establish recommendations to improve retention and integration. The results of the

research can be used for federal leaders to identify common themes that will reinforce better strategies to retain veterans.

3. Employ comparable research solely focused on women veterans. As discussed in the literature review, women veterans are not receiving the same recognition and respect as their male counterparts (Foster & Vince, 2009). Exploring the experience of women veterans could lead to different perspectives.
4. Military rank and grade consisted of officers and enlisted which are tied to levels of authority and responsibility. A similar study that explores the differences in the transition and reintegration challenges could reveal whether former rank and grade have an impact on workplace attitude and retention.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This study aimed to explore the experience of veterans with leadership status in the federal government to create actionable insights on how to support and develop strategies to retain veterans in the federal civil service. The results of the study suggested that veterans were motivated to stay in the federal government not only because of the benefits they receive but also because of their public service outlook. The most important implication of this study was the confirmation of Schlossberg's transition theory in developing a strategy to retain veterans. The findings revealed that Schlossberg's transition theory (Self, Situation, Support, and Strategy) is an effective systematic approach to retain veterans effectively. The literature studies about military veterans comprised mainly on the first two factors: the Self and the Situation. There is evidently a lack of research studies on the retention of veterans in the Support and Strategy factors.

The lack of research on the studies of the retention of veterans in the federal government prompted the pursuit of this study. A study by Ford (2017), explored in Chapter two, discussed the retention of veterans who were working in the private sector. Ford's study comprised of a framework for human resources to consider when retaining veterans. This framework is a three-phase process: anticipate, maintain, and sustain. According to Ford, the anticipate phase is when HR professionals match the skills of veterans to the requirements of the job. When veterans are hired, they are then integrated into the maintenance phase that refers to the organization's orientation program. After the orientation program, veterans undergo a sustain phase which encompasses performance management, professional development, and retention-oriented activities. Although Ford's framework is applicable to the federal government's strategy to retain veterans, it did not present specific strategies to improve the retention of veterans. Thus, this research study enhances Ford's framework by broadening the maintenance phase further into specific actions.

Overall, this study offers the first research study on the retention of veterans in the federal civil service, which is an important but understudied topic. The study has taken a step forward in understanding the transition of veterans in the federal civil service by developing strategies to meet their needs for their retention. The study can also serve as a basis for furthering studies about veterans in the federal civil service. Most importantly, to value the service of veterans, federal agencies need to recognize that the retention of veterans is as crucial as their efforts to hire and provide jobs to veterans.

## REFERENCES

- Adler, D., Possemato, K., Mavandadi, S., Lerner, D., Chang, H., Klaus, J., . . . Oslin, D. (2011). Psychiatric status and work performance of veterans of operations enduring freedom and Iraqi freedom. *Psychiatric Services, 62*(1), 39-46. doi: 10.1176/ps.62.1.pss6201.0039
- Ahern, J., Worthen, M., Masters, J., Lippman, S., Ozer, E., & Moos, R. (2017). The challenges of Afghanistan and Iraq veterans' transition from military to civilian life and approaches and reconnection. *Plos One, 10*(7), 1-10. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0128599
- Ainspan, N. (2011). From deployment to employment. *United States Naval Institute Proceedings, 137*(2), 44-50. Retrieved from <https://www.usni.org>
- Alfari, N., Pittman, J., Flotio, E., Owen, L., Buttner, M., Hossain, N., . . . Lohr, B. (2015). Differential impact of combat on postdeployment symptoms in female and male veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. *Military Medicine, 180*(3), 296-303. doi:10.7205/MILMED-D-14-00255
- Amundson, N. E. (2007). The influence of workplace attraction on recruitment and retention. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 44*(4), 154-162. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1920.2007.tb00034
- Anderson, M., & Goodman, J. (2014). From military to civilian life: Applications of Schlossberg's model for veterans in transition. *Career Planning and Adult Development Journal, 30*(3), 40-51. Retrieved from <http://www.careernetwork.org/journals>
- Arendt, C., & Sapp, D. (2014). Analyzing resumes of military veterans during transition to post-service. *The Florida Communication Journal, 42*(1), 45-60. Retrieved from <http://floridacom.org/fca-journal>
- Asch, B. (2001). *The Pay, promotion, and retention of high-quality civil service workers in the Department of Defense*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand.
- Baechtold, M., & Sawal, D. (2009). Meeting the needs of women veterans. *New Directions for Student Services, 126*, 35-43. doi:10.1002/SS.314



- Barge, J., & Oliver, C. (2003). Working with appreciation in managerial practice. *Academy of Management Review*, 28(1), 124-142.  
doi:10.5465/AMR.2003.8925244
- Bascetta, C. (2002). Military and veteran's benefits: Observations on the transition assistance program. *Testimony before the subcommittee on benefits, committee on Veterans' Affairs, house of representatives*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED467626).
- Basseches, M. (1984). *Dialectical thinking and adult development*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Blank, R. (1985). An analysis of workers' choice between employment in the public and private sectors. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 38(2), 211-224.  
doi:10.1111/033-3352.00193
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2003) *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and method (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.)*. Boston, MA: Ally and Bacon.
- Boyer, D. (2016, April 3). VA still plagued by problems two years after scandal. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtontimes.com>
- Brammer, L. M., & Abrego, P. J. (1981). Intervention strategies for coping with transitions. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 9(2), 19-36.  
doi:10.1177/001100008100900203
- Bridges, W. (1980). *Transitions: Making sense of life's changes*. Cambridge, MA: DaCapo Press.
- Browne, B., & Jain, S. (2002). *Imagine Chicago: Ten years of imagination in action*. Chicago, IL: Imagine Chicago.
- Bullock, E., Braud, J., Andrews, L., & Phillips, J. (2009). Career concerns of unemployed U.S. war veterans: Suggestions from a cognitive information approach. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 46, 171-181.  
doi:10.1002/j.2161-1920.2009.tb00080
- Burke, H., Degeneffe, C., & Olney, M. (2009). A new disability for rehabilitation counselors: Iraq war veterans with traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 73(3), 5-14. Retrieved from <https://www.semanticscholar.org>

- Bushe, G. R. (2010). Commentary on appreciative inquiry as a shadow process. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 19(3), 234-237. doi:10.1177/1056492610369864
- Bushe, G. R. (2012). Foundations of appreciative inquiry: History, criticism, and potential. *AI Practitioner*, 14(1), 8-20. Retrieved from <http://www.gervasebushe.ca>
- Bushe, G., & Coetzer, G. (1995). Appreciative inquiry as a team development intervention: A controlled experiment. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 31(1), 13-30. doi:10.1177/0021886395311004
- Caldwell, W., & Burke, C. (2013). *America's veterans: A sound investment*. Washington, DC: Center for New American Security.
- Clavelle, P., Dickerson, S., & Murphy, M. (2012). Counseling outcomes at a U.S. Department of Defense employee assistance program. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 27(3), 127-138. doi:1080/15555240.2012.70116
- Clemens, E., & Milsom, A. (2008). Enlisted service members' transition into the civilian world of work: A cognitive information processing approach. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 56, 246-256. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.2008.tb00039
- Coghlan, A. T., Preskill, H., & Catsambas, T. (2003). An Overview of appreciative inquiry in evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 100, 5-22. doi:10.1002/ev.96
- Collins, B., Dilger, R., Dortch, C., Kapp, L., Lowry, S., & Perl, L. (2014). *Employment for veterans: Trends and programs*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.
- Cooperrider, D., & Srivastva, S. (1987). Appreciative inquiry in organizational life. In W. Pasmore, & R. Woodman (Eds.), *Research in organizational change and development* (pp. 129-169). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Cooperrider, D. L., Whitney, D., & Stavros, J. M. (2008). *Appreciative inquiry handbook: For leaders of change (2nd Ed.)*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (4th Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Cutler, T. (2002). *The bluejacket's manual: United States Navy*. Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute.
- Daley, J. (1999). *Social work practice in the military*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.
- Damp, D. (2008). *The book of U.S. government jobs: Where they are, what's available, and how to get one*. Mckees Rocks, PA: Bookhaven Press LLC.
- Davis, V., & Minnis, S. (2016). Military veterans' transferrable skills: An HRD practitioner dilemma. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 19(1), 6-13.  
doi:10.1177/1523422316682961
- Demers, A. (2011). When veterans return: The role of community in reintegration. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 16, 160-179. doi:10.1080/15325024.2010.519281
- DiRamio, D., & Spires, M. (2009). Partnering to assist disabled veterans in transition. *New Directions for Student Services*, 126, 81-88. doi:10.1002/ss.319
- Dohrenwend, B., Askenasy, A., Krasnoff, L., & Dohrenwend, B. (1978). Exemplification of a method for scaling life events: The PERI life events scale. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 19(2), 205-229. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org>
- Drummet, A., Coleman, M., & Cable, S. (2003). Military families under stress: Implications for family life education. *Family Relations*, 52, 279-287.  
doi:10.1111/j.1741-3729.2003.00279
- Dunivin, K. (1994). Military culture: Change and continuity. *Armed Forces & Society*, 20(4), 531-547. doi:10.1177/0095327X9402000403
- Durdella, N. (2019). *Qualitative dissertation methodology: A guide for research design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Ebaugh, H. (1988). *Becoming an ex: The process of role exit*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Egan, T. M., & Lancaster, C. M. (2005). Comparing appreciative inquiry to action research: OD practitioner perspectives. *Organizational Development Journal*, 23(2), 29-49. Retrieved from [https://isodc.org/OD\\_journal](https://isodc.org/OD_journal)
- Eldred, L. (2000). *From warriors to wingtips: The leadership transition of retired officers* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (9967337).
- Elnitsky, C., Blevins, C., Fisher, M., & Magruder, K. (2017). Military service member and veteran reintegration: A critical review and adapted ecological model. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 87(2), 114-128. doi:10.1037/ort0000244
- Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., Guido, F. M., Patton, L. D., & Renk, K. A. (2010). *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice (2nd Ed.)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Exec. Order No. 13518, 3 C.F.R. 267 (2009), reprinted as amended in 3 U.S.C. 301 app. at 404-07 (2012).
- Falk, J. (2017). *Comparing benefits and total compensation in the federal government and the private sector, 2011 to 2015*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbo.gov>
- Figley, C., & Southerly, W. (1980). Psychosocial adjustment of recently returned veterans. In C. Figley, & S. Levantan (Eds), *Strangers at home: Vietnam veterans since the war* (pp.167-179). New York, NY: Praeger.
- Fiske, M., & Chiriboga, D. (1990). *The Jossey-Bass and behavioral science series: Change and continuity in adult life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Fitzgerald, S. P., Oliver, C., & Hoxsey, J. (2010). Appreciative inquiry as a shadow process. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 19(3), 220-233. doi:10.1177/1056492609349349
- Ford, D. (2017). Talent management and its relationship to successful veteran transition into the civilian workplace: Practical integration strategies for the HRD professional. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 19(1), 36-53. doi:10.1177/1523422316682736
- Folkman, S., & Moskowitz, J.T. (2004). Coping: Pitfalls and promise. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 55, 745-774. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.55.090902.141456

- Foster, L., & Vince, S. (2009). *California's women veterans: The challenges and needs of those who served*. Retrieved from <https://www.library.ca.gov/crb>
- Frank, F. D., Finnegan, R. P., & Taylor, C. R. (2004). The race for talent: Retaining and engaging workers in the 21st century. *Human Resources Planning*, 27(3), 12-25. Retrieved from <https://www.hrps.org/resources>
- French, J. R., Caplan, R. D., & Van Harrison, R. (1982). *The mechanisms of job stress and strain*. New York, NY: John Wiley.
- Gergen, K. (1985). Social constructionist inquiry: Context and implications. In K. Gergen & K. Davis (Eds.), *The social construction of the person* (pp. 3-18) doi:10.1007/978-1-4612-5076-0\_1
- Gibbs, G. R. (2007). Analyzing qualitative data. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The Sage qualitative research kit*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Given, L. (2011). Descriptive Research. In N. J. Salkind (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Measurement and Statistics* (pp. 251-253). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Gonzalez, J. M. (2016). *The experiences of army enlisted veterans working in non-defense industries and perceived influence has on their self-identity* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrived from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (1767756548)
- Goodman, J., Schlossberg, N. L., & Anderson, M. L. (2006). *Counseling adults in transition: Linking practice with theory*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing.
- Goodman, L. A. (1961). Snowball Sampling. *The Annals of Mathematical Statistics*, 32(1), 148-170. doi:10.1214/aoms/1177705148
- Grady, M. (1998). *Qualitative and action research: A practitioner handbook*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.
- Grandjean, B. (1981). History and career in a bureaucratic labor market. *American Journal of Sociology*, 86(5), 1057-1092. doi:10.1177/001979398503800204
- Greet, T. (2017). Career development for women veterans: Facilitating successful transitions from military service to civilian employment. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 19(1), 54-65. doi:10.1177/1523422316682737

- Griffin, K., & Gilbert, C. (2015). Better transition for troops: An application of Schlossberg's transition framework to analyses of barriers and institutional support structures for student veterans. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 86(1), 71-97. doi:10.1353/jhe.2015.0004
- Hall, K. (2011). The importance of understanding military culture. *Social Work in Health Care*, 50(1), 4-18. doi:10.1080/00981389.2010.513914
- Hammond, S. (1996). *The thin book of appreciative inquiry*. Plano, TX: Thin Book.
- Harrell, M., & Berglass, N. (2012). *Employing America's veterans: Perspective from business*. Washington, DC: Center for New American Security.
- Harrod, M., Miller, E. M., Henry, J., & Zivin, K. (2017). "I've never been able to stay in a job": A qualitative study of Veterans' experience of maintaining employment. *Work*, 57(2), 259-268. doi: 10.3233/WOR-172551
- Hazle, M., Wilcox, S., & Hassan, A. (2012). Helping veterans and their families fight on. *Advances in Social Work*, 13(1), 229-242. doi: 10.18060/2051
- Hoge, C. W., Auchterlonie, J. L., & Milliken, C. S. (2006). Mental health problems, use of mental health services, and attrition from military service after returning from deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan. *JAMA*, 295(9), 1023-1032. doi:10.1001/jama.295.9.1023
- Holmes, T. H., & Rahe, R. H. (1967). The social readjustment rating scale. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 11, 213. doi: 10.1016/022-3999(67)90010-4
- Hudson, F. M. (1991). *The adult years: Mastering the art of self-renewal (Rev. ed.)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. (2010). *Returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan: Preliminary assessment of readjustment needs of veterans, service members, and their families*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- Irvine, A. (2011). Duration, dominance and depth in telephone and face-to-face interviews: A comparative exploration. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 10(3), 202-220. doi: 10.1177/160940691101000302

- Jackson, J., Thoemmes, F., Jonkmann, K., Ludtke, O., & Trautwein, U. (2012). Military training and personality trait development: Does the military make the man or does the man make the military? *Psychological Science, 23*(3), 270-277. doi:10.1177/095679761111423545
- Johnson, T. (2014). Service after serving: Does veterans' preference diminish the quality of the US federal service? *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 25*, 669-696. doi:10.1093/jopart/muu033
- Kahn, R. L., Wolfe, D. M., Quinn, R. P., Snoek, J. D., & Rosenthal, R. A. (1964). *Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity*. New York, NY: John Wiley.
- Karney, L. S., Ramchand, R., Osilla, K. C., Caldarone, L. B., & Burns, R. M. (2008). *Invisible wounds: Predicting the immediate and long-term consequences of mental health problems in veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom*. Retrieved from [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/working\\_papers/2008/RAND\\_WR546.sum.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/working_papers/2008/RAND_WR546.sum.pdf)
- Kelly, J. (2014). Strengthening our naval profession through a culture of leader development. *Naval War College Review, 67*(1), 7-11. Retrieved from <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>
- Kelm, J. (2005). *Appreciative living: The principles of appreciative inquiry in personal life*. Wake Forest, NC: Venet.
- Kelty, R., Kleykamp, M., & Segal, D. (2010). The military and the transition to adulthood. *The Future of the Children, 20*(1), 181-207. doi:10.1353/foc.0.0045
- Kilpatrick, F., Cummings, M., & Jennings, M. (1964). *The Image of the Federal Service*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Kirk, A., & Brown, D. (2003). Employee assistance programs: A review of the management of stress and wellbeing through workplace counseling and consulting. *Australian Psychologist, 38*, 138-143. doi:10.1080/000500060310001707137
- Kopp, E. (2015, August 17). Veterans flock to federal jobs but don't stay long. *The Federal News Network*. Retrieved from <https://federalnewsnetwork.com>

- Kraimer, M., Shaffer, M., Harrison, D., & Ren, H. (2012). No place like home? An identity strain in perspective on repatriate turnover. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(2), 399-420. doi:10.5465/amj.2009.0644
- Lacey, M. M. (2013). *Exploring employee engagement of military veterans in federal civil service: An exploratory case study* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (1448522660)
- Lazarus, R., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing.
- Leedy, P., & Ormrod, J. E. (2001). *Practical research: Planning and design (7th ed.)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Lent, R. W., & Brown, S. D. (2013). Social cognitive model of career self-management: Toward a unifying view adaptive career behavior across the lifespan. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 60(4), 557-568. doi:10.1037/a0033446
- Levinson, D. J. (1977). The mid-life transition: A period in adult psychosocial development. *Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes*, 40(2), 99-112. doi: 10.1080/00332747.1977.11023925
- Levinson, D. J. (1978). *The Seasons of a man's life*. New York, NY: Ballantine.
- Lewis, G. (2012). The impact of veterans' preference on the composition and quality of the federal civil service. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 23, 247-265. doi:10.1093/jopart/mus029
- Lewis, G., & Durst, S. L. (1995). Will locality pay solve recruitment and retention problems in the federal civil service? *Public Administration Review*, 55(4), 371-380. doi:10.2307/977129
- Lewis, G., & Emmert, M. (1984). Who pays for veterans' preference? *Administration and Society*, 16(3), 328-345. doi:10.1177/009539978401600304
- Lewis, G., & Frank, S. A. (2002). Who wants to work for the government? *Public Administration Review*, 62(4), 395-404. doi:10.1111/0033-3352.00193



- Lewis, S., Passmore, J., & Cantore, S. (2008). *Appreciative inquiry for change management: Using AI to facilitate organizational development*. Philadelphia, PA: Kogan Page Limited.
- Liamputtong, P. (2013). *Qualitative Research Methods*. Victoria, Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Maiden, R. P. (1988). Employee assistance program evaluation in a federal government agency. *Employee Assistance Quarterly*, 3(3-4), 191-203.  
doi:10.1300/J022v03n03\_13
- Mani, B. (1999). Challenges and opportunities for women to advance in the federal civil service: Veterans' preference and promotions. *Public Administration Review*, 59(6), 523-534. doi: 10.2307/3110300
- Mani, B. (2001). Women in the federal civil service: Career advancement, veterans' preference and promotions. *Public Administration Review*, 59(6), 523-534  
doi:10.2307/3110300
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (2006). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Masi, D., & Goff, M. (1987). The evaluation of employee assistance programs. *Public Personnel Management*, 16(4), 323-327. doi:10.1177/009102608701600404
- Mauch, J., & Birch, J. (1993). *Guide to the successful thesis and dissertation*. New York, NY: M. Dekker.
- McNamee, S. (2003). Appreciative evaluation within a conflicted educational context. In H. Presskill, & A. T. Coghlan (Eds.), *Using appreciative inquiry in evaluation* (pp. 23-40). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. (2005). How adult life transitions foster learning and development. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 108, 3-13. doi:10.1002/ace.193
- Minnis, S. (2017). Veterans in career transition and employment. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 19(1), 3-5. doi:10.1177/1523422316682951
- Moore, D. & Trout, B. (1978). Military advancement: The visibility theory of promotion. *The American Political Science Review*, 72(2), 452-468. doi:10.2307/1954104

- Moore, J. (2014, March 10). Veterans make up growing share of federal workforce so why is their morale faltering? *The Federal News Network*. Retrieved from <http://federalnewsnetwork.com>
- Morin, R. (2011). *The difficult transition from military to civilian life*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/12/08/the-difficult-transition-from-military-to-civilian-life/>
- Nassaji, H. (2015). Qualitative and descriptive research: Data type versus data analysis. *Language Teaching Research*, 19(2), 129-132. doi:10.1177/132168815572747
- Oh, S. S., & Lewis, G. B. (2013). Performance ratings and career advancement in the federal civil service. *Public Management Review*, 15(5), 740-761. doi:10.1080/14719037.2012.725756
- Orazem, R., Frazier, P., Schnurr, P., Oleson, H., Carlson, K., Litz, B., & Sayer, N. (2016). Identity adjustment among Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans with reintegration difficulty. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 9(1), 4-11. doi:10.1037/tra0000225
- Ornstein, S., Cron, W. L., & Slocum, J. W. (1989). Life stage versus career stage: A comparative test of the theories of Levinson and Super. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 10(2), 117-133. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030100203>
- Ostovary, F., & Dapprich, J. (2011). Challenges and opportunities of operation enduring freedom/operation Iraqi freedom veterans with disabilities transitioning into learning and workplace environments. *New Directions for Adult Continuing Education*, 2011(132), 63-73. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.432>
- Parse, R. (2001). *Qualitative inquiry: The path of sciencing*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers
- Partnership for Public Service. (2014). *Fed figures: Federal departures*. Retrived from <https://ourpublicservice.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/abd589d0e0dcd9336101e81858a0d2f6-1399994024.pdf>
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Pepperdine University Institutional Review Boards. (2009). *Pepperdine university protection of human participants in research: Policies and procedures manual*. Malibu, CA: Pepperdine University.

Pitts, D., Marvel, J., & Fernandez, S. (2011). So hard to say goodbye? Turnover intention among federal employees. *Public Administration Review*, 71(5), 751-760. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2011.02414

Pratt, C. (2002). Creating unity from competing integrities: A case study in appreciative inquiry methodology. In R. E. Fry (Ed.), *Appreciative inquiry and organizational transformation: Reports from the field* (pp. 99-120). Westport, CT: Quorum Books.

Ramchand, R., Schell, T. L., Jaycox, L., & Tanielian, T. (2011). Epidemiology of trauma events and mental health outcomes among service members deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. In J. I. Ruzek, P. Schnurr, J. J. Vasterling, & M. J. Friedman (Eds.), *Caring for Veterans with Deployment-Related Stress Disorders* (pp. 13-34). Washington, DC: American Psychology Association.

Raskin, P. (2002). Identity in adulthood: Reflections on recent theory and research. *Identity*, 2(1), 101-108. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532706XID0201\\_06](https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532706XID0201_06)

Redmond, S. A., Wilcox, S. L., Campbell, S., Kim, A., Finney, K., Barr, K., & Hassan, A. M. (2015). A Brief Introduction to the Military Workplace Culture. *Work*, 50(1), 9-20. doi:10.3233/WOR-141987

Reed, J. (2007). *Appreciative inquiry: Research for change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Reger, M., Etherage, J., Reger, G., & Gahm, G. (2008). Civilian psychologist in an army culture: The ethical challenge of cultural competence. *Military Psychology*, 20(1), 21-35. doi:10.1080/08995600701753144

Rein, L. (2015, August 28). Record number of veterans are getting jobs in the government - but a lot of them quit. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com>

- Rein, L., & Wax-Thibodeaux, E. (2015, September 1). Veterans: Federal jobs can be a bad fit, so many of us leave. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com>
- Resnik, L., Bradford, D., Glynn, S., Jette, A., Hernandez, C., & Wills, S. (2012). Issues in defining and measuring veteran community reintegration: Proceedings of the working group on community reintegration, VA rehabilitation outcomes conference, Miami, Florida. *Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development*, 49(1), 87-100. doi: 10.1682 /JRRD.2010.06.0107
- Roberts, C. (2010). *The dissertation journey*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Robertson, H., Miles, R., & Mallen, M. (2014). Career transition and military veterans: An overview of literature from 2000 to 2013. *Career Planning and Adult Development Journal*, 30(3), 14-27. Retrieved from [www.careernetwork.org/journals](http://www.careernetwork.org/journals)
- Rossman, G. B., & Rallis, S. F. (2003). *Learning in the Field*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Rudstam, H., Gower, W., & Cook, L. (2012). Beyond yellow ribbons: Are employers prepared to hire, accommodate and retain returning veterans with disabilities? *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 36, 87-95. doi:10.3233/JVR-2012-0584
- Ruh, D., Spicer, P., Vaughan, K., & Rockville, T. (2009). Helping veterans with disabilities transition to employment. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 22(1), 67-74. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ844253)
- Sadler, G. R., Lee, H. C., Lim, R. S., & Fullerton, J. (2010). Recruitment of hard-to-reach population subgroups via adaption of the snowball sampling strategy. *Nursing and Health Sciences*, 12(3), 369-374. doi: 10.1111 /j.1442-2018.2010.00541
- Saldana, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Sampson, J. P. (2012). *A guide to quantitative and qualitative dissertation research*. Tallahassee, FL: FSU Libraries Faculty Publications.

- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Focus on research methods: Whatever happened to qualitative description. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23(24), 334-340. doi:10.1002/1098.240x(200008)
- Sandelowski, M. (2009). What's in a name? Qualitative description revisited. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 33(1), 77-84. DOI: 10.1002/nur.20362
- Sayer, N., Carlson, K., & Frazier, P. (2014). Reintegration challenges in U.S. service members and veterans following combat deployment. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 8(1), 33-73. doi:10.1111/sipr.12001
- Sayer, N., Noorbaloochi, S., Frazier, P., Carlson, K., Gravely, A., & Murdoch, M. (2010). Reintegration problems and treatment interests among Iraq and Afghanistan combat veterans receiving VA medical care. *Psychiatric Services*, 61(6), 589-597. doi:10.1176/ps.2010.61.6.589
- Schafer, A., Swick, A., Kidder, K., & Carter, P. (2016). *Onward and upward: Understanding Veteran Retention and Performance in the Workforce*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/onward-and-upward>
- Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Seal, K., Bertenthal, D., Miner, C., Sen, S., & Marmar, C. (2007). Bringing the war back home: Mental health disorders among 103,788 US veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan seen at the Department of Veterans Affairs facilities. *Arch Intern Med*, 167(5), 476-482. doi:10.1001/archinte.167.5.476
- Seth, H., & Buzzetta, M. (2014). Hope for the future: Career counseling for military personnel and veterans with disabilities. *Career Planning and Adult Development*, 30(3), 52-64. Retrieved from [www.careernetwork.org/journals](http://www.careernetwork.org/journals)
- Shuayb, M., Sharp, C., Judkins, M., Hetherington, M.(2009). *Using appreciative inquiry in educational research: Possibilities and limitations* (Research Report No. 313392). Retrieved from <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications-research>
- Simpson, A., & Armstrong, S. (2010). From the military to the civilian workplace: Addressing veteran career development concerns. *Career Planning & Adult Development*, 25, 177-187. Retrieved from [www.careernetwork.org/journals](http://www.careernetwork.org/journals)

- Skinner, K., Kressin, N., Frayne, S., Tripp, T., Hankin, C., & Miller, D. (2000). The prevalence of military sexual assault among female veterans' administration outpatients. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 15*, 291-310. doi:10.1177/088626000015003005
- Smith, B. A., & Hesse-Biber, S. (1996). User's experiences with qualitative data analysis software: Neither Frankenstein's monster nor muse. *Social Science Computer Review, 14*(4), 423-432. doi:10.1177/089443939601400404
- Soeters, J. L., Winslow, D. J., & Weibull, A. (2006). Military Culture. In G. Caforio (Ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military* (pp. 237-254). Boston, MA: Springer.
- Stecker, T., & Fortney, J. (2011). Barriers to mental health treatment engagement among veterans. In J. I. Ruzek, P. Schnurr, J. Vasterling, & M. J. Friedman (Eds.), *Caring for Veterans with Deployment-Related Stress Disorders* (pp. 243-259). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Stern, L. (2017). Post 9/11 Veterans with service-connected disabilities and their transition to the civilian workforce: A review of literature. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 19*(1), 66-77. doi:10.1177/1523422316682928
- Stone, C., & Stone, D. (2014). Factors affecting hiring decisions about veterans. *Human Resource Management Review, 25*(1), 68-79. doi:10.1016/j.hrmr.201406.003
- Street, A., Kimerling, R., Bell, M. E., & Pavao, J. (2011). Sexual harassment and sexual assault during military service. In J. I. Ruzek, P. P. Schnurr, J. Vasterling, & M. Friedman (Eds.), *Caring for Veterans with Deployment-Related Stress Disorders* (pp. 131-150). Washington, DC: APA.
- Stringer, E. (2007). *Action research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Super, D. E. (1957). *The psychology of careers*. New York, NY: Harper & Brothers.
- Tanielan, T., & Jaycox, L. (2008). *Invisible wounds of war: Psychological and cognitive injuries, their consequences, and services to assist recovery*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Center for Military Health Policy.
- Taranowski, C., & Mahieu, K. (2013). Trend in employee assistance program implementation, structure, and utilization, 2009 to 2010. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health, 28*(3), 172-191. doi:10.1080/15555240.2013.808068

- Teclaw, R., Osatuke, K., & Ramsel, D. (2016). Workplace perceptions of veterans and nonveterans in the Department of Veterans Affairs. *Military Psychology, 28*(5), 344-352. doi:10.1037/mil0000126
- Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- U. S. Census Bureau. (2011). *Newsroom: Facts for Features*. Retrieved from [http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts\\_for\\_features\\_special\\_editions/c\\_b10-ff21.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/c_b10-ff21.html).
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2008). *Employment situation of veterans: 2007*. Retrieved from [https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/vet\\_04102008.pdf](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/vet_04102008.pdf)
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2010). *America's heroes at work supporting the employment success of returning service members with TBI & PTSD*. Retrieved from [https://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/2010AHW\\_brochure\\_508.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/2010AHW_brochure_508.pdf)
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2017). *Employment Situation of Veterans - 2016*. Retrieved from [https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/vet\\_03222017.pdf](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/vet_03222017.pdf)
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (N. D.). *Onsite sponsor guide to onboarding veterans and military service member*. Retrieved from [www.vaforvets.va.gov/docs/onboarding\\_OnsiteSupervisorGuide.pdf](http://www.vaforvets.va.gov/docs/onboarding_OnsiteSupervisorGuide.pdf)
- U.S. Office of Personnel Management. (2016). *Employment of Veterans in the Federal Executive Branch, Fiscal Year 2015*. Retrieved from <https://www.fedshirevets.gov/veterans-council/veteran-employment-data/employment-of-veterans-in-the-federal-executive-branch-fy2015.pdf>
- U.S. Office of Personnel Management. (2018). *Sizing up the Executive Branch Fiscal Year 2017*. Retrieved from <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/data-analysis-documentation/federal-employment-reports/reports-publications/sizing-up-the-executive-branch-2016.pdf>
- Vanderschuere, M. (2016). *Continued Service? Understanding Military Turnover Intention Among Federal Employees*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (10113169)
- Veterans' Benefits, Definitions, 38 U.S.C. & 101 (2006).

- Vogt, D. S., Dutra, L., Reardon, A., Zisseron, R., & Miller, M. (2011). Assessment of trauma, posttraumatic stress disorder, and related mental health outcomes. In J. I. Ruzek, P. A. Schnurr, J. J. Vasterling, & M. J. Friedman (Eds.), *Caring for Veterans with Deployment-Related Stress Disorders* (pp. 59-85). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Weitzman, E. A. (2000). Software and qualitative research. In N. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 803 -820. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Wertsch, M. (1991). *Military brats: Legacies of childhood inside the fortress*. New York, NY: Harmony Books.
- Wheeler, H. (2012). Veterans' transitions to community college: A case study. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 36(10), 775-792. doi:10.1080/10668926.2012.679457
- Whitney, D., & Trosten-Bloom, A. (2003). *The power of appreciative inquiry*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Zemke, R., Raines, C., & Filipczak, B. (2000). *Generations at work: Managing the clash of veterans, boomers, Xers, and nexters in your workplace*. New York, NY: Amacom.
- Zgoda, K. (2007). HyperRESEARCH. *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, 25(4), 109-113. doi:10.1300/J017v25n04\_a



## Appendix A

### *Recruitment Letter*

The President  
Federal Veterans Employee Organization  
Washington, DC

My name is Marco Reburiano, and I am a doctoral candidate at the Pepperdine University, Graduate School of Education and Psychology. I am conducting a study regarding the transition and retention of veterans in the federal civil service. The purpose of my study is to explore the transition experience of those veterans who made a career in the federal civil service and attained a leadership position. Their experience will help to create insightful strategies to retain newly hired veterans in the federal government.

I am requesting to interview at least 10 individuals from your organization either by telephone or face to face, depending on their preference. The interview will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The criteria for inclusion are as follows:

1. Must be a military veteran
2. Must have more than 5 years of work experience in the federal civil service
3. Must be in a leadership position, which can be supervisory, managerial, or executive

The interview will be recorded so that data can be captured correctly. All identity of the participants including any identifiable information (e.g, participants' agency) will remain confidential. Each participant will be coded with a pseudonym. All audio recordings and transcript data will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

Participation in the study is voluntary. If any of your members would like to participate in the study, I may be contacted directly through email, [marco.reburiano@pepperdine.edu](mailto:marco.reburiano@pepperdine.edu) or through phone, [REDACTED]. A consent form will be forwarded along with the interview questions to allow participants to prepare and reflect on the questions.

Please let me know if you have any questions and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Marco Reburiano  
Doctoral Candidate  
Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

## APPENDIX B

### Informed Consent

#### PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

#### *Graduate School of Education and Psychology (GSEP)*

#### INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

#### **MILITARY VETERANS IN THE FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE: A QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTIVE STUDY USING SCHLOSSBERG'S TRANSITION THEORY AND APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY TO IMPROVE REINTEGRATION AND RETENTION**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Marco Reburiano, MAM and Paul Sparks, Ph.D. at Pepperdine University, because you are a military veteran who has at least 5 or more years working for the federal government and in a leadership position. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will also be given a copy of this form for you records.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study is to explore the experience of those veterans who transitioned successfully into the federal civil service and has attained a leadership position. The position could be supervisory, managerial, or executive level. Exploring the experience of veteran leaders could provide insights for the development of a strategy to retain newly hired veterans in the federal civil service.

#### **STUDY PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

1. Review the open-ended interview questions before the interview

2. Review the informed consent form
3. Respond to the interview questions
4. Agree for the interview to be audio recorded

### **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

The potential and foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study is minimal which include the breach of confidentiality.

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

While there are no direct benefits to the study participants, there are several anticipated benefits to society. One of the anticipated benefits is the contribution to the body of knowledge relating to the study of military veterans in leadership role in the federal civil service. Additionally, results of this study will contribute to retention strategies of newly hired veterans in the federal government.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

I will keep your records for this study confidential as far as permitted by law. However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if you tell me about instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine's University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

The data will be stored on a password-protected computer in the principal investigators place of residence. The data will be stored for a minimum of three years. The data collected will be transcribed and coded for validity and reliability. There will be no identifiable information obtained in connection with this study. Your name, address or other identifiable information including the name of your organization will not be collected. Your responses will be coded with a pseudonym and transcript data will be maintained separately. The audio-tapes will be destroyed once they have been transcribed.

**PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

**ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION**

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or completing only the items which you feel comfortable.

**EMERGENCY CARE AND COMPENSATION FOR INJURY**

If you are injured as a direct result of research procedures you will receive medical treatment; however, you or your insurance will be responsible for the cost. Pepperdine University does not provide any monetary compensation for injury

**INVESTIGATOR’S CONTACT INFORMATION**

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact Marco Reburiano at [REDACTED] or Dr. Paul Sparks at [REDACTED] if I have any other questions or concerns about this research.

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research, in general, please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University  
6100 Center Drive Suite 500  
Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu).

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**



I have explained the research to the participants and answered all of his/her questions. In my judgment the participants are knowingly, willingly and intelligently agreeing to participate in this study. They have the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study and all of the various components. They also have been informed participation is voluntarily and that they may discontinue their participation in the study at any time, for any reason.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX C

Background Information

Pseudonym \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your gender? \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ 20 – 29 \_\_\_\_\_ 30 – 39 \_\_\_\_\_ 40 – 49

\_\_\_\_\_ 50 – 59 \_\_\_\_\_ 60 – 69

2. What was your branch of service? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many years did you serve in the military? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What was your rank before you left the service? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you have a service-connected disability rated by the VA? \_\_\_\_\_

6. How many years have you been a Federal Employee? \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is your current leadership position? \_\_\_\_\_

8. How long have you been in your leadership position? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Why did you want to work in the Federal Civil Service?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Can you provide a brief summary of your transition from the military to federal civil service and the challenges you encountered?

## APPENDIX D

### Appreciative Inquiry Interview Questions

1. Discovery – Appreciating the best of what is:
  - Q1: What attracted you to federal civil service that you find most meaningful, valuable, challenging, or exciting that you decided to stay and make it a career?
  - Q2: Think back over your career as a federal employee through all of its ups and downs. What do you consider the peak experience, a time when you felt most committed, most connected, and most alive in your work?
  - Q3: What are the things you value most about yourself as a veteran in relation to the nature of your work and your organization?
  - Q4: What is the most important thing that your organization or agency has contributed to your life?
2. Dream – Envisioning what might be
  - Q1: What is your vision for veterans who want to continue serving the country by working in the federal civil service?
  - Q2: Imagine it is five years from today. What possibilities do you see in your organization regarding the hiring and retaining of veterans?
3. Design – Determining the ideal
  - Q1: What is the ideal strategy to retain veterans in the federal civil service?
  - Q2: If you were to design an onboarding process for veterans, what would it be?
4. Destiny – Create what will be



Q1: What are the top three priorities that every federal agency needs to do to retain veterans?

Q2: If you were to create a policy in your organization regarding the hiring and retaining of veterans, what would that policy be?

Q3: During orientation, you were asked to give a talk to advise newly hired veterans. What would be your advice?

# APPENDIX E

## IRB Approval Notice



Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

### NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: October 16, 2018

Protocol Investigator Name: Marco Reburiano

Protocol #: 18-09-854

Project Title: Military Veterans in the Federal Civil Service: A Qualitative Descriptive Study using Schlossberg's Transition Theory and Appreciative Inquiry to Improve Reintegration and Retention

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Marco Reburiano:

Thank you for submitting your application for expedited review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. As the nature of the research met the requirements for expedited review under provision Title 45 CFR 46.110 of the federal Protection of Human Subjects Act, the IRB conducted a formal, but expedited, review of your application materials.

Based upon review, your IRB application has been approved. The IRB approval begins today October 16, 2018, and expires on October 15, 2019.

Your final consent form has been stamped by the IRB to indicate the expiration date of study approval. You can only use copies of the consent that have been stamped with the IRB expiration date to obtain consent from your participants.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for expedited review and will require a submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB. If contact with subjects will extend beyond October 15, 2019, a continuing review must be submitted at least one month prior to the expiration date of study approval to avoid a lapse in approval.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at [community.pepperdine.edu/irb](http://community.pepperdine.edu/irb).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research