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# The Role of the Soldier in Civilian Life: Personal and Social Concerns that Influence Reintegration Processes

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The Role of the Soldier in Civilian Life:  
Personal and Social Concerns that Influence Reintegration Processes

by

Matthew J. Ahlfs

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Sociology  
Department of Sociology  
College of Arts and Sciences  
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## **Dedication**

Dedicated to the U.S. Armed Forces men and women in all branches of services and anyone who is striving to support soldiers along their journey throughout their military career. Also, to those who have been impacted by mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety and suicide within the veteran community and if you have affiliation to the men and women within the ranks of the military. This thesis is dedicated to those soldiers who are struggling with mental health concerns and those who have committed suicide. With great hopes this project is the step in the right direction to discovering optimal solutions to decrease the amount of concerns throughout our ranks and beyond.

I would like to give a sincere special thanks and honor a select few individuals and organizations. These honorable select few have continued to support this thesis and contributed to the overall optimal direction to help soldiers with their mental health concerns:

28 U.S. Army Military Soldiers whose powerful voices are captured in this thesis and will help soldiers and civilians better understand who a soldier is, who they become and who they develop into throughout their military career, and beyond.

Will Tyson, Ph. D. Emelda Curry, Ph. D. and Michael DeJonge, Ph. D. who have continued to support this project from developing a “what if” into a literature masterpiece that will help the civilian and military cultures better understand a soldier through their journey. This thesis provides the opportunity to allow us to go on with soldiers. They have supported my passion to fuse my academic and military knowledge and experiences together in order to capture the

military mindset and how it arguably conflicts with the civilian mindset of a soldier. This increases our recognition on who the soldier is and becomes.

Ferris State University ROTC Cadre. Big Rapids, MI and University of Wisconsin-River Falls ROTC Cadre. River Falls, WI – for allowing me to initiate this research at their facilities during the data collection and writing process. Each Cadre member dedicates a significant amount of time, energy and effort for their soldier's well-being. The Cadre demonstrates exemplary passion and inspiration to what it means to be a leader within the ranks of the U.S. military.

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Chris Pomeleo, Prohibition Barber Inc. Minneapolis, MN – providing great inspiration to continuing to seek ways to help and support the veteran community and help veterans redefine their mission when they reintegrate back home. His brotherhood has help create this vision to help and support soldiers.

Alex Henri, SSG. 704<sup>th</sup> Chemical Company. Arden Hills, MN – may he rest in peace. If it was not for his unfortunate suicide that affected me greatly, I would have never asked the following questions, what are we *really* doing for our veterans who come home with many mental health concerns? Why do so many veterans commit suicide? Why do they feel so alone amongst many? What can both cultures, the civilian and military culture, do better in order to decrease the number of suicides within the veteran community? And how can we truly help and support veterans who come home to a different world after enduring a deployment and obtaining unique

lived experiences that transforms who they are as a person and who they develop into? Alex was the military leader you wanted and wished for as a soldier. His passion and dedication to help train soldiers inspired me to pursue becoming an officer where I can best use my leadership skills in order to greatly impact soldier sin various and unique ways. He pushed me to use my specific skills and knowledge to look at different ways to analyze any situation that I am confronted with in order to produce multiple solutions to an issue. If it was not for his passion, support and caring to help me grow as a soldier, I would have never become an officer, nor would have I pursed my academics that way I did. Without Alex, this project would not exist. Rest in peace to one of the greatest NCO's the army has the honor to have within its ranks.

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### **Abstract:**

The intent and direction of this thesis is to recognize personal and social concerns that influence soldiers' reintegration process. The missing element in current literature is capturing the soldiers' lived experiences, ideas, perspective and knowledge of what it truly means to be a soldier and having to reintegrate back into the civilian life after being submerged the military culture for an extended period of time. One of the vital concerns to the soldiers is how civilians, specifically the community, politicians, scholars and mental health providers, are not necessary fully aware nor do they recognize the influential impacts of the experiences and environment the military culture has over the soldiers. Soldiers may suffer from depression, anxiety, isolation, alienation, lack of belonging and perceived burdensomeness upon returning home. Previous research often from the civilian point of view expects soldiers to face personal and social concerns, but this research does not allow soldiers to speak for themselves – from their military perspective and lived-experiences. The mission of this thesis, with the support of members of the US Army, is to help bridge the disconnect in communication and the lack of understanding between the two cultures, military and civilian, in order to work together to find a more improved solution on helping soldiers reintegrate processes. The main objective of the mission is to increase our awareness and understanding on who a soldier is, who they develop into and who they become throughout their military career, and how this influences their reintegration journey.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction and Reasons for the Argument**

The experiences our United States Armed Forces service members go through are a highly discussed social issue that captures the attention of scholars, mental healthcare providers and military personnel. Furthermore, experiences and concerns are largely ignored or not completely understood by politicians and the public leading to a lack of understanding of what it truly means to be a soldier. There is an existing issue the public recognizes on how soldier's experiences influence their perceived social and personal concerns that arise during their reintegration process. However, their concerns, perceivably, most of the times are "swept under the rug," where they manifest and gain significant influential power over the soldiers' mindset. Progress to support and aid soldiers is stagnated as their problems continue to escalate because the public and society does not truly understand who a soldier is and why they think, act and behave the way they do if they have not been a soldier themselves. These issues have grave repercussions and consequences when they are not addressed properly or accurately. These concerns are the importance of the discussion in which we will explore at great lengths and through in-depth accounts of soldiers themselves voicing their concerns. The problem is how to discuss and address reintegration issues in order to continually seek out better ways to help soldiers during their transition process.

I am concerned with how we *begin* to discuss soldiers' reintegration as part of the transformation that may occur over their experiences throughout the military. As a soldier myself, I am fully aware that the highly-rigid structure of the military has a goal to make you into a soldier to protect and defend the nation. I am also fully aware that as I prepare to deploy, I will likely experience a remarkable identity transformation during my time overseas and through my reintegration process. This life-changing process can completely alter a soldier's personal and social perspectives of the world.

In this thesis, I examine how soldiers exist between military and civilian cultures and how this tension contributes to problematic transitions between military culture and civilian culture for soldiers and their families. Soldiers may suffer from depression, anxiety, isolation, alienation, lack of belonging and perceived burdensomeness upon returning home, my research objective is to understand why. The military culture produces a distinct mindset soldiers must develop and enhance to continuously think differently from the other individuals – civilians. Furthermore, this way of thinking enables soldiers to always have a plan for the most dangerous course of action that can impact their surroundings and the civilians they swore to protect. One of the vital concerns to the soldiers is how the civilian community does not necessary recognize the impact of military culture on the soldiers. A soldier who has been fully immersed into the military culture attempts to reintegrate back into the civilian culture and seek help from those who may not fully understand the proper assistance they demand to adequately assist with their social concerns.

The overarching research questions that will guide this investigation are: (1) how do soldiers' perspectives on civilian and military culture influence their anticipated and actual deployment concerns and experiences; (2) what are the personal and social challenges, obstacles

and anxieties soldiers face as they go through the reintegration process, (3) and why are these concerns so influential towards the soldier's overall well-being? These questions will be grounded in sociological theory that will aid in the exploration of the soldier's perspectives. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman's role theory examines the distinct social position and role somebody performs which inevitably shapes who you are and who you will become. Using this theory, we can see how soldiers perform their role as a member of the military and how their high-tempo attitude transforms the person they have become. Through this transformation, a perceived disconnect produces a lack of recognition from their civilian counterparts. Thomas Joiner's theory of perceived burdensomeness describes social withdrawal, distancing and isolation one feels when they are experiencing conflict with themselves and others around them. Their perception, mistaken or not, shapes how they feel about themselves and interact with others around. Bruce Lincoln's theory on the dynamics of culture describes a culture in which the members are insiders or outsiders/strangers to the knowledge, embodiment and accustoms that one must recognize to fully embrace the cultural ideology, Similarly, Robert Parks' marginal man Theory describes how people existing between cultures experience conflict, tension and disruption in limbo of multiple worlds. Together, these theories will solidify my argument and provide reasonable sociological foundation for the exploration of the guiding research questions and increasing awareness of soldiers personal and social concerns during their reintegration process. Furthermore, I intend to add to the literature as throughout this thesis we will increase our knowledge and understanding on who a soldier is, develops into and becomes during their time in the military, and beyond.

## **Awareness and Understanding of the Military Culture**

### ***The Role of the Soldier***

Each branch of the military has their own distinct various codes, morals and ethics centered around pride and loyalty to the group. By examining the Warrior Ethos imbedded within the Soldier's Creed for the US Army, we can see how the four-line code shapes the perspectives of the soldier and how the military influences who they will become. "I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade" (Army 2018). This four-line code is everything that defines and exemplifies an army soldier. New recruits must recite the Warrior Ethos several times throughout the day to fully understand they must adhere to this code on and off duty. They must embody and become the code. The recognition of what it means to be a soldier is within the twenty-four-worded code they live by. Other branches have similar words that describe the honor and loyalty they share with one another. The civilian culture is highly encouraged to recognize this from the soldier's perspective for better ways to assist them on their journey home since this code represents who they are as a soldier.

The military culture permeates the highly-rigid environment that strongly encourages the soldier to become someone who places the Warrior Ethos in the forefront of their lives through formal lessons, training and peer interactions that elicits positive reinforcement. A soldier is someone who has successfully completed Basic Combat Training (BCT) with the end goal of transforming from a civilian into a soldier who is trained and capability to defend the nation. Additionally, a soldier has the possibility to be deployed to protect the nation domestically or internationally. A soldier may be preparing to be deployed, currently deployed, or has been deployed. Deployment can be conceptualized as mobilizing to another geographic location to

complete military mission essential tasks that is beyond the training environment and focused on real-world operations. The soldier must be prepared to leave the civilian culture and then re-enter when they have been immersed in the military culture for an extended period. The soldier has adopted the code and morals of the military culture and has transformed into a new person since they initially left the civilian culture.

The members of the military culture embrace and unite under the collective group mentality to accomplish all tasks they strive to achieve. JJ Collins (1998) recognizes the group's ideology when he examines the military culture with strong intent to bring awareness to practitioners to create viable solutions for the aiding in the reintegration process soldiers experience. According to Collins (1998), "military identity is infused with the values of duty, honor, loyalty and commitment to comrades, unit, and nation. It promotes self-sacrifice, discipline, obedience to legitimate authority and belief in merit-based rewards system" (Collins, 1998). Adopting this military identity is key. Collins (1998) recognizes the group's ideology when he examines the military culture with strong intent to bring awareness to practitioners to create viable solutions for the aiding in the reintegration process soldiers experience. Coll, Weiss, and Yarvis (2010) bring attention to the central reintegration concerns that is influencing on the soldier's identity and overall well-being. Their research intent is to deliver emphasis on what the military culture is through the following quote, "military values serve as a standard of conduct for military personal and these rules regulate their lives on a daily basis. Upon entry into service, military values are aggressively imposed on the service members and these norms continue to affect them on and off duty" (Coll et al 2010).

Similar to the explanation of the bonds soldier share given by Collins (1998) and Coll et al. (2010), Lighthall (2012) attempts to further articulate how the soldiers come to know

themselves. The Soldiers military and civilian identity may conflict with one another inevitably producing tension and disruption towards their transition between cultures. Lighthall (2012) attempts to investigate the military environment and how the transition into the civilian culture generates concerns that many civilians seem to push aside or are unable to fully comprehend the magnitude She describes the conflict of the soldiers and provides important context for their new civilian environment that may increase reintegration disruptions, “combat veterans often miss the intense closeness they had with their comrades, and being an environment where everyone understands them, where they’re doing a job they trained for and are competent at, where everything they do matters” (Lighthall 2012). This description not only shows how tension may arise, but also how united and close the soldiers are to one another in the military culture. Additionally, it captures vital importance on the group dynamics that influence each member considerably toward understanding one another in the context of the military environment. It observably demonstrates how civilian communities may become equipped with the knowledge to help better aid the soldier’s through their reintegration process. They can improve on their ways of finding purpose in the soldier’s daily lives outside the military culture. Additionally, the civilian culture may better assist soldiers by finding ways to incorporate their strengths into the community and institutions they find themselves embedded within the civilian culture (Orthner and Rose 2003). To give them a mission and purpose in the civilian culture is vital.

Coll et al (2010), Lighthall (2012) and Collins (1998) emphasize how the soldier is transforming into someone new through their experiences in the military. The soldiers must be made fully aware they are no longer the person they once were but are now someone else in order to better assist and understand themselves through their reintegration process. This illuminates Role Theory articulated by Berger and Luckman. When performing any given role,

you must become that role entirely. Berger and Luckman don't speak directly to soldiers; however, they theorize the transformation throughout the roles we engage and participate in that help develop who we are now and who we will become. "By playing roles, the individuals participate in a social world. By internalizing these roles, the same world becomes subjectively real to him" (Berger and Luckman 1966:74). The military culture coupled with the Warrior Ethos aggressively and deliberately transforms how the soldier once thought into a new way of thinking that focuses exclusively on the group's mission. Those two must always come first (group and the mission) but the most important aspect between these two is the mission. The soldier performs a role as they are submerged within the military culture. "To learn a role, it is not enough to acquire the routines immediately necessary for its 'outward' performance. One must also be initiated into various cognitive and even affective layers of the body of knowledge that is directly and indirectly appropriate to this role" (Berger and Luckman. 1966:75). *I will always place the mission first* is the most important thing within the soldier's mind at any given moment. What is their purpose? What is their mission? Throughout their daily lives, they always produce a mission if they are not tasked out with one. This provides them with purpose on how to improve themselves, not for their own benefit but for the group's. How can they improve themselves to better strengthen the physical, emotional and mental aspects of the group's entirety? "The roles represent the institutional order whereas the individual performance of the role represent itself and the role represent an entire nexus of conduct" (Berger and Luckman. 1966. Pp.75). I emphasize on how the role soldiers perform influence their *social and personal concerns* throughout their reintegration process. Furthermore, I intend to understand how performing the soldier role has transformed their ideas, perspectives, and who they are as a person after being in the military culture for an extended period of time.



### *All Volunteer Force Sets Apart Soldiers and Civilians*

One of the most prominent features of the military culture is the move away from a draft to an all-volunteer force of the military. In 1973 Nixon declared the end of the mandatory draft. He believed concluding the obligatory draft would be a substantial and influential political weapon against the escalating anti-war movement (Hearst, Newman and Hulley. 1986). Furthermore, he assumed young adults would no longer desire to protest the war, and its politics, when it was clear they would not have to fight, and possibly die, in Vietnam for a political mishap and no clear purpose. This feature since then and today, has created a perceived disconnect and lack of understanding to members within the civilian culture not needing or having to incorporate their lives in relations towards the military (Gewirtz et al. 2011). Civilians and other non-military personal can view war and conflict through movies, Television shows and media outlets, and when they are done with their intake on what they perceive to be happening with soldiers and the real-world issues “over there,” they turn it off and continue to their day detached from what’s *really* happening far from their understanding (Castner. 2016). Collins (1998) contends, “the move away from a draft to a volunteer force has allowed most Americans to become completely detached from military issues and the men and women who are sent to war, leading to a lack of understanding about the differences between the two worlds.” This disconnect is then created, sustained and maintained by those who will never have to experience military life. Soldiers face personal and social challenges when they swear to protect their civilian counterparts. Consequently, soldiers who choose to serve begin to socially distance themselves from the rest of their civilian counterparts during military training (Soeters, Winslow and Weibull 2006). This may certainly have detrimental social and emotional impacts but to what extent? One of the main goals of this current research argument will to better understand

and recognize how exactly the perspectives of the soldiers shape their view of themselves and the civilians – in this sense the “other” – the ones who chose not to join the ranks of the military. How does the social and emotional separation from the civilian culture influence the perspective of the soldier during their time in service? Does the social distance become wider over time with their involvement with the most abrasive and consequential realities of the military culture – the emotional effects of experiencing war?

Hall (2011) investigates the Authoritarian Structure of the military and how that influences soldiers to be obedient, display high-levels of discipline and trust in their chain of commands. A moving quote from her findings reveals that soldiers must continuously perform with a ready mindset. “[D]issimilar most civilian professions, with certainty a few exceptions such as police and firefighters, the military is a world set apart from the civilian world because of its constant preparation for disaster. This constant preparation for disaster also places a great deal of pressure and stress on the soldier and their significant others” (Hall 2011). The important takeaway from her work is to bring awareness that soldiers are fully immersed within their role they perform which generates a high-operational tempo mindset. Soldiers are continuously and effortlessly prepared for the most dangerous course of actions that can be done onto them or others around them. This mindset is often referred to within the ranks of the military as “working at 100% combat speed” or “train as you fight” because there is no room for error in a real-world mission. Soldiers are always training to do what the realities of war ask them to do, with it the impact of carrying the burden of their actions in the real-world operations (Duniven. 1994). Arguably, soldiers maintain and reinforce their military mindset in any given social environment they are submerged within at any given time. . I will continue to provide examples throughout

this literature. Let us now examine the deployment stages and how that continuously reinforces the high-operational mindset in relation to soldier's perspectives.

### *Anticipated and/or Actual Deployment Concerns*

Shepperd, Malatras and Israel (2010) tackle many of the prominent concerns that soldiers face while they are transitioning between the military and civilian culture. It's important to understand the deployment begins long before the soldier leaves and long after they return with numerous implications along the journey. Soldiers train for mission related tasks which may cause scheduling conflicts with personal and family matters. Once soldiers return, soldiers may struggle to fit in perform roles in their personal lives such as father, husband, mother, wife or other roles away from their soldier role. Shepperd, Malatras and Israel (2010) provide an in-depth analysis of the pre-deployment and post-deployment stages and how they may influence the soldier and their family. They describe the stages in three phases. Phase (1) predeployment stage initiates when the service member obtains the warning that they will soon deploy – typically within the time frame of one year, could be much sooner, but 365 days in average notification timeframe. The ensuing time before the actual departure date may be a busy time, with the service member balancing immensely increased workload as well as family preparations, responsibilities, and reactions. Phase two is the deployment. Where the soldier will conduct and execute their military operations abroad in order to successfully complete mission from their higher chain of command and on behalf of their country. They continue with the final phase, post-deployment phase. Post-deployment stage begins when the service member returns home and typically lasts for approximately three to six months. During this stage, families often face the tasks of reintegrating, renegotiating roles and areas of responsibilities and establishing new routines. The soldiers and their families are growing into new people through their lived-

experiences that have acquired throughout the duration of the deployment. (Shepperd, Malatras, and Israel 2010).

In each stage, the soldier's mindset is uninterruptedly preoccupied with training to prepare for their mission related tasks and long-term preparation for their family's well-being and their own (Finkel 2013). Soldiers spend countless hours throughout the day performing the role of the soldier to become mission effective and rehearse their critical tasks that are being asked of them to conduct while deployed to theatre (Riggs 2011). *Theatre* is another term to describe a deployable environment that may not be known to be combative or peace making but to expect the latter. In other words, theatre simply describes a soldier's deployment environment that considers various number of factors that must be considered in a given area, ethno-demographics, economics, politics, religion and recent significant activities etc. (Mercer, Whittle and Mahoney. 2010). This is among many of the reason soldiers prepare and train for the most dangerous course of action, it can happen when you least expect it in any given environment.

When soldiers return from deployment their reintegration process can be severely challenging as they must recognize they have become someone different from before they left (Ivie 2016). Soldiers who are immersed within the military culture expose themselves to numerous stressors that impact them in varying degrees and will bear heavy influence towards their performance on their role as a soldier (Wegner 2001). The military culture evokes stressors that continue to influence their perspectives in their social environment and towards the nation they vowed to protect (Alder et al. 2004). I contend these stressors are derived from the experiences the soldiers must endure as they continue a life of a soldier while they perform the necessary role that makes them who they are. The stressors generate influence on their overall

outlook on life that can potentially restrict and impose on their growth as a member within both cultures.

Arguably, one of the most common stressors that has significant influence in helping soldiers with their concerns is the geographic disparity in access to resources and support for non-active duty soldiers. Segal (2003) identifies the existing disparity among equal access to resources the soldier's demand and require from the amenities. "Reservists live and work in the civilian community and receive military training one weekend a month. As a result, reservist families are less likely to be integrated into a military social support network, are far less familiar with how to access the military benefits to which they are entitled to and are less likely to use installation-based social services" (Segal 2003). As Segal points out, the Reservists and Guardsmen's are not geographically nor informationally equal to obtain the support that are granted to their active duty counterparts through their reintegration process. Some Reservist and Guardsmen may live multiple hours away from an active duty base and if they need adequate recourse and support in order to mitigate their concerns then what? Active duty military personal are not geographically displaced because they live on or are near a military base, therefore, they have access to resources and support at their demand. This illuminates on a troubling consequence that many civilians seem to not be able to grasp. There are soldiers amidst their civilian communities that could be experiencing drastic reintegration concerns that are impacting them and their family's overall well-being (Faber, Willerton and Clymer 2008). Soldiers may not have adequate information on how to obtain the assistance they require. The presuppose assumption that civilians may observably hold is that soldiers can obtain help when they please, they just choose not to due to the stigma it carries (Woodward 2000; Finkel 2013). That may be true unfortunately in some instances but is not always the case. Reservist and Guardsmen are not

always adequately equipped socially or emotionally with the help they demand through their reintegration back as they continue to go between cultures. It is among one of my top priorities within this research to illuminate this concern through the soldier's voices themselves in ways that can better help them through their reintegration when they are amidst the civilian culture wielding uncertainty. This is crucial to understand about the current study. Placing considerate attention to Reservist and Guardsmen soldier's perspectives transform through their reintegration process that may influence social and personal concerns as they progress that could be different from their active duty counterpart.

Given this information of what we understand to be the outstanding features that make up the military culture we can move forward on the implications. Implications that spillover into the civilian culture that inevitably clash, causing serious social and personal consequences on the soldier's well-being.

### **Implications of the Military Culture:**

#### ***The Opposing Cultural Dynamics – Marginal Man Theory***

I contend that the issues with reintegration begin to surface when the soldiers are between cultures. Parks (1928: 881) speaks of migrants and how social concerns arise when they are between the cultures they are leaving and entering, "One of the consequences of migration is to create a situation in which the same individual finds himself striving to live in two diverse culture groups. The effects produce an unstable character – a personality type with characteristic forms of behavior. It is in the mind of the marginal man that the conflicting cultures meet and fuse." Soldiers precisely are in the marginal position as Park's theorizes. The military culture has its own values and norms fixed with a highly authoritarian structure that requires soldiers to do what they can do to better the group and ensure the safety and security of all members at all

times (Collins 1998; Coll et all 2011; Lighthall 2012). On the other hand, civilian culture observably is structured around individual freedom and how much one can get ahead of the others with arduous work, dedication and unremitting persistence to achieve their own goals – the American Dream mentality. Civilians may have a group benefit in mind at times but the focus of the success of their goals are for the individual to better invest in themselves to set them up for future career advancements. Individual and group mentality is one of the most distinct separations that set the military culture apart from the civilian culture. Parks (1928:883) emphasizes the necessity to understand how the marginal man develops himself as he progresses in between culture. “The movements and mingling of peoples brings rapid, sudden, and often catastrophic changes in customs and habits.” I intend to explore Parks theory of the Marginal Man among the soldiers who leave one culture for another. My focus primarily rests on bringing increased awareness to both military and civilian cultures through Park’s understanding of tension the marginal man experiences. “When old habits are being discarded and new ones are not yet formed, it is inevitably a period of inner turmoil and intense self-consciousness. In the case of the marginal man the period of crisis is relatively permanent, resulting that he tends to become a personality type. One who lives in two worlds is divided, experience distress, conflict and turmoil that interferes with integration” (Park 1968:893). It is with this idea of “one who lives in two worlds” that grants this investigation and research importance, to help us understand the personal and social distress and conflict soldiers experience during their reintegration process.

Lincoln (2003) recognizes four features that are crucial to a given group’s entirety. “Also crucial are observance of a group’s rituals, ceremonies, and etiquette, and – most broadly – manifesting behaviors and showing a sensibility that those who constitute themselves as

members of the group (1) recognize their own; (2) recognize in themselves; (3) recognize in those people with whom – as a result – they feel bound by sentiments of affinity; and (4) recognize as lacking in those whom – once more, as a result – they feel themselves estranged and constitutes as Others, or strangers” (Lincoln 2003:51). These four cultural features are crucial to understanding the military and civilian culture clash that renders a soldier, “an unstable character who is divided and distressed” (Parks 1928). We can break down Lincoln’s account of culture dynamics and illuminate three distinct members. Recognizing their own, in themselves and feeling bound of sentiment and affinity to can be described as the insider to the given culture. In my argument, the soldier is the insider. Soldiers feel bounded by morals, loyalty, honor and duty to always recognize their group’s well-being and sense of protection for one another. Soldiers also are willing to lay their life down for the ultimate protection amongst themselves and their counterparts they sworn to protect – civilians.

The last feature of a culture lacking the understanding and feeling of estranged can be described as the outsider or the stranger. In my argument, these can be individuals who are detached from the military and have never experienced the role and identity of being a soldier. For all intents and purposes, this can include soldier’s family members as they struggle to understand that their loved one [their soldier] at times is unable to communicate to them what they are feeling when personal and social concerns arise (Drummet, Coleman and Cable 2003). Outsiders and strangers are unable to completely understand the magnitude of being a soldier because they have never been through the lived experiences of what it means to walk in the boots of a soldier. This recognition creates a lack of awareness and disconnect between communication of the two cultures that imposes on both members to understand each other. Lincoln (2003) contends, “culture is thus the prime instrument through which groups mobilize themselves,



construct their collective identity, and effect their solidarity by excluding those whom they identify as outsiders, while simultaneously establishing their own internal hierarchy, based on varying degrees of adherence to those values that define the group and its members” (Lincoln 2003:52). This description helps solidify my research intent and direction in so much as to illuminate on the various members within the military and civilian culture who observably contribute to the clash that may hinder personal and social concerns through the soldier’s reintegration process. More so, to explore how soldiers perceive themselves within both cultures placing considerate emphasis on their perspective towards those who understand them [insiders] and those who are unable to [outsiders/strangers].

### ***Coping Mechanisms and Abrupt Awareness of Social Position***

Blow et al. (2017) explore how soldiers and their families cope prior to leaving and returning from the deployment by understanding the active (positive) and avoidant (negative) coping mechanisms the soldiers engage in when they reintegrate back into the civilian culture. Active coping mechanisms are acceptance of becoming someone new and utilizing effective social support systems to help ease the transition through the reintegration process. Avoidant coping mechanisms are perceived to be attacks or worsens the overall well-being of the soldiers to include; denial, substance abuse, behavioral disengagements and emotional distancing from family. Coping mechanisms may have grave influence on how soldier’s view themselves and others when they progress through the reintegration process. Blow et al. (2017) explain that “home life is more chaotic when the soldier returns home leading him/her to step into a less organized family environment (especially compared to the military) with members not used to consistent routines and rules. This stress likely reflects a soldier struggling to fit back into family life post-deployment, with a significant other disengaged.” We must recognize where, how and

to what extent the anxieties from the soldier's perspective begin to strengthen as it holds vital consequences to themselves, to include others around them, through reintegration – unfortunately the worst case imaginable, suicide (Castro and Kintzle 2014). Their personal and social identity conflict with the military culture (their old selves) and with the civilian culture (their current and new self) transforming them into someone new (Church 2009).

### ***Changes in Perspectives – Perceived Burdensomeness***

Soldiers are constantly recognizing the social situation in which they find themselves submerged within. They compare where they have been, where they are now, and where they envision themselves to be (Finkel 2009). They often reminisce on what they have done in places they have been stationed or deployed to recognizing within themselves the dynamics of who they have become through their cultural belongingness. They attempt to contrast the immense differences within the civilian culture from the military culture towards those who have not experienced what they have as a soldier (Pease, Billera and Gerard 2016). Demers (2011) mentions an important consideration often we either ignore or don't fully comprehend, "soldiers notice perceptions of differences (between themselves and civilians and between who they were prior to war and who they are now), tension between wanting to reconnect with civilians (including family) and wanting to retreat from them, coping mechanisms, and support for transition" (Demers 2011). Throughout her work she discovers various themes that encompass the significant confusion soldiers hold when they reintegrate back into the civilian culture such as soldiers often feel alone amongst many, change in self-perception, alterations on past social activities and relationships leading them to feel isolated from the rest of society. Furthermore, soldiers begin to socially and emotionally distance themselves from the rest of the civilian culture – who they feel don't understand who they are (Laser and Stephens 2011). Parks (1928)

addresses this precise feeling of loneliness and change in perceptions, “The movements and mingling of peoples bring rapid, sudden, and often catastrophic changes in customs and habits” (Parks. 1928:883). Parks emphasized when one migrates into a different culture they often meet conflict, tension and disturbances along the way that creates an unstable and volatile environment onto their character.

The themes Demers (2011) highlights are important to be aware of how the features continuously construct the perspectives of the soldiers towards civilians and their culture’s ideologies. More so, when these perceptions generate feelings of social and emotional withdrawal from the other members in the culture, these emotions become powerfully influential on the soldier’s well-being. Joiner (2005) argues when one experiences *perceived burdensomeness* they are likely feeling intense hopelessness, emotional pain, lack of belonging and feeling a burden onto others around them. More specifically, perceived burdensomeness is associated with feelings of ineffectiveness and these feelings may manifest predominantly in close relationships and others in their immediate surroundings. “If you let yourself down, the experience is not pleasant, but it is contained – it affects just you. If you let your group down, you experience all the negative aspects of letting yourself down (because you are part of that group), but you also experience the sense that your ineffectiveness is not contained, that it negatively affects others” (Joiner 2005:97). Letting down a group is worse because, “they perceive that this ineffectiveness that negatively affects everyone is stable and permanent, forcing a choice between continued perceptions of burdening others and escalating feelings of shame” (Joiner 2005:98). Joiner emphasizes how the person’s perception is powerful, mistaken or not, may influence thoughts, behavior, decisions and who they are as a person. Given Joiner’s account of perceived burdensomeness, I intend to investigate the powerfully perceived personal

and social concerns that arise during the reintegration process that inevitably influence the soldier's behavior and who they transform into.

Newby (2005) captures minor details that enable the perceived belief that soldier's hold while they endure throughout their military career and a deployment. Thoughts focused on what they have experienced through deploying to a theatre environment overseas in which they carried out their military related tasks and missions. His research mission and intent desires to gain both positive and negative perceptions soldiers believe due to the strong belief that deployments are associated with only negative implications. Newby (2005) notes the themes throughout the positive perceptions; financially stable, realized how much their family/significant others mean to them, never take things for granted no matter how mundane they may seem, being there made them feel a sense of purpose for their country and Bosnia, and numerous reports on self-improving as a person. However, the negative outcomes deemed to be more impactful; away from family created emotionally disconnect/distancing, trouble sleeping, difficulties getting out of high-tempo mindset when their back home, found it easier to become emotionless, and lastly, feels like nobody will understand them or allow them to fit in to larger community/society (Newby 2005). A change in mindset may be the solution to make leaving, performing the role of the soldier and reintegrating back easier for all members of a military family, most importantly the soldier (Riggs and Riggs 2011). The soldier's family and themselves must "hunt the good stuff." This is a military saying to seek out the positives rather than the negatives of any situation. Amidst the military mindset and constantly readying and preparing for the worse, the military ensures the soldiers are mentally resilient in order for them to be in a position to continuously hunt the good stuff. Soldiers must recognize they are becoming a better person through personal growth as they endure the hardships of the soldier way of life.

As the negative perceptions from the soldier's experience provide alarming context so does the soldier's family. The family endures a deployment as well, not in the sense they are conducting military operations abroad, but they must become accustomed, adapt and overcome in their everyday lives in the physical absence of their soldier when they deploy. Often, the only thing discussed in association with the military reintegration process has negative connotations. However, Huebner et al. (2007) attempt to explain the all-encompassing negative features the soldiers live through in accordance to the theoretical framework of *ambiguous loss*, a term coined by Boss (1999). "There but not there" and "here but not here" are the two descriptions of this theoretical framework that largely concentrates on the emotional and psychological levels that soldiers, along with their families, suffer from (Boss. 1999). The authors explain the feeling of loss begins prior to the soldier getting deployed and progresses through the deployment long after their return. Emphasizing the worsening of uncertainty on what is to happen to them while they are absent from their family. Children of soldiers reported "numerous signs consistent with depression, including loss of interest in regular activities, isolation, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, sadness, and crying. They also reported elevated levels of anxiety about their parent's duties and safety while deployed" (Huebner et al 2007). This article demonstrates the importance on meaning-making and how the deployment is mostly associated with a negative association. What if their negative connotations are too powerful to shake? How does this impede on the soldier's way of thinking?

"Here but not here" is common for soldiers who have experienced deployments, even more so for those who have experienced combat deployments. At times, they may relive an event that had catastrophic emotional impact on them (Marlantes 2012). They may ponder an unfortunate decision they have acted on or not. Inevitably producing severe guilt or even

tremendous emotional disturbances through regrets (Wood 2016). Combat trauma is best understood as emotional disturbance due to experience or exposure to: (1) death due to war, (2) instances of physical abuse, (3) dead or decomposing bodies, (4) maimed soldiers or civilians, and/or (5) prison of war or refuges with the preceding incidents occurring to them” (Gerhman et al 2013;1010). These tragic events are typical among soldiers in combat deployments. When a soldier is on a combat deployment, they *expect* to engage in a firefight in which they must eliminate the enemy combative before they are eliminated, thus producing the “Them or Me” mentality. “I must eliminate them, or they will kill me.”

It’s important to understand the soldier *will* be engaged in a firefight during combat missions “outside the wire” (outside the perimeters of the Forward Operating Base they are stationed at during deployments). They are commonly placed in life or death situations that will have drastic emotional and mental impacts long after they reintegrate into the civilian culture. Typically, they don’t have any time to think about what they have done during the deployment due to the chaos and business that is asked of them during their missions (Junger 2011; Finkel 2013). Constant preparation for the upcoming mission, receiving briefs on their surroundings and important individuals within the geographic area, and rehearsing mission essential tasks take up most of their “off-time” (free-time) during deployments. When they reintegrate back into the civilian culture is when they consider what they have done and been through. They are deemed to be in the Marginal Man position when they are reintegrating and between cultures. Why does this matter? How does this continue to influence how soldiers perceive themselves and their surroundings when they are reintegrated into the civilian culture? It matters to the soldier and their family as they return to the civilian culture where they must find their mission (their civilian culture goal) to help ease their reintegration. It matters to their emotional well-being as it begins

to exacerbate when they are no longer in a military environment, no longer surrounded by members who understand and know what it means to be a soldier, and no longer with the people that know them best, arguably more than their own families (Junger 2011; Cole 2014). When they are no longer with the people they understand in the way a military member does, their own sense of perceived burdensomeness onto others around them in their social environment may begin to gain ground.

It's important to understand soldiers often feel alienated from the others in society who have not experienced the traumatic encounters or the degree of stress they were exposed to during combat. I strongly believe implementing social support on campuses, and in communities in general will greatly benefit the soldiers substantially easing their social concerns as they reintegrate. Soldiers wish to be listened to and be heard from what they have experienced during their time in service (Elliot, Gonzalez and Larsen 2001); however, they often feel nobody cares or doesn't really want to know what they have done (Tick 2005). This typically leads to emotional distancing that impedes on their overall well-being. Even though their mindset and high-operational tempo is consistently activated they desire to feel a sense of belonging within civilian communities (Burnett and Segorgia 2009). Soldiers need to have a mission in the civilian culture and a sense of direction that benefits the overall group they are now socially attached to. If one even exists for them within the civilian culture.

While soldier desire to fit in, difficulties may arise preventing them from doing so. The high-operational tempo mindset ensures soldiers are always thinking and doing "100% combat speed" in their behavior as they bounce between cultures. When thinking at the high-operational tempo, one begins to consider every dangerous course of action and they have multiple plans for all circumstances that may arise. To others, this behavior may show a strong association with

paranoia or hypervigilance (Sites 2013). Allowing them to further their emotional distance from the soldiers they are exposed to throughout the civilian culture. This behavior of the high-operational tempo mindset is best described through Coll et al (2011) when he referred it to 'autonomic hyper-arousal' to describe soldiers' mentality when they return to the civilian culture. The researchers state, "meaning they are always on guard and fearful of encountering the terrifying circumstances that haunt them. Isolation is common because they find it difficult to trust other people and environment, and their need for safety and protection outweighs all other considerations for intimacy, socialization, or pleasurable pursuits" (Coll et al 2011). Soldiers are presumably observed within this mindset. No matter the social environment soldiers find themselves in they may be constantly on guard of those around them and their immediate surroundings. It's not their paranoid or frightened of the worse scenario from happening or events that haunt them but it's the observed understanding that soldiers are always prepared for the most dangerous course of action to occur. Soldiers always have a plan, and backup plan when things go "south" or downhill from the expectations of the norm. To their civilian counterparts, soldiers are presumably observed to be socially ostracized in the civilian culture because they feel they don't belong or can fit in (Sites 2013; Wood 2016). I contend this is primarily due to their high-operational tempo mindset that deems unnecessary for the other civilian members in the culture. This allows the civilians to create separation emotionally and socially among the soldiers within their culture. Inevitably generating a perceived disconnect of concern or understanding the civilians share towards the soldier amongst them.



### ***Literature Review Conclusion***

I have laid out a well-grounded argument on how the cultures clash with each other creating disturbances on reintegration concerns soldiers expect and have experienced using Parks Marginal Man Theory and Lincoln's account of dynamics in a given culture. Furthermore, how soldier's feel isolated and alienated when they attempt to reintegrate back into the civilian culture. Their high operational tempo mindset creates emotional distance on civilians. Soldiers receive pushback from the civilians themselves when their behavior is misaligned with the social expectations of civilian culture. Even more so, soldiers require a mission within the civilian culture to "stay motivated" (a phrase we use in the military to push the soldier to do their best in any circumstances they have to endure) and to find their mission. Their mindset is for the group and to the members as they perform their role as a soldier exhibited in Berger and Luckman's Role Theory. Which further pushes them in social disconnect when they feel as if they are unable to fit in or deemed to be a social outcast by the members of the civilian culture grounded in Joiner's Perceived Burdensomeness Theory.

Using Lincoln (2003), Berger and Luckmann (1966), and Parks (1928), I will address the concerns of being in between cultures and how that contributes to the perspective and the role of the soldiers who are increasingly moving back into the civilian communities after being a member in the military environment for an extended period. I will then emphasize the seriousness of the reintegration concerns such as "here but not here," autonomic hyper-arousal, alienation, the constant feeling of isolation and perceived burdensomeness (Joiner 2005) that many soldiers are known to suffer from, consequences that Parks emphasizes throughout his theory. I will investigate what other researchers have found through their intensive studies and how it all relates to the unfavorable social position soldier's find themselves in. Furthermore,

how the military and civilian cultures oppose one another, producing disruption towards their reintegration process generating personal and social concerns that influence their overall well-being.

My intent and emphasis of this research is to alter our perspectives on our current course of actions as we bring back soldiers reintegrating into the civilian culture. Their voices need to be heard from their perspective and for too long literature, applied practices and the community has not allowed the soldiers to speak for themselves. This notion carries drastic influence over their perspectives through the reintegration process in a grave influential way. I intend to change that. I will explore *why* their reintegration issues exist and *how* their social concerns gain traction through the clash between the two cultures. That is my mission.

## Chapter 2

### Methods

#### *The Guiding Research Questions*

As we progress to understand *why* and *how* the reintegration process holds various amounts of personal and social concerns for the soldier, we must first address the guiding research questions that will assist that recognition. The following questions guide our exploration within the in-depth investigation that will support this thesis and defend the intent.

Q1: How has military training transformed you as a person?

Q2: How do soldiers perceive the civilian culture – “being a civilian” – and how do they understand the military culture – “being a soldier?” How do these conflicting ideas of civilian and soldier contribute to personal and social concerns through reintegrating process?

Q3: How does perspectives towards the civilian and military culture influence the soldier’s anticipated and actual deployment concern and experiences?

Q4: What strategies and techniques has the soldier engaged with to prepare themselves, emotionally, mentally and physically for their anticipated or actual deployment concerns?

Q5: What are the biggest personal and social challenges, concerns, and obstacles when the soldier must reintegrate into the civilian culture?

Q1 addresses the transformation from civilian to soldier and how it produces the high operational mindset. Specifically, investigating through the soldier's perspective how the high operational tempo mindset and highly rigid environment of the military culture changes the overall personality and views the soldier holds. This question allows us to understand and recognize the abiding codes throughout the military culture the soldier must adhere to as it changes the perspective they once had to what they now hold. This question is grounded in Berger and Luckman's Role Theory. I intended to know how exactly the military culture shapes the soldier by exploring the role they perform. The conceptualization of soldier throughout this thesis's argument is someone who has successfully completed Basic Combat Training and has the possibility to deploy throughout their military career. They are continually preparing to be deployed, are currently deployed overseas in a theatre environment and have returned from a deployment in which they progress through the reintegration process. These features places considerable attention to what it means to be a soldier as they perform their role as they adhere to the code and ethics of the military culture.

The motive behind Q2 is to explore how soldiers perceive members of both cultures contribute to the clash. Which arguably may produce personal and social concerns in the reintegrating process. This question will be grounded by Robert Parks Marginal Man Theory and Bruce Lincoln's Cultural Dynamics Theory. Recall, the conceptualization for reintegration means the soldier leaves the civilian culture and then re-enters when they have been submerged within the military culture for an extended period. They have become accustomed to and must adhere to the soldier way of life as they follow the abiding codes they live by.

Q3 examines how perspectives change overtime as the soldier progresses through their military career and continue their time in service. The question addresses when the soldier is

submerged within the military for an extended period their views of the civilian and military culture are expected to change. The focus is through the deployment the soldier prepares for their entire military career which contributes to varying perspectives they hold of both cultures. It is vital to remember that deployment begins long before the soldier's departure and continues to impact them long after their return. This question will be grounded in Robert Parks Marginal Man Theory and Thomas Joiner Perceived Burdensomeness Theory. Furthermore, this question intends to analyze the origins of the personal and social concerns of reintegration. To identify where exactly the concerns of the reintegration process begin is the emphasis behind this question.

Q4 illuminates the mental and emotional preparation that the soldier has or can engage in prior to deployment. This question binds Q3 to Q5 in the sense that soldiers experience mental and emotional anguish when they anticipate and/or expect to change through a deployment inasmuch when they return, they will experience their concerns. Furthermore, this question intends to explore within a discussion on how soldiers can begin to make steps in their current [pre-deployment] stage that will benefit them in the long run when their anticipated personal and social concerns arise during their reintegration process when they return to civilian culture. This question will be grounded in Robert Parks Marginal Man Theory and Bruce Lincoln's Cultural Dynamics Theory.

Q5 focuses on the reintegration process and the social concerns that the soldiers experience as they transition between cultures. This question is focused on the soldiers experiencing the concerns that they expect, will and have endured as they progress through the reintegration process. This question addresses *why* the social concerns through the reintegration process develop and gain traction through the transition between cultures. In addition, this

question is focused on soldiers experiencing the personal and social concerns that they expect, will and have endured as they progress through the reintegration process. Furthermore, this question will be grounded in Robert Parks Marginal Man Theory, Bruce Lincoln's Cultural Dynamics Theory and Thomas Joiner Perceived Burdensomeness Theory.

### ***Sampling Procedures***

The ideal convenient sample throughout the exploration of the personal and social concerns that arise during the reintegration process are both officer and enlisted soldiers who are preparing to deploy, currently deployed and have returned from deployment. Officers have been commissioned and typically are the soldiers who create the training plans and provide guiding intent on how they wish to see the training executed by the enlisted who follow them. Furthermore, officers manage and supervise the enlisted soldiers and are part of higher chain of command within the ranks. Enlisted soldiers are the ones who are executing and completing the training their higher officer has delegated to them. Enlisted soldiers are understood throughout the ranks of being the "backbone" of the military – the soldiers who achieve mission essential training and tasks. Officer and enlisted soldiers hold distinct roles within the military and have vastly different experiences as they progress through their military career. Additionally, enlisted and officers who have been deployed and never deployed. However, for those who have never deployed, parameters have been set to those who have never been deployed will be mobilized or deployed in the next 365 days.

We must recognize that there are different components of the military. When I speak of components, I propose the status of the soldier in their military occupation. These statuses include reserve, National Guard and active duty components. Reservist and Guardsmen are understood to be part-time soldiers. They typically have careers and/or are pursuing an

education, full-time duties or other experiencing other life course transitions beyond military culture. While on the other hand, active duty is a full-time soldier. The military is their career. Every day they put on the uniform and live or are near a military installation fully submerged within the military culture. This is not to say that the soldier's status or roles of any of these individuals perform are no less important than the others. They are all soldiers who live by the values, norms and Warrior Ethos. They are just in different social environments as they adhere to the soldier way of life and perform their soldier duties. This information is critical to understand the personal and social concerns that influence the soldiers' reintegration process in diverse ways given their component status.

I recruited soldiers using snowball sampling. I distributed information about this project to my platoon, emphasizing the research goal and that I, with the support of soldiers, wanted to help understand how others see our personal and social concerns that arise during the reintegration process. They distributed this information through their own military networks. The soldiers were not forced to, obligated to, or ordered by higher chain of command that they needed to do this. Let me be clear, the soldiers in this research were not in any way coerced to participate. Each soldier was willing to participate during their own free time. Each soldier was motivated to participate by a deep passionate interest in seeking a solution on issues that arise during the reintegration process of our soldiers within the ranks of the military. As a result, soldiers came forth with powerful stories and reasons why they share my passion.

The sample for this study included 28 soldiers. Among them, 16 were deployed or have been deployed, 12 had never been deployed but were preparing to mobilize. Ten are officers and 18 were enlisted. For the soldiers who are deployed I set up a formal interview over Skype at their convince during their off-time. The soldiers who are stateside I met with them to conduct a

formal in-person interview. Among the enlisted soldiers, I made a goal to obtain soldiers from the lowest rank, E-1 private, to senior enlisted not yet the highest rank, E-7 Sergeant First Class. Privates are brand new within the ranks of the military and have little experience in the culture. However, Sergeant First Class have been in for an extended period of time with many stories, experiences and knowledge of being a member within the ranks of the military. The point of this range is to obtain a wide perspective of those who are brand new to the ranks of the military (Private) and those who understand the military cultural dynamics and experienced the reintegration process.

### ***Methodological Procedures: Formal Interviews***

My plan of action throughout this research was that I conducted formal interviews from 28 U.S. Army military personal. I have executed this course of action because from obtaining the soldiers from their own accounts and allowing their voice to be amplified we will increase our knowledge and awareness on their personal and social concerns throughout their reintegration process. I understood by executing formal interviews has allowed soldiers to construct their own answers from the grounded questions that supported our focus to help us explore the concerns of transitioning between cultures they frequently endure. I deliberately choose formal interviews because of the rich descriptions the soldiers have emphasized and provided on their experiences through the reintegration process. We can better understand why and how the concerns impact the soldiers in such influential ways from this course of action I have executed. Furthermore, we can gain understanding about certain frame of mind as the soldier progress through the reintegration process that otherwise would not be able to obtain without a formal interview. Several soldiers have approached me on their own time and asked if they could participate in this interview. Soldiers were ready and willing to voice their ideas on their personal and social



concerns of the reintegration process. We have the means to help many people in both cultures better understand the problematic transitioning process that raises vast amount of issues along soldiers' reintegration journey.

The course of action I specifically selected explored in great depth what soldiers understand the reintegration process to mean to them (lower enlisted who have not been deployed but are preparing to be deployed soon) and those who have been deployed once or more to help us better recognize the problematic transition process. Reflecting on what soldiers have experienced, what they have done and how things can improve as we continue to experience the complex reintegration process. I may be the one writing this thesis, but it is our [the soldiers] work and dedication to help better understand the reasons our personal and social concerns arise as we progress through the reintegration process in order to place both cultures in the most optimal position to discover more improved ways to support soldiers along their military journey, and beyond. This is our mission.

**Table 1: Sample Populace Demographics**

Name (Alias)	Rank	Pay Grade	Army Component	# Years in Army	Deployment	# of Deployment/s	Time Until Next Deployment	Civilian Occupation	Married	Kids
Aaron	Sergeant	E-5	Army Reserves	8	Yes	2	3 months	Deputy	Yes	Yes
Adam	Lieutenant Colonel	O-5	National Guard	23	Yes	3	9 Months	Contractor	Yes	No
Amanda	Second Lieutenant	O-1	Army Reserves	6	Yes	1	8 Months	Personal Trainer	No	No
Ashley	Captain	O-3	National Guard	9	Yes	1	9 Months	College Professor	No	No
Blake	First Lieutenant	O-2	National Guard	3	No	0	8 Months	Lawyer	No	No
Brady	Sergeant	E-5	Army Reserves	10	Yes	2	3 Months	Home Construction	Yes	Yes
Brent	Corporal	E-4	Army Reserves	9	Yes	2	4 Months	Security Officer	Yes	No
Brooke	Specialist	E-4	Army Reserves	4	No	0	4 Months	Business / Finances	No	No
Cindy	Second Lieutenant	O-1	National Guard	6	No	0	5 Months	College Professor	No	No
Danielle	Specialist	E-4	Army Reserves	3	No	0	3 months	Industrial Shipping	No	No
Erik	Second Lieutenant	O-1	National Guard	3	No	0	2 Months	City Parking Security	No	No
Francis	Sergeant	E-5	Army Reserves	7	Yes	3	3 Months	Deputy	Yes	Yes
Jackson	Specialist	E-4	Army Reserves	5	No	0	3 Months	Armed Security	Yes	Yes
Jacob	Corporal	E-4	Army Reserves	6	Yes	2	4 Months	Security Officer	Yes	No
Jared	First Lieutenant	O-2	Army Reserves	4	No	0	3 months	Sherrif	No	No
John	Sergeant First Class	E-7	National Guard	14	Yes	5	9 Months	Contractor	No	No
Kenneth	Second Lieutenant	O-1	National Guard	3	No	0	8 Months	Marketing Sales	No	No
Mark	Second Lieutenant	O-1	National Guard	3	No	0	10 Months	Carpenter	No	No
Mary	Colonel	O-6	Army Reserves	15	Yes	4	6 Months	Thearapist	Yes	Yes
Mitchell	Speciliast	E-4	Army Reserves	7	Yes	2	3 months	Marketing Sales	No	Yes
Nathan	Sergeant	E-5	Army Reserves	8	Yes	1	3 months	Deputy	Yes	No
Paige	Staff Sergeant	E-6	Army Reserves	9	Yes	2	4 Months	Financial Banker	No	Yes
Peter	Captain	O-3	National Guard	9	Yes	1	9Months	College Professor	Yes	Yes
Rachel	Private First Class	E-3	Army Reserves	2	No	0	3 Months	College Student	No	No
Richard	Speciliast	E-4	Army Reserves	9	Yes	1	4 Months	Marketing Sales	Yes	No
Robert	Sergeant First Class	E-7	National Guard	13	Yes	3	6 Months	College Contractor	No	Yes
Samuel	Sergeant	E-5	National Guard	6	Yes	1	10 Months	Computer Programmer	No	No
Zack	Sergeant	E-5	Army Reserves	9	Yes	1	2 Months	Construction	Yes	No

The above table will help us explore the soldiers voice throughout the data analysis. The table has 11 variables that help us understand who they are as a soldier and as a person. (1) is a pseudonym to represent who they are within the civilian world. Throughout the data analysis chapters, civilian names will be used to help see them as people rather than soldiers. The goal of this is to help increase our awareness and understanding that soldiers are people with feelings, emotions and anxieties by using a first name before their voiced expression will help illuminate their concerns as a person. (2) is their rank, who they refer to within the military world – different from who they go by in the civilian culture. (3) their pay grade to show where they are within the rank structure and how much responsibility they have, the higher rank, the more you have, vice versa. (4) is their U.S. Army component. (5) how many years they have been in the ranks of the military world. (6) whether or not they have been deployed. (7) is their response to

how many times they have been deployed. (8) is their time-frame until their upcoming military mission – or deployment. (9) is their occupation within the civilian world, some correspond to their military occupational specialty (MOS) and others don't relate at all. (10) determines whether or not they are married. Lastly, (11) reveals to the readers if the soldier has kids. These 11 variables will help depict who the soldier is when you come across their voice throughout the data analysis in the next three sections. I have included myself because I have two important parts I would like readers to understand as I prepare for my first deployment at the end of the year – two months out. Let's move forward and explore the soldier's voices in-depth together in order for us to increase our awareness and understanding on who they are and who they will become throughout their military journey.

## Chapter 3

### The Military Mindset

#### *Soldier's Transformation – Leaving Behind their Old Self and Producing their New Self*

The proposed objective of Q1 was to identify and understand how the military culture shaped the soldier by exploring the roles they perform throughout their time in service. The goal of this section is to help increase awareness of both cultures to recognize soldiers are continuously training and preparing for deployment, engaging in military missions overseas, and reintegrating into civilian life after they return from a deployment – it's an unremitting cycle. This grounded foundation places substantial attention on what it means to be a soldier as they perform their role obeying to the code and ethics of the military environment and constantly migrate between civilian and military culture – placing attention on who they have become through the military.

All 28 soldiers stated that the military training they have endured throughout their time in the service has most certainly transformed them as a person, which inevidently altered their perspective towards the military and civilian culture. Throughout this section we will explore how the military training and environment has deliberately hardwired a soldier to be, think and operate in a certain way. Most importantly how the military mindset continues to produce and develop itself throughout a soldier's time in service as they continuously bounce between the military and civilian cultures. Soldiers unanimously proposed with great reason that military training has developed their critical thinking skills, problem solving capabilities, advanced

multitasking, significant heights of patience, and the strong confidence of becoming lethal through protection, defensive and the last resort-will to superior levels than your average person or their prior – former civilian - selves. Furthermore, and most notably, soldiers expressed how military training provides meaningful rationale behind every action and decision they are told to adhere to or complete themselves. Time was also a significantly important factor mentioned as it completely dictates the soldier’s mission and way of life – when they wake, when they eat, when they train, rest, sleep, only to repeat again. Time and purposeful meaning are behind everything the soldier will do, and these factors are the core essence of the military environment and culture. These important variables have a considerable amount of influence when a soldier endures their reintegration journey. We will continue to develop and strengthen this argument throughout this section and the subsequent two sections that explores how the military mindset in-depth.

### ***Jekyll and Hyde Characterization – Two Different Minds in one Physical Body***

Situational awareness, or autonomic hyper arousal, is a vitally important consideration of the military mindset – arguably the most important to understand in order to recognize who the soldier has become. A soldier is conditioned [hardwired] to scan and analyze their surroundings constantly to determine the threat level, a term in the ranks referred to as “situational awareness.” This can be conceptualized in the simplest of terms, ‘stay alert, stay alive’, and ‘assess your surrounding environment for susceptible and possible threats’. Situational awareness can also be interchangeable to the conceptualized term presented by Coll et al: “autonomic hyper arousal,” – soldiers being on constant guard of their surroundings – which soldiers express between cultures to be ready for the worst possible scenario. This idea is expressed through all 28 soldiers accounts within the research data. They are ready, capable and prepared for a threat to arise in any social environment they are within in order to counter and eliminate it.

Soldiers are on the guard of their surroundings because they have prepared through constant repetition, battle drills, and conditioning throughout their military training that allows them to protect others around them and defends their own safety and security. This increases the capability and situational awareness a soldier holds through their skills in order for them to be alert of their surroundings and in an optimal position to counter threats that arise. Brent, who will deploy for his second time at the end of the year, explains the military mindset is always ready and capable to reveal itself at any moment for the worse-case scenario:

*The military environment and training influence you to have a specific and certain mindset. This mindset trains you to protect those around you and yourself through lethal defensive measures if you must. This translates you to demonstrate and execute controlled-aggression if you have to. Also, you are more confident in your skills and be able to react with clearer mind and thoughts when you are in high-stress situations because you have mentally prepared for the worse of the worse. Your military self comes out when you need it to, when you call for it and when it deems necessary to show itself to let you know it's there.*

Brent speaks how military personal must be constantly prepared, capable, and ready for anything to happen at any moment no matter what social environment they find themselves in. He also mentioned how the military self will come out when it wants to in any situation it desires necessary to reveal itself and to remind the person to call upon it for help. One of the critical findings of this research through the voices of the soldiers who were interviewed illuminates that a soldier is battling their military mindset with their civilian mindset which causes one of the mindsets to overpower the other given thoughts, considerations, and actions. The classical book *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886)* will be used and understood as our cultural

comparison as we move forward with this thesis. We can use this as guiding reference point as we increase our knowledge and understanding on who a soldier is and becomes through the hardwiring of their military mindset that conflicts with their civilian mindset. This classical book presents the struggle of a man whose mind attempts to overpower his actions with great attempts to control his mental, emotional, and physical being. The character's unconscious mind attempts to motivate his thoughts, desires, decisions, reasoning, and behavior to his consciously deliberate mindset. Many soldiers spoke of themselves in the third person and described their civilian self and military self as if they were two entirely different people that conflict with one another. Their military mindset is ready and capable for the worst to unfold; however, their civilian mindset may not be, therefore their military mindset overpowers their conscious thoughts and actions to ensure that they're both ready for anything at any moment. They are two different people in two different worlds but in one physical body. Parks (1928) speaks of the Marginal Man when he describes how people exist between cultures experience conflict, tension, and disruption in limbo of multiple worlds. A soldier is between worlds and minds at any given moment – civilian and military culture and mindset. They conflict with their military self and civilian self, leading them to experience disruption between cultures. Four specific examples have expressed this phenomenon and how it impacts them in the civilian culture and conflicts with their duties in that world.

Francis has deployed three times expresses the dissimilarity between his civilian and military selves. He is a squad leader in the military and a deputy in his civilian life, though somewhat similar in nature yet different mindsets depending on which one is out at a given time:

*SGT X and Deputy X are two different people. I am a lot different on the civilian side than I am on the military side. On the military side I am a leader. On the civilian*

*side not so much. I am a deputy [police officer]. I feel when I am a deputy I am more “under the microscope” with everything I do. If I arrest someone, that arrest is altering their life and changing their future. So, you want to make the right decision always. SGT X in the military dishes out orders and expects things to get done quick and timely. Why? Because someone said so, now I am saying so. Get it done, no questions, do it now.*

Throughout the discussion Francis's formal interview, both SGT X and Deputy X came out in conversation with many stories to validate and justify their stance and reasoning. He has been in the military longer where he feels comfortable due to the group effort and other soldiers who are beside him when he must make quick and decisive decisions. On the other hand, when he responds to various calls as Deputy X, he must be attentive, reticent, and observe his surroundings as well as body language in order for him to make the correct decision. This is due to the many negative repercussions that could play out towards the person and/or himself if he chooses the wrong action with inaccurate judgement. His military mindset supports and increases his situational awareness to his surroundings at each call he responds to in order for him to be in the optimal position to protect others and himself. His military mindset supports and assists Deputy X when he is engaged within his duty in the civilian world. Because he is a new Deputy, he calls upon SGT X to help and support him on the job in the civilian world to make the right decision.

Jackson prepares for his first deployment, speaks of how his military mindset comes out while working his civilian job as a security escort for large amounts of money that travel to banks and other organizations to refill vaults and ATM's:



*I carry a weapon on hand as well in order to protect the money. When I am on the job and I am transporting money, my military mindset takes over and I am more situationally aware. I am constantly scanning my sector and looking around when I am at ATM's more than I normally do on the job. My partner and myself get in sync and will let each other know when people are around and when we get to a stop we are in and out quickly. I get in the zone before each and every stop. It's an important job and I find myself using my military training and tactics to help me get through each day and each transportation.*

Jackson is living autonomic hyper arousal in order for him to protect his assets – the money, his partner, and his life – during his mission. Scanning the surrounding area for any possible threats places the soldier in the optimal position to protect others and himself given any social environment. When the military mindset overpowers the civilian mindset – as Hyde does Jekyll – the soldier becomes more confident and prepared for any challenges, obstacles, and threats that arise when they are going about their everyday lives in the civilian world.

Nathan speaks from his own account on how his military mindset takes over his civilian mindset when he describes he is always on edge no matter what social environment he submerged in:

*It's a mental preparedness the military hardwires and solidifies into your mind because this is how you stay alive. Stay alert. Stay alive. I eat in my car when I get takeout because you are always watching and always on alert. You are taught to look for issues and threats. You are taught to look for IED's when you are walking or driving – traveling from point A to B. You are always on edge because you are waiting for something to happen. It's a waiting game. So, this carries over when you*

*are in the civilian world. I dislike going to crowded places because I am high-alert. There are too many people to watch and my head hurts by the end when I leave.*

Nathan's quote reveals the difference between the thought process of the military mindset compared to the civilian mindset. Civilians may not necessarily scan for threats or be as situationally aware of their surroundings compared to soldiers. Most are not conditioned, drilled, and trained to think like this, with a few exceptions of law enforcement/first responders. Furthermore, these two mindsets – military and civilian – are part of two distinct worlds. Parks (1928) argues that “one of the consequences of migration is to create a situation in which the same individual finds himself to live in two diverse culture groups – the effects produce an unstable character – a personality type with characteristic forms of behavior. It is within the mind of the marginal man that the cultures meet and fuse.” Parks' quote is vital to understanding the dynamics and complexity of the military mindset. It does not matter what social environment the soldier finds themselves in; the military mindset will take over to ensure that their civilian self and others are protected by the skills, capabilities, and readiness the soldier has been conditioned and hardwired to execute between cultures.

Blake prepares for his first assignment at the end of law school expresses the difference in the way his military and civilian selves' conflict with each other in the civilian culture – the military mindset controls who we are as a person:

*I am in the reserves. I am a lieutenant. I am in law school. I must be an army officer both in my civilian life and my military life. In the back of your mind you are always thinking you are a soldier and you have to be one, act like one and carry yourself as one. Is that me thinking this or is that my military self reminding me it's always there? We are disciplined and grounded this never leaves you it is always with you,*

*you're still a soldier 24/7 no matter where you are. This is a major challenge for soldiers like us who are in the reserves with obligations and duties in both worlds that we must effectively balance and successfully meet their demands. I know my military self likes to control how I think, behave and operate in the civilian world – it controls who I am, who I will become.*

Blake illuminates how his military self controls who he is and who he will become through his continuous character transformation as he bounces between cultures and performs his role within the civilian culture. We are soldiers “24/7” – all the time no matter where we are in both cultures. Our military self reveals itself when we find discomfort or perceive feelings of trouble in any given social environment. Our military self reminds us that it knows what to do if a threat were to arise because we have been conditioned, hardwired and capable of mitigating and eliminating elevated levels of risks. The soldier expressed concern whether it was him or his military self thinking in a given situation validating the stance of the argument soldiers are two different people in two different worlds.

The four soldiers justify the validation between the idea that two minds operate at any given time in one physical body. The military mindset determines the best course of action if an attack were to occur given the security vulnerabilities and chokepoints established from the assessment of the surroundings. The civilian mindset, as most of the others could attest to in that social environment, does not consider scanning the surroundings for potential threats, or identifying locations and avenues of approach where the impending attacker could spark and gain advantageous ground over the occupants of the facility, or war-game in their own thoughts what they would do if someone were to incite an attack onto the others in the area. It's

impossible for the military mindset to not come out – a soldier is hardwired to think in this way; it must come out in order to control the thoughts, decisions, and behavior of the civilian mindset in any social environment to optimize the readiness and capabilities of the soldier. Parks illuminates this idea when he argued that “the conflict of culture, as it takes place in the mind of the Marginal Man, it is just the conflict of the ‘divided self,’ the old self and the new self.” The military mindset of a soldier (the new self) purpose is to protect and defend their civilian mindset (the old conflicting self) and the civilian populace. Soldiers took an oath to protect and defend their country – civilian and military populace – even if it means their own lives to do so given the specific skills and capabilities they have been conditioned to use if the call of duty demands them to be utilized in any social environment. We must ask ourselves and recognize what factors and influences contribute to the military mindset? How does a soldier become conditioned to be ready and prepared for anything to happen to them or others in any given social environment? These answers reveal how we can increase our awareness on how the military mindset continues to develop and gain influence over a soldier’s thoughts, actions and behavior.

### ***Military Standards – What the Soldier is Expected to do***

Soldiers expressed military standards are a mechanism that reinforces a conditioned mindset to be produced in order to ensure synchronization and advancement in the same direction in thoughts, actions and behaviors. The military standards act as a guiding force for soldiers to hold adequate preparedness, continuously develop critical thinking and advanced problem-solving abilities in order to successfully accomplish their task or mission – that’s been ordered from their higher chain of command. Brooke suggests how military training has enabled him to critically analyze problems when he speaks of standards in the military:

*We have that discipline to do certain things in a precise way. You understand there is a standard and you must meet that standard. There is no excuse why you can't meet the standard. You should always push yourself to exceed it and motivate others around you to surpass the expectations. The training is always critical and important. You are training to be deployed if you are not already deployed.*

Similarly, Erik is preparing for deployment in six months, explains the difference between the standards in the military and civilian cultures:

*If you don't meet the standard in the military it's kind of a huge deal, even more so when you are an officer. If you fail to meet it, it makes you look bad, your leadership ability is questioned and looked down on. Those around you will come down on you hard and you have consequences to address and meet if you fail to achieve the standard. It's kind of cut-throat. Compare this idea to the civilian world, if civilians don't meet the standard they just try a little harder next time with not too much punishment for failing. You can get away with it if you have reasoning and the right attitude. In the military, there is no excuses, you have a standard and you will meet it, no questions, no excuses.*

Both Erik and Brooke demonstrate their heightened concern with the importance of meeting the military standard – there are most certainly consequences when soldiers fail to meet the army standard. Coll et al expressed this vital importance when their research highlighted how “military values serve as a standard of conduct for military personal and [that] these rules regulate their lives on a daily basis.” The importance behind the military standards is for a soldier to not only meet them, but also sustain the required demands. In order to get into the military, a prospective soldier must meet mental, medical, physical, and other standards before

they can enlist, sign the oath of office, and begin Basic Combat Training. They must then maintain these standards throughout their military career or face punitive actions from their higher chain of command. These standards make or break you as a soldier – deescalates or escalates advancement in your career. As Erik and Brooke articulate there are no excuses why one can't achieve the standards and there are no excuses in your explanation if you fail to meet them. It's simple. Punishment follows if you fail to accomplish the standards. It is ultimately this way of thinking that produces an obsession to successfully complete the standard, and tasks that are given to you by your higher chain of command with no exception and by ensuring you do what you must in order to accomplish what is in front of you with no exceptions. This obsession and mindset to meet the standard can also spill into a soldier's actions in the civilian culture and have a major impact on the soldier during the reintegration process. Furthermore, to reinforce and emphasize a point Thomas made above, is to recognize a soldier is constantly training for a deployment if they already are not on one currently. Samuel prepares for his third deployment in three months reveals how the military standards spills into the civilian culture– his military self dictates how things get accomplished in his everyday life and within his own home:

*When there are tasks to be accomplished I will go out of way to get them done. And the bad part is sometimes I have no chill. I want to chill out, but I can't because the military mindset won't let me. When my family is cleaning the house and doing chores is has to be done the way we do it in the military. I go completely all out almost in OCD [obsession compulsive disorder] kind of way to ensure its to standard and meets the expectations. I won't stop until I get it done the way I want it done. I need to find happy medium for all tasks I accomplish because it causes tension sometimes with my wife.*

The adherence to the military mindset and obsession to complete the tasks that are ordered by higher chain of command onto the soldier, is effectively made possible, arguably even controlled, through the dictation of time and its value. Time and standards are two concepts soldiers are constantly controlled by through their thoughts, actions, and decisions. Soldiers are often given a “time-hack,” meaning they have to be ready to conduct whatever they are told to do prior to the time given to them. This means that leadership then has the implied task to get their soldiers ready much sooner than actual time-hack. If a time-hack was given for soldiers to be ready and training at 1200 they must be prepared and accounted for at least 30 minutes prior to have an accurate number and collectively order things before training begins. Accountability and numbers are vitally important, and as such time-hacks tend to be pushed earlier and earlier to help ensure accuracy because accountability and numbers are vitally important which indicates a soldier enhances their patience levels when they have to wait around earlier than they should to conduct training. Jackson helps to explain why the military is utilizes time-hacks:

*Time is a critical component that dictates our life schedule. I have to be at work 30 minutes or an hour earlier than when I start work. Military culture is obsessed with arriving earlier to time-hacks. It gives us more time to fix an issue rather than showing up on time, discovering the problem and then wasting time solving it, therefore, losing time to train. There is a purpose to why we are early – just in case something happens – we have time to correct the concern and train on time. There is literally a purpose why we do everything we do, even the stupid and dumb thing – it makes us better and more prepared somehow, someway.*

Jackson’s account of time suggests that we then have an abundance of it in order to resolve any issues that arise during the earlier arrival so that the time-hack is still met

successfully, and training is still initiated on time. No matter the thought, action, or decision, everything in the military environment has a purpose. It may not be seen or understood right away, but all military training that soldiers endure is purposeful, meaningful, and enhances their understanding on why things happen the way they do. Through time and purposeful logic, everything happens for a reason that is justified through conditioning and hardwiring of the soldier to be ready, prepared and capable, for any obstacle or threat that may arise in their social environment.

### ***Conditioning and Purpose – Who the Soldier Becomes through Hardwiring***

The military environment deliberately constructs a soldier's mind into one capable of thinking two steps ahead of their adversary and instills a wealth of confidence in their skills and proficiencies. This mindset formation leads soldiers to prepare and carry out lethal defensive measures to eliminate a threat if one were to exist. Additionally, this mindset produces soldiers' thoughts, behaviors, actions, and decisions with a distinct purpose at the foundation of everything they do or don't do. This purpose and conditioning leads to a transformation from who the soldier once was and into who they are becoming through the rigid structural military environment. Purpose is behind every action a soldier recognizes and understands when they are ordered what to do, how to do it, and when to do it by the authoritative structure of the military as it is important to produce meaningful reasoning for what they are being ordered to do. Ashley has deployed once and prepares for his next mission states the importance behind a soldier's purpose:

*We need to know our purpose for doing what we are about to engage within the next hour, day, week, or year of our lives. If not, uncertainty creeps into the soldiers thought process and they can become lost and go in so many different directions.*



*Providing a clear purpose and direction enables soldiers to do what the military demands from them.”*

Samuel has been deployed once and prepares for his second tour early next year speaks about his purpose with his military self and his civilian self:

*When I was deployed, everything we did had a purpose. Somethings didn't make any sense at the time but most of them had a greater purpose when you evaluated what you were doing from a bigger picture. We took it upon ourselves to make sure we checked our gear, weapons, supplies, and anything and everything we had with us for our mission – to keep us alive if things got crazy. You have this daily process while deployed over there. When you return to the civilian world, things no longer have purpose like they used to. Your purpose becomes less clear and you are not sure how to do certain things because nobody is telling you – it's just you.*

Ashely and Samuel illuminate the importance of understanding the purpose soldiers require before they execute a task. Purpose is significant to recognize the reasoning behind why soldiers do what they are told when they are told to do it, and it is critical to comprehend this aspect when we discuss soldier's reintegration back into the civilian culture in the subsequent sections. The argument is validated here in the two quotes and we must recognize a soldier's purpose must be clear and understood in order for them to continue moving forward so they endure the uncertainty and don't get lost along the way.

Collins (1998), Coll et al. (2010), and Lighthall (2012) demonstrated within their research how the soldier transforms into someone new with their unique experiences and training that they endure throughout their time in military service. This is accomplished by conditioning

and repetitive training in order for the soldier to build physical and mental muscle memory to allow for them to carry out a certain coordinated plan of action in a given circumstance – strengthening the military self and mindset. Jared offers an accurate account on soldiers' deliberate way of thinking:

*Repetitive training makes you more confident and capable. You have to make mistakes while you're in training to learn from them and understand their consequences. If you make those mistake out in the real-world operation, you could very well turn the tide of the war. If I were to let something slide, let's say searching a vehicle as an MP [military police] and I let complacency kick-in, what is going to happen if there is an explosive device in there that I didn't find? What casualties can that lead to? What can end or go wrong from the complacency and laziness? Military training has equipped me to prepare for the worst and conditioned my mind and skills to be capable of mitigating the aftermath.*

Military training produces a confident, repetitive mindset so that the soldiers are well-equipped with their skills and capabilities to handle the worst-case scenario. This mindset enables soldiers to think more advanced than their adversaries, placing them in an optimal position to alleviate the consequences a threat could produce. These worst-case scenario thoughts that are result of the military training will often play out when the soldier is in the civilian world as well. LT Ahlfs and the other three soldiers justified and validated this argument when the military self overpowered the civilian self to help both of them endure in uncomfortable or troubling situations given any social environment. The standard they adhere to is to ensure that they are prepared to protect both the civilian and military culture's populace. Specifically,

indicating that it becomes their mission – their purpose - they must accomplish within both cultures’ given their superior skills and advanced capabilities.

Nathan shares his account on the all-encompassing military mindset:

*In the military, in which they condition and train you to be as lethal as possible and have fire superiority over your enemy you are engaged with given the circumstances, you must be confident, ready and able to use this lethality mindset in order to protect your mission, soldiers and yourself. Your primary goal in the military is to wage war, kill people and be lethal – defensive or offensive operations – when you must and when it calls upon for you to do so. You have to expect this to happen when the worse of the worse occurs. The oath, the training, the military culture has allowed you to protect those who can’t and ensured you can out-kill the enemy.*

Nathan’s quote illustrates the confidence, capability and readiness to be lethal when soldiers must be in order to protect and defend those in any given social environment that we find ourselves in. Soldiers have a purpose to protect those who are unable to and to ensure they are in the optimal position to eliminate the threat to mitigate the damage and fear it would have otherwise produced.

A closing quote that will help transition into the next section that illuminates the disconnect the two cultures have towards each other – we are just conditioned differently and have different experiences. Danielle prepares for her first deployment at the end of the year validates the necessity of having high patience levels to scan, assess, and observe your surroundings in order to be a capable asset in any given social environment:

*Specifically, when we are conducting training, if you are rushing all the time and are impatient with your tasks you will not achieve mission success and you will hurt someone and fail. You have to stop and scan your surroundings, be patient and be in control of your surroundings and be aware of those around you and what is around you. The Army always tells us ‘Smooth is slow, slow is smooth’ or ‘Stay Alert, Stay Alive’ for a reason. Most of the time civilians look at us and think we are crazy for being on alert. They can’t understand why we do what we do – this produces a misunderstanding from their culture to ours and who we are as soldiers.*

The questions we must address as we advance this argument is; how does the soldier’s autonomic hyper arousal mindset impact who they are and others around them into the civilian culture? Why is it important to recognize and understand how the military mindset is grounded within the soldiers? The way they carry themselves? How they conduct themselves in the civilian world? Why does the military mindset matter to those who don’t understand the military culture? These questions illuminate the important consideration to comprehend to the civilian culture and military culture members, scholars, mental healthcare providers, and politicians because it helps bridge the gap between how soldiers are conditioned and hardwired through their military training and experiences, and when they must reintegrate to a culture – the civilian society – that does not think, operate or live in the way a soldier does. Parks emphasized “conflicting cultures meet and fuse” for a specific reason – to suggest that when the marginal man, in this specific case, the soldier, is between cultures, they are different from most of the members in the culture they are integrating into – a soldier back to the civilian culture. The civilian culture is not conditioned and hardwired as the soldier is; therefore, the soldier will experience distress, tension, and conflict with the members and themselves when they reintegrate back into the

civilian culture – a culture who does not understand them for specific and validated reasoning, specifically due to their own experiences and training being significantly different from the general civilian populace. The following section will highlight the perceived misunderstanding and disconnect that the civilian culture’s perspective holds toward the soldiers from their own stance and how this influences the arguable conflict and tension between the two cultures – “conflicting cultures meet and fuse.”

## Chapter 4

### The Civilian and Military Culture and Perspective

#### *The Cultures' Skewed Perspectives Towards Each Other*

One of the central arguments throughout this thesis explores the differences between the military and civilian cultures in the ways that each culture's populace ground their foundations and core beliefs. Q2: How do soldiers perceive the civilian culture – “being a civilian” – and how do they understand the military culture – “being a soldier?” How do these conflicting ideas of civilian and soldier contribute to personal and social concerns through reintegrating process? Q3: How does perspectives towards the civilian and military culture influence the soldier's anticipated and actual deployment concern and experiences? Together both questions focus on the contributing perceived influences between the two cultures that produce the clash and misunderstanding towards one another. Being a soldier is different than being a civilian in the way one thinks, operates, and behaves while one is in or between the cultures. The interviewed soldiers articulated similar insight towards how the factors generate tension when the conflict with one another. The 28 soldiers have all shared the same component status of either being in the National Guard or Army Reserves. These two components of the army are similar, the only major difference is that the Army Reserves is funded by the Federal Government, and National Guard is State funded when it comes to military finances and duties. In addition, if a soldier is in the Army Reserves, they are subject to being activated anywhere throughout the United States

for military missions. However, a soldier is in the National Guard they are limited and restricted to within their states borders for military activation. Each is a soldier within the civilian structure performing the roles of both soldier and civilian – two different people in two different worlds.

This section of the thesis will develop the argument on how the military and civilian cultures' perspectives towards each other contribute to the misunderstanding and disconnect between the two. To further support and validate this logical argument, this section is broken up into two sub-sections. (1) Social media produces specific and precise images of soldiers that the civilians believe and accept if they don't understand the military culture. (2) Soldiers perceive civilians before and after deployment based on their experiences in another culture and full-time military service. The validation and justification of these two sub-sections will support the development of how the misunderstanding and disconnect originates and continues to progress between the two cultures. Additionally, Bruce Lincoln's Cultural Dynamics Theory will ground this section and its sub-section components to further develop the argument to help us recognize and understand the perceived disconnect between the cultures.

Most soldiers mentioned how civilians are ignorant, unaware, misinformed, and just don't know what they don't know. Unless civilians have first-hand experience or know someone close to them who is in the military, they end up getting their information on the military and understanding of being a soldier through mass media. This means that most of their understanding, opinions, and ideas on the military are generated from what they've been exposed to through Hollywood, social media, and "through the grapevine," suggesting how misunderstanding sparks and gains ground throughout the civilian culture.

Robert shares his account on the overall general consensus of what the other interviewed soldiers believe the civilian perspective holds towards military personal and where it originates from:

*For the general public, there is a kind of mystery about the military, even more so for those who have never served or have no real attachment or connection with service members. All their information and knowledge about us is through movies, Hollywood, social media, and prime time entertainment, which in a lot of cases isn't realistic and leads to misconceptions about the military. They associate soldiers with going to war, getting blown up, killing terrorists, experiencing traumatic events and returning home with varying mental health problems.*

Robert describes “the mystery of the military” of how those who are not associated nor affiliated with soldiers tend to have when they don't have a personal account on what the military culture means to them. Additionally, Robert speaks of the unrealistic, inaccurate, and misinformed generalizations that civilians hold toward soldiers when they just don't know. Civilians may have a universal generalization when they view soldiers in uniform with experiencing the worse-case scenarios and experiencing the reality of war – which may produce distance between each other. It's important to understand that, yes this does happen, however, not every soldier experiences a combative environment – war – or the worse of the worse. Robert's voice will help us advance towards a more in-depth account on how media plays a vital role in shaping the way the civilian culture *attempts* to understand and view the military culture. These accounts illuminate one of the elements of Lincoln's Cultural Dynamic Theory: outsiders and strangers – towards the military culture. The civilian culture's misunderstanding and



disconnect generates an inaccurate perspective towards the military culture which has significant effects on the soldiers when they must endure their reintegration process.

### ***Media Produces and Reinforces an Inaccurate Image of Soldiers – Selling War***

In this sub-section we will explore an in-depth analysis of how civilians view soldiers placing emphasis on how media reinforces their [mis] understandings and inaccurate depictions of the military culture. Almost all 28 soldiers (23) stated that civilians perceive soldiers not humans, almost machines, and expect soldiers to return to civilian life after we train, cross cultures, and deploy, unchanged. Furthermore, all 28 soldiers expressed that civilians' view of soldiers in one of two lights. The first light being that civilians view soldiers in a reverent, highly-respectful and idolizing way with extreme appreciation for their service and commitment towards their country in which they respond to the call of duty in order to protect their country and the populace. The second light being that civilians view soldiers as war-machines, "baby-killers," PTSD and alcohol ridden culture in which we are the lowest of the low of the U.S. populace with no other future but to serve our country in the *aggressive* and *violent* military environment. These two wavering ideas of soldiers in the perspective of the civilians are reinforced through social media, Hollywood, and "through the grapevine" – suggesting that they obtain their perspective through hearsay and third-hand understanding, emphasizing on the inaccuracy behind this method of obtaining information.

We will explore the positive perspective first to obtain a better understanding of how civilians see soldiers. Rachel is preparing for his first deployment next year, speaks on how civilians see us with high-respect:

*I think for the most part there is a lot of reverence when civilians look up to us with much respect for what we do in the military. I enjoy it because we soldiers' have a set standard that we must live up to and ensure we are meeting it on and off duty – in both cultures. This is important as we are sworn to protect, defend, and support both cultures. The community service visibility helps shape their perspectives to be positive towards their understanding of soldiers.*

Soldiers contend civilians idolize us because we voluntarily will accomplish our duty and mission in order for the civilians to have freedom and a safer way of life in their culture. Soldiers adhere to standards on and off duty which reinforces our purpose and direction in successfully accomplishing our missions in both cultures. The sense of purpose and dedication to the two cultures is a considerably important argument throughout this thesis. Jacob validates this idea in a similar manner with an adverse undertone:

*I think nowadays civilians are so trained or conditioned to where they see a veteran they have to express some form of gratitude towards us that is almost becomes automatic. Thank you for your service, I could never do what you do. And they shake your hand and express sincere appreciation for being a soldier. I can't tell you how many times I have heard that and that's all they have said and moved on and continued their day.*

Advancing throughout this argument and understanding on the perspective on how civilians view soldiers this quote holds an important consideration that needs to be explored deeper than what we know currently. Jacob expresses his concerns on how civilians are trained and conditioned to thank us, exhibit strong appreciation and gratitude but what else after that? The conversation stops with a handshake and a thank you but nothing else. This is important

because soldiers deem “thank-you-for-your-service” to be scripted and just one of those things’ civilians say without understanding the depth and reality of what they are really saying. In other words, to truly show appreciation and thankfulness civilians should keep the conversation going one more step to show sincerity. Dave Finkel illuminates this considerably important idea in his book *Thank You for Your Service* which is now a blockbuster film of the same name (2017) that accurately portrays what soldiers’ experience while deployed as well as when they return home living with what they have done and seen through their journey. Many soldiers mentioned a small number of Hollywood movies that go in-depth through a soldier’s experiences because of former military members that lived through the actual event are helping producers capture legitimate and accurate representations of the military culture.

The following quotes are shorter in description that emphasize the reverence of the positive perspective civilians believe and accept towards soldiers. “Civilians view us as disciplined, full of respect and responsible for our actions and how we carry ourselves. We are proud to serve and wear the uniform.” “They see us confident in our skills to protect them if something were to happen. We have the ability to eliminate threatening circumstances and adversaries anywhere with the safety of everyone at the center.” “I think the civilian population has a high-respectful outlook on soldiers because of what we do, go through and experience. Afterall, it’s for them, for our country and for the safety and security of everyone in the US.” These short quotes help reinforce civilians outlook on soldiers as disciplined and honorable people who have the security of the country and populace in their best interests.

Moving forward and shifting perspectives to the negative side we will begin to see how civilians portray a soldier from media’s influence or their own accounts. Cindy prepares for her

first deployment next year, shares her idea in which most soldiers throughout this research spoke of on how civilians perceive soldiers in indifferent yet negative emphasis:

*Civilians perceive us to be Godlike people because of what they see in movies and on social media. And when you have this preconceived idea on what it is to be a soldier, when you come home you are expected to be fine and drive on with what you have seen or done – you are to be “normal”. When you come home, people expect you to be the same person as you were before you left. The reality is you are not. You never will be. You can’t hug your loved ones the same because you feel guilty and that guilt drives us to feel detached from our old selves and way of life.*

Cindy’s voice captures how most soldiers believe civilians perceive us to be godlike people who emotionlessly push through military operations, but soldiers contend that military experiences change who you are and who you will become. Both cultures need to recognize this transformation alters thoughts, ideas, and behaviors. A soldier may feel guilty for leaving their loved ones behind as they endure and experience a deployment that will change them as a person. A deployment creates emotional, mental and physical constraint on soldiers and their loved one. I argue a soldier leaves behind their old selves and become their new selves through their deployment/s, as Parks argues. This is significantly vital to understand when we consider where we have got to in this argument and the continuous development of this thesis. As soldiers bounce between cultures and acquire unique experiences that differ from the civilian culture’s populace, the cultures meet and fuse and tensions, distress, and conflict will develop on their well-being.

Why is it that civilians believe we are Godlike people and machines? How does their perspective continue to develop and shape itself? Adam explains his negative account on civilians' misinformed understanding of who we are as soldiers:

*In the civilian world when you say [combat] veteran they have preconceived notions of what that means. 'Oh, you are a combat veteran, that means you killed people, you have seen terrible things, you must have PTSD. You have all these mental issues and you can snap at any time.' This is what civilians often think about when they see or know you as a combat veteran through Hollywood movies such as Fury, Lone Survivor, American Sniper, 13 Hours, Black Hawk Down and/or Saving Private Ryan. Your presence makes them anxious and nervous on what you could do or might do because of what has been depicted in these films.*

Adam's quote places substantial importance on Lincoln's outsider and stranger concept. It is to be noted that these movies are based on historical events, however, the prevalence of these specific movies heavily skew civilian perspectives on soldiers if the accuracy is illegitimate to sell the violence and action of war for consumers. Moreover, soldiers believe civilians generalize those events depicted in Hollywood blockbusters to have happened to every soldier in the military. Adam mentioned how a soldier's presence may make civilians nervous because of what they know of the military through the depiction of mass media. I contend civilians are outsiders and strangers in the military in which some of them believe and accept in accurate understanding of soldiers.

Cindy, again, shares her opinion in the negative light on how civilians perceive soldiers:

*I feel some civilians perceive us as that California professor does, believing we are the lowest of the low and that hurts. Media captures us doing the worst of the worst and then that's all people look at and remember when they look at us. Some people I am speaking of, not all, they don't see what happened before a certain event, the factors and variables involved, and everything considered and accounted for before forming their opinion or perspective on soldiers. War is war. Bad things tend to happen because of the politics and nature of the beast, however the media only focuses on when we do – bad things. News coverage and social media during these times are inaccurate and at times blatantly wrong.*

She is referring to Gregory Salcido, who went on record in a diatribe rant about how military personal are the “lowest of the low” and out-right expressed how soldiers are stupid, incompetent, and unable to think for themselves with no other future but to serve in the military. There could be many reasons why Mr. Salcido and others hold this perspective. One reason could be that they have had a bad experience with the military and/or soldiers, so they now believe that this is universal and generalize towards the entire culture itself. Another reason could be that they are against the politics that are involved with war and the conflicts that call upon military personal to conduct operations worldwide. Another reason could be that civilians perceive all soldiers to be war-hungry and supportive of the war for a chance to engage in violence throughout their military operations. Future research should illuminate on this misunderstanding, some soldiers vow to protect their country at any cost however, they may not be for the current conflict or war, yet they must engage in operations due to their mission from higher chain of command. This is interesting and can prove to be worthwhile if we choose to explore this idea more in-depth on what a soldier believes in and if what they believe in contrasts

to their obligatory actions throughout their missions. These are all misinformed understandings of the military culture and soldiers when civilians believe and accept their [mis] understandings to hold true. Again, civilians just don't know what they don't know; therefore, awareness and understanding are vitally important to bridge the gap cause by misinformation that Professor Salcido and others may have about the military.

Social media can be weaponized and used against military personal for propaganda purposes when someone has the opportunity to exploit certain images that fits their extreme view. The validation of this idea can be demonstrated with a certain image that went viral on social media that is expressed in the next soldiers account. Aaron has deployed once and who is preparing his second deployment next spring, emphasizes this negative view civilians hold towards military personal when they are misinformed:

*I think they view us as killing machines and brainwashed individuals. They view us as uneducated and the only route we had in life is when we decided to join the service because we are too dumb for college. They sometimes view us as criminals and war hungry savages who just want to shoot guns and cause harm to others. They view pictures like the viral 'grenade throwing technique' that was captured where it looked like Basic Combat Training soldiers were throwing the Hitler salute and now think we are all racist and out to kill – this hurts when people believe this to be true about us, it shatters my heart.*

Aaron illuminates an important consideration when someone doesn't know anything about the military and doesn't have affiliation to any member of the culture because they base what they find out through social media. The image and ideas that the soldier speaks of went viral and had over 4,000 shares because someone who didn't know anything about the military deemed the

soldiers were throwing up a racist salute – which has strong symbolism behind the gesture – and were out to carry out an extreme political wrath. However, the photo only captured the way soldiers’ arms and hand were raised up in a forty-five-degree angle, making it look like this was happening, but in reality, this is the proper way to aim and throw a grenade in the military, as demonstrated in FM 3-23.30 Chapter 3 *Employment of Hand Grenades*. This photo was captured at BCT when soldiers were learning how to properly throw a grenade. Strikingly, the photo didn’t capture the grenade in the other hand and soldiers at the range; the photo only displayed what it wanted to show to skew the image and politics of the military – soldiers throwing what seemed like a Nazi salute. The precise angle, caption and depiction of soldiers were weaponized throughout social media for strictly propaganda purposes to influence others given an inaccurate and falsified portrayal of military members.

The soldiers revealed an important consideration: when civilians obtain their information, they hold it to be true and it will be difficult to then persuade or show them the other side of the perspective. Civilians are not taught how to interact with veterans, to converse with them past ‘thank you for your service’, or how to understand who they are. The military is an all-volunteer force and those who are not part of the culture just don’t know what they don’t know. This often means a mindset of “why bother?” Why bother going out of their [civilians] way to understand the military culture if they will never be a soldier? Why bother if they just don’t have to and don’t have any reason to? As we move forward with the soldier’s perspective of civilians, it is paramount to consider the following question: How does the lack of awareness and understanding from the civilian culture influence the way soldiers view civilians? The following sub-section will help formulate the reasoning behind their perspective towards the civilian culture and its populace.



### ***How Soldiers Perceive Civilians – Being a Civilian***

This sub-section will help us better understand how soldiers view the civilian culture and its members including the experiences through a deployment. The goal of this sub-section is to increase awareness on how soldiers generate their perspective towards the civilian culture and how it develops throughout their time in the military. What factors contribute to the soldier's outlook towards the civilian culture? The answers to this question will help support the exploration of the military mindset and validates the argument on how military training and deployment impacts the soldier's thoughts and understanding of both cultures as they meet and fuse.

Similar to the civilian's perspective through media and looking at the military, soldiers see civilians in both positive and negative perspectives. An idea that was shared between soldiers coincides with Lincoln's Cultural Dynamic Theory when both outlooks mentioned about outsiders and strangers. The negative perspectives articulate how outsiders and strangers – civilian who are detached or don't have affiliation with the military – don't know what they don't know and lack the magnitude to understand who the soldier is and what the military culture means. The positive perspective soldiers believe and accept speaks towards the outsider and stranger who *desires* to support and help military personal, however, they are unable to truly accomplish this idea due to the disconnect of lived-experiences and understanding. Allow the following soldiers' voices to help articulate and develop the argument on how their opinion of the civilian culture generates and continues to produce itself throughout their time in the military.

We'll begin with two accounts of soldiers who are preparing for deployment to examine their perspective and determine their opinions towards of the civilian culture before their

deployment. Jared shares his opinion on the civilian culture – validating the outsider and stranger concept through a positive outlook:

*I am very humble and proud to be around civilians. They show you other ways of thinking. Civilian side of the house you have flexibility in a mindset to think outside the box because the military has a precise and structured way they want you to think and do. The civilian culture has so many opportunities to help you think, do, and be anything you want to. Some people are using their strategic way of thinking to help soldiers move in the right direction adapting and learning about the culture clash when we come home. If you combined both culture's methods and techniques to think you can have some wicked combinations of success and innovation.*

Jared believes the civilian mindset has a unique and advantageous way of thinking that the civilian culture has focused on – capitalizing on new and strategic ways of being innovative and constructing ground-breaking ways to solve issues that arise in their culture. This soldier also expressed a unique concept of combining the military and civilian way of thinking in order to produce “wicked” and “successful” ways to approach concerns that may become influential in the short and long-term confrontation. This idea could be implemented in future research ideas and could be used in consideration to explore how the job market and methods of problem solving from both cultures could be beneficial for combining effective ways to think critically, identify concerns, and generate optimal solutions to issues in the workplace, community, or the cultures as a whole.

Mark shares his voice towards how he perceives the civilian culture that some members make it their mission to help others around them focusing on their drive to make a positive impact:

*Some civilians in the civilian world try their best to help everyone – they are genuine and caring people. They are some civilians who make it their personal mission to impact those around them in the utmost positive ways. Educators, law enforcement, medical personal, community organizers, you name it there is an occupation that strives to better those around them somehow someway. Some civilians want to help soldiers comes home. They want to know us better. They educate themselves and speak to many of us in order for them to support us when we come home or with issues we face. I have a stronger respect for civilians who have a mission to help others.*

Mark discusses how some people will diligently make it their mission and purpose to help others around them. This is similar to the code military personal live adhere to and honor. Most soldiers mentioned how civilians they know personally and throughout society are not selfish, individualistic or greedy to push through life shying away from caring for others. Lincoln argues through his third component of his Cultural Dynamic theory that there are strangers in a given culture who lack the ability to understand the culture. The Officer above speaks on how these strangers [civilians] are attempting, or at least doing their best, to bridge their own lack of understanding in order for them to seek out more improved methods of support they can offer for soldiers. Through their drive and ambition, they take the initiative to make it their mission to help others around them for the maximum positive effects they may produce. My purpose I aim to implement in the future with this thesis argument and throughout my academic and military career is to make it both civilian and military culture's mission to help better understand each other in order for us to bridge the gap of disconnect that arguably and perceivably exists.

Before we rush our way into the right direction we must explore the disconnect and recognize the negative manner soldiers disclose when they consider the civilian culture's populace and mindset. Soldiers' perceive and notice negative connotations directly targeting the military culture through the crosshairs of the civilian culture. Multiple soldiers revealed an expression considering the civilian culture as being "headline-ready" in nature – civilians look at the headlines and move on not desiring to look beyond the text. In other words, some civilians view news or media headlines and then believe and accept that to be true – no further investigation needed their perception has been formed. Danielle expresses how she views civilians as social media magnets and who only care about headlines and can't see past the written text on the screen:

*I believe they are a one-track mind who would never understand why we do what we do and can share our expression towards our experiences and perspective. All they care and see are headlines of US soldiers doing bad and they don't see past the text on the screen and then the news or social media shares everything before the facts and reality are given. Then it's too late to change their mind because the perspective is formed. I worry about this when I get deployed because where we are going it's getting pretty active right now – I don't want my name on the headlines for something I had to do but people don't realize why I had to do it that way.*

A final point to emphasize on how soldiers view civilians in a negative manner is expressed through Francis's voice:

*Think of an iceberg. You see a small portion, but under the water there is this massive block of ice with many layers that goes deeper than you think it does. Civilians don't see this. This shelters soldiers from speaking because we perceive*

*them not to care because they just can't understand how deep that iceberg idea is to them because they are not a soldier. They already have their perceptions and ideas towards us. They believe what they want to believe. Their perspective is already shaped and skewed through the media and their own understanding. This is the social media generation – social media dictates their understanding.*

Many soldiers throughout the research discussion who have been deployed expressed how deployments changed their thoughts, ideas, and perspective in how they view the civilian culture and its populace. Specifically, the Danielle and Francis illustrate their point of view towards the civilian mindset they perceive civilians to hold in which almost all the deployed soldiers voiced to be true to them– civilians are one-track minded and demonstrate their inability to see the *real* issues and causes of certain events through military operations. Danielle voiced her concern that the civilian culture is “social media magnets” expressing how they are attached to their phones, see a headline, obtain their perspective without any further self-research or investigation, and move forward believing and accepting that headline to be factual. This is an indication that they only see a small portion of what is really true, or how Francis put it, civilians only visibly see the tip of the iceberg when they look towards the military culture. Some civilians – through the soldier’s point of view – are believed to be unable to see “under the water” at the factors, variables, and reasoning that goes beyond their ability to understand why the soldiers do what they do and why they are who they are as people. Some civilians may not ask the difficult questions that involve critical thinking. What really happen on that specific military operation? How did political and economic factors play a role? How are the ethno-demographics influence local’s behavior, attitude and perspective of military personal in

their geographic location? However, while some civilians don't push their selves to see beyond the headlines, other civilians – who have affiliation with the military – are able “put goggles on dive under the water” to see the issues below the tip of the iceberg but what they see is “foggy” or “unclear” of what is happening to the soldiers. They are in a position of obscurity of who the soldier is and how the soldier thinks. Those who express willingness to explore under the surface put themselves in a position where they are capable of understanding better compared to civilians who only see the tip of the iceberg. When they “put the goggles on to see under the water” they are demonstrating their desire to help understand soldiers more than just absent mindfully seeing the tip of the iceberg and moving on – ignoring the issues or not understanding the magnitude of the concerns. A quote from Zack shares his wife's desire and willingness to “put the goggles on” in order for her to move in a position to understand him better as a soldier and has her husband:

*My wife and I had a conversation letting me know we need to communicate every day because she can't read my mind, she needs to understand and know what is happening in my head, so she can better help me through the issues she can't see nor understand. We are a team and we must move forward as one if we're going to make it. She wants to understand. She wants to help. Soldiers and civilians need to understand each other more.*

Zack's wife demonstrates her willingness to “put the google on and dive under the water” with military issues, specifically her own husbands personal and social concerns. It's remarkable to recognize the way soldiers view civilians in this manner because this helps illuminate on where civilians' understanding originates from and the ways it repeatedly is produced through media or other influences when they look towards soldiers

without any affiliation or little knowledge about the military culture. This method of recognizing and understanding each other more may improve relationships, diminish negative thoughts and disconnect between the cultures, and increase the success of a soldier's reintegration process.

A closing quote helps us reflect on the data presented in this section which reasonably validates the misunderstanding and disconnect that prevails between the two cultures – as the skewed perceptions feed off one another. Additionally, this quote is logically important as we conclude this section and transition into the next which explore in-depth the anticipation and lived-experiences of a deployment. Moreover, we will be placing uncertainty as a central focus of influence on a soldier's thoughts and behaviors throughout their military career – the uncertainty within the unknown. Paige has been deployed twice and prepares for her third at the end of this year speaks about how social media interferes with the communications between the cultures given a deployment:

*A deployment is a deployment no matter what. A deployment will have base factors – communications, environment variables, social and political factors etc. When you are away from home and your loved ones, for a long period of time that is a major stressor on your well-being. Time-zones and communications will affect your ability to speak to them often. Also, your mission and operations will interfere with your perspectives. Social media interferes with both of your perspectives from what's happening on each end things may be blown out of proportion with news stories, information and Jody thoughts can consume and defeat you when uncertainty overkills your thoughts.*

Paige articulates how social media coupled with uncertain thoughts can disrupt the military and civilian cultures perspectives towards each other, even more so between loved ones through bombardments of inaccurate information that act as a barrier moving forward. Paige's quote and idea will be a precursor as we advance to the next section but allow me to justify a phenomenon within the military that is perhaps unheard of or ignored within the civilian culture that impacts military member's in various substantial ways – the Jody phenomenon. Many soldiers throughout this research, to include myself, have experienced and/or expressed great concern with Jody when they leave for military training or deployment overseas for an extended period of time. The simplest way to conceptualize Jody for readers is to paint a picture of three people; a soldier, a soldier's loved one (significant other or spouse) and another person. This other person may be a friend of a soldier, a friend of their loved one or a third-party person that affects the relationship in an extreme negative way. Furthermore, this other person waits for the soldier to leave, or even before, to spark an emotional connection to the soldier's significant other due to the *vulnerability* of physical and emotional separation through geographical displacement given a military deployment overseas. Jody instigates and exploits a soldier's loved one's vulnerability. Jody is the emotional boogeyman soldiers express a considerably amount of anxiety about when they leave for military training or deployment because their physical distance produces a chance for Jody to solidify their emotional connection to their significant other. This often results in the soldier losing their loved one in the end due to the uncertainty centered around and through a deployment. The dominant factors that reinforces this concern is communication and distance between a soldier and their significant other during their physical departure. A soldier's communication may be



hindered, restricted or blocked as they are conducting military operations abroad depending on their geographic isolated location or type of mission. The relationship may take a toll if they lack the ability to continue to strengthen their bond and love for one another – allowing Jody to take the emotional and physical connection away from the soldier, pushing their loved one away. We'll explore emotional, mental and physical uncertainty and unknown in-depth in the following section.

The data presented in this section has demonstrated and validated an important consideration when soldiers and civilians view each other: that there is a gap of misinformation and misunderstanding of one another that is reinforced throughout social media and that produces a significant lack of awareness of what actually happens. The idea of anticipating and experiencing a deployment tends to change a soldier's idea on how they view the world from a bigger picture perspective. Throughout this research soldiers have voiced this concern towards some civilians who will never understand what goes on in the world because they lack the ability to dive under the surface to see the factors, effects and considerations that are involved with soldier's engagement with military operations. "Why bother" mentality encapsulates some civilians mindsets when they don't have to worry or be concerned with soldiers because they don't have affiliation or care to know anything about the culture.

We must recognize with the understanding of the military and civilian mindset, and how the perspectives of each culture inevitably clashes with each other, is the important consideration on how this affects soldier's reintegration process. Specifically focusing on the anticipation of deployment and actual lived concerns that soldiers have endured throughout their time in the military. The next questions that we must consider as we move

forward to the most important section of this thesis and argument are as follows: How does the military mindset impact the reintegration process of a soldier? How does the military mindset affect their families? How does the misinformed understanding of soldiers and civilians contribute to the influential concerns throughout the soldier's reintegration? What are the biggest social and personal concerns soldiers face when they must reintegrate back into the civilian culture that doesn't understand them? The subsequent sections will help expose what the soldiers voiced through their deployment concerns and consideration as they prepare or have experienced coming home from military operations and duty to their country. It is with their voices that we will help bridge the gap of misunderstanding while placing both cultures in a more optimal position to discover new ways to alleviate the influential concerns soldier must endure and conquer through their reintegration process. This must become our mission!

## **Chapter 5**

### **Being a Soldier – Anticipation of Deployment**

#### ***Understanding a Military Deployment***

There are numerous important considerations to identify before we advance with this argument that must be at the center focus of this section's argument and research discoveries. (1) Recognizing the military mindset, (2) understanding the Jekyll and Hyde characterization of soldiers living in two different worlds as they are two different people, (3) and recognizing and accepting the anticipation or lived-experiences of deployment holds significant power over the soldier's mindset. Q4: What strategies and techniques has the soldier engaged with to prepare themselves, emotionally, mentally and physically for their anticipated or actual deployment concerns? This question will be the grounding foundation within the in-depth investigation of this section as we continue to progress through recognizing and understanding the personal and social concerns that become influential on a soldier's reintegration.

In this section I plan to explore how anticipation of deployments affects a soldier's mindset and preparation of reintegration as uncertainty floods their thoughts. Precisely analyzing how soldiers' thoughts, behaviors and actions are influenced by the uncertainty whether or not they are truly getting deployed. Importantly to know this section will be grounded in-depth with Robert Parks Marginal Man Theory, Bruce Lincoln's Cultural Dynamic Theory, and Jekyll and Hyde characterization illuminating when soldiers must

continuously bounce between cultures it's groundbreaking to recognize because this is where certain thoughts and behaviors develop and strengthen within the soldier's conscious thought process.

We must obtain a clear and concise understanding of what a deployment is and means to a soldier and their loved ones in order for us to recognize how it can influence the development of a soldier. Given this research argument and numerous soldiers voicing their own ideas on what a deployment is I will provide a clear and concise understanding on conceptualizing it. A deployment can be conceptualized as mobilizing to another geographic location to execute military mission essential tasks that is beyond the training environment and focused on real-world operations. Some deployments are more intense and dangerous than others, but the point of the emphasis is a deployment is a deployment. Deployments force a soldier to leave their culture, home, and loved ones and position them in another culture – completely different from what they understand – to go experience life and conduct military operations that could place others, their group, and their own safety at elevated levels of danger. All throughout their deployment, they may be at heightened risks of existing and surviving in horrible conditions and significantly lower standards of living to support the mission given to them from their higher chain of command. A deployment produces emotional, mental and physical constraints on a soldier's family and their own overall well-being. It's important to understand that a soldier's communications and accessibility to their loved ones may be restricted, hindered or blocked due to their location and military mission. As a soldier progresses through a deployment there can be repercussions that influence and manifest on a soldier's character

transformation. This will transform the soldier into someone else leaving their old self, old thoughts, and old habits behind as they become someone new with their lived-experiences.

This section will help place us in a more optimal position to better support soldiers and their families by identifying some of the key uncertainties that manifest within a soldier's thoughts as they prepare to deploy. Our mission throughout this section is to obtain a better understanding on the anticipation and lived-experiences of deployment that influences a soldier throughout their reintegration process. Furthermore, this section will build our knowledge on who the soldier is and who they continue to develop into – their new selves are influenced throughout the anticipation leading up to their deployment, if they even go!

### ***Thoughts of Uncertainty and the Unknown Perpetuates***

The dominant concentration we must explore in this section is to identify and recognize how anticipation or lived-experiences of a deployment may influence a soldier's thoughts, behaviors and actions that members in both cultures seem to not understand the magnitude in why they develop and progress the way they do. In addition, how anticipation and endured experiences of deployment, not only effects the soldier, but also their family's thoughts, behaviors and overall well-being. It's a binding relationship the impact of a deployment has on a soldier and their family that we must increase our awareness and understanding on throughout their time in the military. This section will help reveal important accentuations on how the anticipation of a deployment inspires the military mindset of a soldier – to support the validation of the Jekyll and Hyde Theory.

Mitchell conveys about how time and doubt may poison a soldier's mindset when they are preparing for their first deployment, if they are currently deployed for the third time or if they are returning from their fifth deployment in the ways that our military mindset can fall victim to the dynamics of uncertainty:

*Time is going to beat you and demand your attention – all of it. The only thing you can do is reflect on who you are and where you are in life now. I participated in War. I survived and had to do some things I didn't like but kept me alive. This internal confrontation soldiers must face is what I deem most fearful for everyone to include you and myself. Loneliness, time, doubt and fear are the worst enemy any human being can face – significantly worse for soldiers. We become someone different after we experience a deployment but how will this change you Matthew or any soldier who deploys? Who am I today? Who will I be tomorrow? It is frightening what you'll discover even more so when your family can't connect or understand you, especially when you feel as if you're a burden to their lives and your own home's stability.*

Mitchell emphasizes on the importance to understand the soldier's transformation – physically, emotionally and mentally – when they are surrounded by various stressors as they endure the journey of being a soldier throughout their time in service. These stressors reveal how considerably crucial they are to recognize these issues that continue to develop throughout a soldier's journey as they constantly bounce between both cultures. The point is to understand how soldiers will transform into someone new and the uncertainty on who that new person will be is troubling – for the soldier and their family - to grasp. It's distressing to a soldier having awareness in the fluctuating of relationships towards their loved ones and even their own selves

through their experiences that later influences conflict within their thoughts, decisions and actions. It's remarkable how Mitchell describes how time, doubt, loneliness and fear are worst enemies to all of us – civilian or soldier - and how these factors hold significantly more power when they are targeting soldier's mindset. Together, these variables inspire uncertainty and the unknown that demands a soldier's thoughts and attention to consider everything that could happen to them while on deployment, or when they return home.

How does the uncertainty manifest within a soldier's considerations they are required to contemplate throughout the anticipation process of a deployment? Blake's voice explains the anticipation of his transformation through a deployment and what that could do to him once he reintegrates when he returns:

*It's hard to anticipate what to expect because you hear so many different stories. I anticipate returning to be different. You must leave assuming everything back at home will be the same when you return – but you know it won't be. It's difficult to explain because there is so much uncertainty on what will happen. Where you deploy also depends on how you will come home and what you are like. Combat deployment has different stressors and environments than a peaceful or training deployment to another allied country, but a deployment is a deployment – so many factors that affect you when you return. It's important to understand anything can happen to you while you are deployed – we must be ready for anything! Your family must be ready!*

Blake expresses his concern on the uncertainty he anticipates before deploying and towards his considerations on how he'll return home and what who he will become. The unknown influences a soldier's anticipation because when they consider all the possibilities that may happen to them while they are on mission, and what happens to their

loved ones back at home, it produces anxiety within the mindset that can have numerous undesirable implications. Recall, I argue a deployment is a deployment. No matter what kind of mission a soldier is conducting, a deployment will transform the soldier into someone new and will have lasting effects on their thoughts, behaviors and overall well-being. In addition, reinforced with the Jekyll and Hyde characterization the military mindset is constantly controlling and influencing a soldier's thoughts, decisions and behavior. It's important to recognize this precise way of thinking *never* ceases, indicating a soldier demonstrates this mindset before, during and after deployment – it arguably evolves, strengthens and progresses throughout their cyclical journey. The military mindset will be prominent throughout the duration of a deployment and will continue to reinforce itself when the soldier returns home.

Allow the logic of this position to be revealed through the next two soldier's insight. First, Jared shares his logical rational on how uncertainty produces numerous thoughts within the unknown that wields a considerable amount of power over him:

*The anticipation is crucial because of all your realms must be balanced as you train and prepare to leave your loved ones – I will need my military self to help me with this challenge that awaits me. What will deployment do my military self and civilian self – will I collide with myself? Will I love my family the same when I return? Will I look at them the same? How will I be able to emotionally support them while I am deployed and handle my own business at home – both worlds being cared for? How will I change? How will they change? Many soldiers don't ask these difficult and challenging questions when these thoughts creep into their minds – we absolutely must start here because we both know what happens when we don't!*



Jared exhibits the uncertainty on who he will become and how his family will be impacted throughout his character transformation. In addition, he is alarmed at how many things he is considering will occur in each of the stages throughout his military deployment. Moreover, he faces his thoughts with questions he contemplates with and may not like how the answer reveals itself when he is confronted with what surfaces. It's considerably important to understand that he, as many soldiers have suggested to include myself, must call upon his military self to help his civilian self during the stages of deployment and his reintegration process. This discovery is remarkable when we consider Jekyll and Hyde characterization and Parks Marginal Man Theory. Together, these two theories feed off each other to illuminate a consideration we have been ignoring until now – or at least not understanding the magnitude of the concern – that a soldier battles in their own mind on who will come out, or who is supposed to come out, at a given time in any social environment when confronted with certain issues. Our military mindset reveals itself when we are in a situation or environment that troubles our conscious thoughts, or even when our civilian mind is unsure what to do – like a candle in a dark room to illuminate its presence, it's there, it's now. A soldier is their military mindset. The military mindset is the soldier. They are one in the same. This idea has repercussions that perpetuates within the civilian culture when a soldier is constantly calling upon their military self to help them out – cultures meet and fuse producing distress and tension.

An additional quote reinforces the power that uncertainty holds towards a soldier preparedness and readiness for an upcoming deployment. Erik shares his insight on what he is considering now and what he will experience overseas on his upcoming military mission:

*The truth is there is no actual way to prepare for it. Because we have no idea what we are going to walk into the second we get off that plane and into country. There are too many things to consider – it's impossible to think of it all. We will do our best for the upcoming military training to prepare us to accomplish our mission while we are there. Mentally you must prepare yourself for anything and everything that what will happen to you and those around you. Our military mindset is ready but are we ready or prepared to experience what we could over there? Are we ready to accept the reality of war?*

Erik explains that soldiers must be ready for anything and everything to happen to them while they engaged in military operations. Our military mindset through the rigorous conditioning and training are ready, but is our civilian side? Erik raises this powerful question, and quite frankly its remarkable to consider as soldiers carry out their military operations in a deployment. Are both military and civilian mindset ready to experience, undergo and accept the realities and repercussions of war? What we must do at this point is ask ourselves what if the soldier prepares and readies for a deployment, but they are told from their higher chain of command they are no longer needed nor are they deploying? What happens when a soldier is “off-ramped?” How does this impact their overall well-being? Their military mindset? Their civilian mindset?

### ***Off-Ramping – Intensification of Uncertainty***

A soldier is subject to being off-ramped at any moment from the second they are notified they are going to deploy up until the time they step off the plane into the area of interest [country] they will conduct military operations. In other words, off-ramp means a soldier believes they are going to deploy however, all of a sudden due to changes to their

mission or decisions from higher chain of command with the unit they are attached to has been pulled off and no longer deploying. This has happened to 25% of the total sample. A horror story that is often spoke throughout the ranks in the military is the “ultimate off ramp.” The story goes that a soldier can go so far of getting on the plane, your plane lands to the country that your deployment *would have happened*, but the plane is ordered to turn around, take off and bring your unit back home indicating your deployment has been cancelled form higher chain of command leading to the ultimate off-ramped. This most certainly has profound mental and emotional repercussions to follow when a soldier is facing uncertainty whether they are deploying or not – their family and own plans, thoughts, mindset coupled with other varying factors are abruptly thrown off course and must readjust within the unknown. Soldiers must leave the civilian world more frequently than they usually do in order to prepare, train, ready and be as capable as they can become throughout the course of their pre-deployment phase. This means being excused from their civilian employment, missing out on family activities, spending countless hours training away from their loved ones and spending their emotional, mental and physical well-being getting attuned to their deployment tempo they will endure over the duration of the tour.

Cindy’s insight will place a considerable amount of attention on Park’s idea when he argues cultures meet and fuse which inevidently produce an unstable character and a soldier must leave behind their old self and becomes their new self throughout the anticipation process, leaving her subject to be off-ramped. Cindy speaks volumes about the uncertainty and the unknown that floods soldiers’ thoughts during their anticipation of deployment:

*I am excited because I get to answer the call of duty and do what I have trained so hard and long for. I am nervous because I have seen what it has done to many of my battle buddies. I have also lost friends because of what happens over there. So, I get nervous about that. The anticipation is the most difficult I think because you are getting ready to go but an off ramp can derail you mentally and emotionally. I was off-ramped, and it destroyed me emotionally – I just wanted to do my job and help people, but the Army changed their mind and denied the unit from going on the tour. This is crucial to that anticipation that soldiers have about deployment because you have been training constantly – hours on hours that blend into days that quickly pass by - being taken away from your family, civilian life while you train but when it is all said and done, you may not even go! That will mess you up!*

The uncertainty that manifests within soldiers' minds as they prepare to leave for a deployment is crucial to identify and recognize throughout this thesis argument – the concern is deliberately in her voice. Military training demands a soldier's time in order for them to answer the call of duty the Army demands of them. Cindy reveals that when a soldier is off-ramped, they can be derailed emotionally and mentally. A soldier is *convinced* and *believes* she is going to deploy to conduct military operations, but at any moment they can be ordered from higher chain of command they are no longer needed. She was deeply affected by her off-ramp because she was training long hours, taken away from her civilian employer and her loved ones to solely focus on preparing for her mission. She was notified she was no longer deploying and mentioned how she felt robbed of her duties to serve her nation and perform her role as a soldier. This absolutely holds profound emotional and mental impact on a soldier's well-being but the question we must come to understand is how exactly? Park's Marginal Man theory may offer

remarkable insight as the soldier prepares to embark their journey between cultures. Does the unstable character of a soldier that is created through distress and tension, as Park's argue, begin when they receive notification of a deployment? How does unstable character continue to build, fester and manifest within the soldier's mindset when they are off-ramped? Future research will benefit if we explore how "off-ramped" soldiers must readjust after going through preparing their families and themselves for the deployment but now must remain in the civilian culture because they were pulled off the mission. It is vital to pin-point and recognize where a soldier, arguably becomes the unstable character Park's contend exists when one migrates between cultures. This understanding will help discover better ways to support the soldier and ensure they are ready for anything to happen from the time they are notified of the deployment and when they endure their reintegration process, and beyond. In the meantime, Kenneth and Samuel will help us investigate a brief idea on how off ramping a soldier will have grave consequences to their families and own overall well-being that is influenced by uncertainty and doubt on whether they are truly deploying or not.

Kenneth conveys the uncertainty and frustration of being told by the Army that you are no longer deploying after mentally and emotionally preparing yourself to execute military mission overseas:

*Being off-ramped fucks with you. I planned on being gone for a year of my life, away from everything I knew. But then after all this planning and training the Army tells us we are not getting deployed, and I know it happened to you as well! That fucks with you as a person, as a soldier, your mindset and your life. I didn't know what to do, I didn't have a job because I didn't plan for one because I was to leave. It was hectic to accept this. Soldiers stopped their rent, sold cars, sold houses so on and so*

*forth. We had the orders to go but we were still denied. For the last year we were ready as you could possibly be, T's [effectively trained to perform your military duties] across the board in the TPU scale [a scale dictated by the Army that measures your readiness and capabilities to perform your military mission]. We were convinced we were going to do our military duties overseas but instead went home with so many questions and no answers to help us out.*

Samuel explains how his off ramp produced nothing but stress that severely diminished morale across his unit and every soldier's well-being when their higher chain of command notified they are longer getting deployed:

*We were so focused and executing our military police skills effectively. We were helping and supporting local law enforcement on various simulated missions to prepare the unit for what we we're going to do. Then the Army hit us with the off-ramp notice. And when we all found out that we are no longer needed, mind you after 18-hour days and rigorous training that interrupted our personal lives, the morale among the unit and soldiers extremely decreased. God damn did it! When you are off-ramped all of a sudden after rigorous training and you just go home, it's hard on everyone including the family they go back to. This is crucial to that anticipation that soldiers have about deployment because you never know if you are actually going until you step foot into country or wherever you are tasked to go execute the call of duty. The uncertainty is somewhat sickening.*

Samuel, Kenneth and Cindy greatly stress how soldiers have mixed emotions on migrating between cultures where they must engage in military operations. Mainly because soldiers desire to carry out our military missions we are asked to conduct, but we don't know if we *actually* will

and if so, what and how we will transform in who we are along our journey through our experiences during our operations. No matter their background, their skills and how much of an asset they are to the Army and the mission, a soldier is always subject to being “off-ramped”. Kenneth articulates when a soldier gets notified by their leadership they are being deployed they can prepare all they want, do what they believe they need to by selling their cars, their homes and convincing their family and themselves they are leaving their physical presence for a year. However, over the course from they are told to until they leave for mission they never know until they know, and you may think you know but you will never until you do. Samuel added soldiers *might know when* they board the mobilization plane (the plane that leaves a U.S military active duty base to the point of origin the soldier will enter the country they will conduct missions in) and step their first foot off the plane ready to complete missions but anything can happen that results on your unit and yourself being sent home with no reason why but an order to do so. Moving forward, we will investigate how uncertainty within the unknown throughout the deployment process impacts thoughts which deeply impacts overall relationships towards a soldier’s love ones.

### ***Soldier’s Reintegration and Relationships Uncertainties Manifest in Their Thoughts***

We must go in-depth to how anticipation and uncertainty develops and gains influential power. Furthermore, how these two profound ideas impact the soldier’s relationships and thoughts towards their loved ones when they are completely submerged within the unknown. We will explore this crucial idea with three soldiers’ perspective that specifically targets their anticipating concerns of how their family will be impacted and their selves as they prepare to deploy and be physical absent for more than one year.

Amanda places her uncertainty and considerations into her family members and how civilian society will feel towards her when she returns from her deployment. She is filled with many questions and hardly any answers because a deployment is different for every soldier and affects them in many ways. She worries about her family members and her fiancé's love for her. She hears throughout the ranks and from many soldiers she has spoken with that you leave one person and come back someone else, that is just how it is, she believes. She is more concerned on who she will become and how others will change while she is physically absent:

*When you are deployed you can speak to your loved one back home but depending on where you are there could be several hours between you both. There is also limited and restrict communications depending on your mission and location. It can be extremely challenging to communicate with your family when you want to. Will they grow to be better without me while I am away? Will they change for the better while they don't communicate or see me as often as they did prior to me leaving? How will society look at me when I return? I am most worried about my relationships with my family, friends and fiancé changing for the worse and they deciding I am too different for them to accept. That will crush me. I hear it happens often to soldier who leave one person and return someone else.*

Second, Jackson speaks about his family concerns as well placing a considerable amount of attention to his young daughter with his physical departure from her presence:

*I have a wife. And I have a daughter who is almost two years old. Right now, mentally for me I am accepting that I will be physically absent from them both and entering a different country. A new world and culture. I am helping prepare my wife*



*financially and emotionally. I am not worried about her so much because I know in my heart she is strong and capable to sustain herself while I am gone. What really gets at me and worries me significantly is my kid because she is so young right now. She is almost two. The thing that bothers me the most is if she will forget me. More so doesn't remember me being there for her now and looks at me like a stranger when I return to her.*

Jackson articulates deep emotional and physical concern through the forced geographical separation of his family and himself. A deployment being a forced geographic separation between a soldier and their loved ones. His voice captures the concern he bears by leaving home, entering a new world and culture that generates an obstacle in the way of his daughter and himself. This geographical distance will test his mindset and fathering capabilities. This idea is remarkable to expose. Many soldiers and I similarly expressed how emotional, mental and physical constraints inspire a profound impact on the soldier's mindset and capabilities while performing their role as a soldier conducting military missions. In other words, these specific constraints may hinder and restrict the capability of the soldier to perform their military duty during mission. This could result in distractions within their mind having detrimental impact on their mission, their soldiers and themselves when their thoughts are not focused on their tasks at hand. To a soldier the mission and group must come first always. This code is emphasized in the Warrior Ethos within the Soldier's Creed.

While Jackson worries about his daughter's love for him and understands in his heart his wife is strong, capable and willing to endure through a deployment to remain together. The same can't be said for the next Jacob who articulates uncertainty about his

wife's capability to remain with him as a married couple. He deems emotional, mental and physical distance is his worst enemy that is targeting his wife's ability to continue with him. Jacob has been married for two years voices his emotional concern he has towards his marriage – specifically when he speaks of his wife's ability to endure the deployment:

*I love my wife very much, but I also know my wife. I feel right now she won't be able to handle a marriage over my upcoming deployment. Where will that lead us? I don't know but its shaky now. If my wife had military experience she would better understand what is to come and what to expect. But she doesn't so it is going to be more difficult because your loved ones know what you tell them but won't understand in-depth or completely because they are not soldiers themselves. Why do you think the military divorce rate is so high? We live in two different worlds. I am prepared for the worse to happen when I get deployed because I just don't see us making it.*

We first must recognize that Jacob is exhibiting uncertainty on how the deployment will affect his marriage. Though it's unfortunate he believes in his heart they will not remain together it becomes a perceived reality he must prepare for when he returns home. Secondly, he speaks of high divorce rates as he pin-points a reasoning that could explain why the frequency is as high as it is. A validated reason could be they are two different people in two different worlds – as one member constantly migrates between cultures in conflict with their old and new selves. Furthermore, he leaves his old self behind as he deploys and returns home becoming his new self. He will experience “a divided self” a transformation that will produce a different person within the military mindset with altered thoughts, behaviors and actions that will undergo tension. As we shift focus to Lincoln's

Cultural Dynamic Theory we can see how this soldier speaks about how he wishes for his wife to have had military experience or understanding because he believes this will help them have a better chance of making it through the deployment. He speaks from the heart with this reasoning for a few suggestions that will be grounded by Lincoln's account. He believes his wife is estranged to the military culture with the inability to understand the emotional, mental and physical ramifications of an upcoming deployment. Also, she is an outsider to the military culture in addition to not understanding the magnitude of what it means to be a soldier which inevitably increases the possibility of a divorce from occurring because they are two different people. Jacob mentioned how he will prepare for the worse to happen when he gets deployed and quite possibly return single, divorced and without his wife. In his voice, we can depict the military mindset speaking for him. The primary duty of the military mindset is to prepare and ready for the worse-case scenario from unfolding. If it doesn't, it doesn't but if it does Jackson is ready for the end of his marriage. Many soldiers attest to this reason for the high-divorce rates because soldiers marry people outside the culture and then confront tension and distress when they experience transforming into someone new. Through their lived-experiences a soldier spouse may no longer love the person they married or are not loved by them due to their transformation that will occur.

In this section we have identified important and vital considerations to recognize as a soldier prepares for an upcoming deployment, even more so for the first time. We have emphasized on the uncertainty and unknown that floods a soldier's mind when they start to question all the infinite possibilities that could happen to them while deployed or their families back at home. Furthermore, we increased our awareness of how the anticipation is

influential and produces tension in the mental, emotional and physical realms of the soldier's mind and their families. In addition, we discovered how loved ones are at the focus of discussion of the soldiers who prepare for their first deployment or even their fifth one, placing a considerate amount of emphasis on children and spouses because there is a significant number of emotional obstacles that act as catalyst to the uncertainty a soldier contemplates. Lastly, we examined Bruce Lincoln's account of Cultural Dynamics to reinforce the idea of insider and outsider members of the military culture to determine their role's effect towards a soldier who prepares their upcoming deployment. We will now transition to the personal and social concerns through lived-experiences of a deployment in a soldier's reintegration process in order to continue to build on our knowledge and awareness.

## Chapter 6

### *The Unfortunate Reality of Reintegration*

#### **The Influential Power of Soldiers Reintegration**

It is paramount to identify and recognize the effects of a soldier's reintegration that becomes influential on who their new self will develop into and how both cultures add considerable amount of conflict to this process. This final section aims to increase our knowledge and awareness of the influential power behind the concern's soldiers have that severely impact their reintegration process. The guiding research question that will ground and validate this section is: Q5: What are the biggest personal and social challenges, concerns, and obstacles when the soldier must reintegrate into the civilian culture? Many soldiers expressed how they feel as if they are "ghosts" or "strangers" when they return from deployment because they feel and think differently than the members within the civilian culture after experiencing military operations abroad. In this final section of the thesis we will explore in-depth with soldiers who have lived-experiences reintegrating after their military deployments. The range of deployments in this section are one to five so we can acquire a wide area of attentiveness on how the reintegration process for soldiers progresses and develops.

Throughout this final section we will revisit how the military mindset through conditioning and autonomic hyperarousal is vital to understand throughout the reintegration

process of a soldier – Jekyll and Hyde characterization. We will then move to examine stories of soldiers’ experiences overseas and why that impacted their reintegration when they came home (1) character transformation, (2) family issues and (3) social ramifications are emphasized. Then we will dive deeper in how the (4) family level reintegration causes concern for a soldier as they come back home to outsiders who have a faint idea what it truly means to be a soldier – their loves one can’t understand them producing significant amount of distress. (5) Finally, we will end with three optimal solutions and personal accounts from soldiers that, not only give us a ray of hope but also help us move us forward to place us in a more improved position to support military personal and their families through their reintegration process. This final section will be grounded by Robert Parks Marginal Man Theory and Thomas Joiners Perceived Burdensomeness Theory to logically validate the argument. These tow concepts are critically important to consider as we explore soldier’s reintegration concerns in-depth from their own voices.

It's vital we have a clear and concise recognition on the power behind Joiner’s idea behind his theory of perceived burdensomeness because it will support and justify why soldiers may feel personally and socially ineffective towards their contributions to their families and society. Specifically targeting when soldiers can’t connect with or understand their loved ones – and even the members of the civilian culture – is groundbreaking to recognize because this is where negative thoughts and ideation originate to become severely influential in the soldiers conscious thought process. Joiner accentuates how someone’s – for this research, a soldier - perception is influential, mistaken or not, may inspire thoughts, behavior, actions and who they will become as a person. Understanding Joiner’s explanation of perceived burdensomeness, I plan to explore in this overall section the tremendously influential perceived personal and social

concerns that arise during anticipation and reintegration process that inspires a soldier's behavior and who they transform into. Moreover, Joiner's argument will help increase our awareness on why soldiers experience mental health concerns and how these concerns become powerful and infectious over their well-being

### ***Culture Shock – Soldiers Bouncing Between Cultures Causing Distress***

I will develop and strengthen the idea of how a soldier may experience distress and tension as they constantly bounce between cultures by logically explaining a soldier's migration cycle throughout the cultures. When someone migrates from one culture to another there arguably exists personal and social repercussions that have a considerable amount of impact on how they perceive others around them and their selves. I contend a soldier's culture migration cycle has three substantial considerations and phases. (1) A soldier originates within the civilian culture – they are a civilian before being a soldier. (2) A soldier migrates to the military culture where they are conditioned, hardwired and develop into a soldier and is actively engaged in performing that role in any given social environment. (3) They are constantly preparing for a deployment where they may migrate overseas to conduct mission operations to another culture that is new to them. Its considerably important to understand throughout the three phases a soldier is continuously bouncing between cultures experiencing conflict towards others around them and their own self as they progress throughout their military career. Parks emphasizes how the Marginal man will experience negative ramifications that persist and manifest on their overall well-being. This idea is arguably reasoned because a soldier is not anchored to one culture. Soldiers are continually moving in and out of each culture perceivably carrying distress with them along the way that wields considerable amount of power over them.

Richard shares his account on how he experienced a culture shock when he reintegrated back home:

*It's challenging when you go between the worlds constantly. It produces tension and conflict between the culture's members. I understand how soldiers can slip through depression and deal with a lot of mental stressors when they come home because I did. Soldiers must reprogram their minds in order to feel as if they belong to the new world they find themselves in. Soldiers come home after experiencing and seeing things other people can't even fathom through their own imagination. Social pressure forces soldier to deal with this and pretend nothing has happen and act like the person they left as. If you have seen and done certain things, you will not return the same person. Soldiers struggle with this internal battle to be normal.*

Richard deliberately articulates the importance to realize how soldiers are programmed to operate, think and be a certain way that is immensely different from how most civilians are conditioned. This brings us back to the military mindset and how this idea increases tension towards a soldier's reintegration because we are different people with different ideas, experiences and lived-understanding of who we are. Furthermore, this has profound influences on soldiers as we continue to develop into new selves throughout our journey. This transformation arguably increases tension and conflict in relationships between soldiers and their loved ones.

Paige validates how her military mindset was in constant conflict with her civilian mindset and who she was as she tried to be both persons at once. She experienced cultural shock when she returned. She was attempting to switch off her military mindset when she



returned, however, that idea proved to be impossible and it influenced her people perceived her when she was within the civilian culture:

*It was a cultural shock coming back from my deployment. My mind was programmed one way and when you come back to the civilian world you have to reset yourself in order to be attuned to their [civilian] way of life and then again, reprogram yourself to be attuned to the military life when you do training. When you go back and forth you find yourself constantly reprogramming yourself to meet that specific cultural expectations and norms. Even for me to cope I wanted to speak to people about my experiences and then people look at you “this bitch is crazy” because they don’t understand what you are speaking of because they have not experienced it for themselves to be able to hold that conversation. So, to mitigate as much anxiety as I could, I decided not to keep switching between selves, I will remain in military mode all the time, it helps me.*

A reinforcing quote from Brady helps confirm this crucial idea for us to understand about soldier’s and their relationships when they have return from a deployment. He speaks on the grave and troubling consequences that are inevitable when a soldier returns from a deployment and is unable to connect to civilians when he is now even more different than he once was:

*When you come home you don’t have close connections with the people you saw every single day while overseas. You understand them, they understand you. You lose this feeling when you come home because your family and civilians don’t understand you anymore. They can’t relate to what you have done and experienced. It’s unfortunate because they try to, but the sad truth is they will not be able to unless*

*they go overseas and experience what it is like first hand. I have experienced this after each deployment, I have done two tours and each one draws me farther away from the civilian culture's members.*

Brady and Paige help narrow our attention towards how soldiers perceive as if the civilian culture will never understand who we are, the reason we do what we do and why we operate and think certain ways. Paige had difficulty constantly putting the effort into reprogramming herself and after conflict and tension with others around her and herself, she deliberately decided to remain in military mode to ease her distress. Brady admits after each tour he has pushed himself farther away from members within the civilian culture because they will never understand him or come close to recognizing what he is going through unless they have served in the military. It's troubling to grasp because soldiers throughout this research expressed how they pushed their selves into isolation because they can't connect with anyone anymore because of who they have become and what they had to do throughout their military missions. The soldier's new selves add significant challenges to feeling belonged – or anchored - to the civilian culture. They cross cultures so often they are unable to truly anchor themselves into one specific culture. In addition to feeling isolated they often voiced their concern how their lived-experiences throughout their military operations and their return significantly affected the stability of their homelife with their family – more negative than positive.

### ***Family Level Reintegration –Frustrations Persist, Fears Become Reality***

Joiner argues any perception, mistaken or not, can influence someone's thoughts, action and behavior. The perception behind this thought convinces the person to be true; therefore, their behaviors and actions reflect their thoughts. In other words, if a soldier

believes they are being a burden onto others and failing to maintain and sustain their interpersonally relationships their behavior and thoughts towards themselves will reflect this notion of ineffectiveness. Robert shares his account on how deployments changed him as a person and how his transformation through his lived-experiences while on deployment produces conflict and tension on his wife and himself throughout his reintegration process:

*Now given we were in Northern Baghdad in arguably the most dangerous part during statistically the most dangerous time to be there smack dab in the middle of the Sunni triangle. It was kind of like the wild west back then where if you feel threatened you do what you got to do to survive Both deployments I endured were intense experiences. I truly believe I looked evil square in its face during both of these deployments, one at distance and one very close and personal. I was on edge quite a bit when I returned, changes internally started to happen, and perspectives altered. This damaged my marriage and things went downhill once I returned home. My wife felt robbed because I was no longer the same person she fell in love with and married. I absolutely returned someone different through those intense experiences – what I have seen and what I have done.*

Robert speaks volumes when he states he truly believes he looked evil square in the face through what he has done and saw while he was deployed to arguably the most dangerous place in the world given the time he was conducting military operations. The Sunni Triangle he speaks about is surrounded by Tikrit (northside), Baqubah (eastside), Baghdad (southside), and Ramadi (westside). This place is arguably one of the most dangerous places in the world and Robert endured through two deployments in which he continued to develop into a new person brining his lived-experiences from this area back

home with him each time. Arguably, Robert's military mindset was a culprit to the downfall of his marriage – unfortunately leading to a divorce - and his stability within his own home. What he has seen and done overseas produced mental and emotional weight that disrupted his wife's love for him. Moreover, he perceived she was getting robbed because of who he had transformed into because of his military experiences and his new self. He left for deployment as the man his wife loved yet returned to someone she no longer knew and felt different around because of his lived-experiences coupled with a character transformation. An important consideration to realize is recognizing when soldiers constantly migrate between cultures and experience deployments they continue to develop into a new person with the military mindset at the center. The military mindset generates numerous distressing thoughts and behaviors that conflict with civilian culture's members regularly, even more with their own loved ones. Arguably, a soldier's military mindset conflicts and builds tension with their civilian mindset. Who we are as a soldier is different than who we are as civilians.

The question we must ask ourselves is: how does deployment affect the stability and relations within the household at the family-level reintegration from the soldier's perspective? Francis deeply expresses how he felt as if he was a stranger in his own house when he returned from deployment as it generated the continuous feeling of uncertainty, confusion and frustration:

*It just feels I am a stranger in my own house to them and they don't see me nor notice me. I sat back, watched and when that gap of their routine allows you to come back in, get in there and ease your way in to establish a routine together. Don't dive right in and expect to go back to things were – this won't happen. You are going to*

*throw everything off and cause turmoil. They have got comfortable in your absence. They will challenge you and demonstrate discomfort if you just dive right back in like nothing happened. Eventually, you get back into it together, but it takes time and a lot of work together – team effort. Let your spouse or loved one – in my case my wife – take the reins because she has been playing both parenting roles while I was gone – I let her slowly give it to me. It was extremely challenging, but you must be patient or else it could be devastating to all members.*

Francis demonstrates what a soldier must do when they endure the family-level reintegration in order to mitigate the conflict and tension that otherwise would spark if they attempt to dive right back into everything as if nothing happened. Families become accustomed to not having their soldier's physical presence at the home because of their deployment, so they must adapt and overcome to the conditions that are forced upon them. He felt as if he was a stranger in his own home because his family got comfortable and generated a synchronized routine in his physical absence. He became a stranger to their way of life when you reintegrate back home. It takes high-patience levels from all members of the family and significant amount of group efforts to allow the soldier to reestablish their way into the family's overall routine and progress forward as one cohesive unit. However, if a soldier fails to reestablish a cohesive family unit the perceived feeling of ineffectiveness or burdensomeness can escalate into feeling of shame and depressive dark thoughts. Additionally, Joiner argues perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness are the two most common variables when one considers, attempts or commits suicide. Allow Peter, who believed he produced great stress and tension towards

his family when he returned, to describe his family-level conflict to articulate why it's important to be patient upon your return home:

*Home life can be very different from how you left and when you come back. It was kind of strange because some of the things I did to help out around the house when I came back from that year long absence interrupted my family's routine and caused somewhat of minor conflicts within the household. They were used to doing it a certain way and here I come interrupting their synchronization. It was certainly frustrating for everyone when I came back because of this, almost interruption of their daily lives and what they got used to while I was away. So, we then had to make a new routine that incorporated all of us, which slowly became a thing but not without issues of course.*

Peter explains how he jumped right back into the family routine and it sparked frustration directed towards him from his loved ones. He was responsible for the spark of the conflict because he assumed he could dive right back into his husband and father roles. However, it takes high patience levels and a slow-paced ease to incorporate a reintegrating soldier back into the family-level synchronized routine their loved ones developed in his physical absence. This idea is illuminated through many soldiers' voices throughout the research when it was shattering to them that they are responsible for producing conflict and distress within their own household towards their family. This idea generated frustration towards all members in varying ways that we need to further develop in future research to dive more in-depth to explain the reasoning. What can we do to ease our family-level reintegration concerns? How can soldiers and their families develop a slow smooth pace of reintegration that mitigates and diminishes conflict and distress between all members?

As we briefly touched the surface of family-level reintegration and obtained a more improved recognition on how soldiers may experience conflict and tension within the household we must move forward to place attention on the bigger picture in the civilian culture – societal level. Allow us to continue to progress this argument towards the societal-level of reintegration to obtain a better understanding of how soldiers experience distress from the larger civilian culture. Specifically, focusing on the military mindset, autonomic hyper arousal, isolation, and a soldier's purpose and direction – these factors are considerably relevant in the next soldier's accounts.

### ***Societal Level Reintegration – Isolation Gains Power Over A Soldier's Mindset***

Many soldiers throughout the research voiced great concerns with how their military mindset and high-operational tempo generates distress within the civilian culture. Their new selves, who they have transformed into through their military experiences and mindset feel isolated disconnected from civilian culture. Soldier's describe how a sense of purpose and belongingness is vital to their reintegration process – and without it becomes detrimental to their mental and emotional well-being.

John, who has deployed five times has spent more time in the military culture or high operational tempo environment on a deployment than the civilian culture since becoming a soldier. He speaks volumes on how the high-operational tempo of the military culture and his purpose is significantly altered in the civilian culture as he reintegrates:

*When I came back to the civilian culture, it was like slow motion, so many ways to go about your life, so many paths to advance yourself, I just couldn't keep up with the infinite number of options. So many options that I didn't understand because in the*

*military you are told to take this path or that path to get where you need to go – dictated by the army’s demand. Everything was a clear guided direction within the military culture with little freedom to do as you wish. Furthermore, I have done the worse of the worse while deployed I have seen dead bodies mangled and have done things to keep my men, and myself alive. I am different. Soldiers are different from civilians and their way of life. Reintegrating is severely challenging, you wonder why 23 veterans a day [on average annually] commit suicide.*

Brady shares the various struggles soldiers face when they reintegrate into “normal” society after experiencing military operations abroad and how it takes a toll on their overall well-being:

*This military mindset doesn’t allow you to easily reintegrate into “normal” society, therefore you gravitate to people who have the same experience as you because they understand you as a person – but there is not many of us. You try your best to reintegrate into “normal” society, but you just don’t fit with the experiences you have endured. So, some try to go back into the military but sometimes they can’t because you are injured – mentally or physically – and the military says no. Then what? I know many people who have had this happened. It’s happened to me. It messes with them mentally, even more then they struggle with feeling alone and a burden to others.*

Joiner describes how soldiers believes they are isolated and don’t belong within the civilian culture due to who they have become and what they have experienced. The military mindset convinces soldiers they don’t fit in or belong to anyone within the civilian culture because of the inability to connect with populace because of the lived-experiences



and autonomic hyper arousal they continuously develop throughout their time in the military. Numerous soldiers expressed how alienation is a reoccurring feeling that pollutes their mind with toxicity because they feel disconnected from civilians and family. Furthermore, John struggles with the level of freedom civilians have an infinite number of options a soldier could have upon reintegration. The recognition with this knowledge illuminates from day one of the military someone has always been ordering the soldier to do this or that – it’s arguably hardly an independent thought, its more directed from another soldier in their higher chain of command. In other words, a soldier is ordered to execute a task, no questions asked, they do it, get it done and wait for another demand from their chain of command. Both, John and Brady intensely articulate the crucial need to redefine soldiers’ mission and purpose when they reintegrate into the civilian culture. With the infinite numbers of options and amount of freedom in the civilian world, a soldier can get lost in the unknown and unsureness on where to go and what to do. Many soldiers expressed their uncertainty with the abundance of opportunity in which they are now free to choose themselves rather being told where to go and how to do it from someone else is alarming.

A short quote from Brady sums up the general attitude of soldiers hold when they return to the civilian culture uncertain on what to do with the unlimited possibilities, “when I returned to the civilian world, I didn’t know what the fuck to do, right? So many options. So many avenues of approaches. Nobody was telling me where to go it was up to me to decide.” An additional quote Adam expresses reveals his anguish returning home from a deployment, “After I got home from Iraq, I couldn’t find a job. Once I found one, after a long while and many attempts, getting that job was a huge weight off my chest and

relieved so much stress and anxiety from my mind. I had a mission in the civilian world – work hard, support my wife and ensure we have a roof over our heads.” Both quote reveal soldiers needing to narrow their focus and direction when they return from a deployment and enter the civilian culture with high uncertainty clouding their optimism. Nobody is telling a soldier how to do anything or where to go when they return. It’s on them, and them alone, to seek out their course of action that will provide an opportunity for them to rediscover their purpose in order for them to alleviate uncertainty that weighs down on them from moving forward.

Brent offers what he believes is the most troubling and difficult obstacle that lies in front of soldiers from successfully reintegrating back into a civilian world, isolation and the feeling of everything and everyone being different. He mentions how he experienced what war truly means when you are a soldier who is shooting at the enemy and being at the receiving end of the adversary’s iron sights in a firefight:

*During my deployment I experienced what war really is – the combat, wounded soldiers and the anxious feeling at any moment you could be gone before you knew what hit you. It was intense. We got into firefights regularly. I have seen people get hurt and seen all that wicked things that war offers. I have shot at people and they have shot at me. So, when I returned it was extremely difficult to talk about the reality of war. I cut a lot of people out and grew closer to those who understood who I was, where I was coming from and where I was heading. I pushed myself into isolation because everything, everyone and myself was just different. It takes more time than you would think to adjust to the civilian culture. I am still working on it.*

When uncertainty and doubt manifests within soldier's mindset it generates the feeling of alienation – or isolation – that tends to produce emotional and mental distance from the civilian populace. Feelings of connection and belongingness diminish quickly when a soldier returns from a deployment, even more so a combat tour overseas, that continue to create distance between civilian and military personal. Brent voices how he was pushing his civilian connections away because he perceived they wouldn't understand what he has done and who is becoming. However, he drew closer to his battle buddies – military personal – within the civilian culture that can depend on each other for support and understand through the bond and love they have for being a soldier. Similar to Brent, Aaron validates his own alienation through the feeling of inability to connect with people because of what he experienced overseas:

*For me, doing something so in the top-secret realm and not having anyone to talk to it with because when we left we had to sign a document stating we would not talk about what happened here for the rest of our lives. And if we get caught talking about it or writing a book about our experiences we will be tried and sent to [the military prison at] Leavenworth to sit in jail for the rest of our lives. There wasn't anything I can do, no programs to help me because I was afraid to talk about things because I didn't want to get in trouble or where that would take me because of that document I signed. I couldn't tell my wife, my family or anyone! This hurts to know. Its troublesome.*

Aaron did not voice exactly what he did because he was (and remains) fearful of his punishment and consequences if he were to ever be caught. He couldn't communicate his experiences to his loved ones and felt as if he could not connect nor did he belong to the

civilian culture because of his-lived experiences. Hopelessness and uncertainty were central to his articulation. The four soldiers expressed this concern when Mitchell spoke of how this messes soldiers up and when the Aaron stated he can't talk to anyone about his experiences due to fearful personal and social repercussions he could face if he were to open up. Brent unfortunately cut a lot of his close civilian friends out because he couldn't speak to them, so he created distance on them but closed the distance on military personal drawing them closer because they knew who he was and what he had experienced while overseas. Furthermore, John spoke of the 23 suicides a day from the veteran populace is the ultimate consequence when soldiers perceive themselves distant and unbelonging to the rest of society – the civilian culture. Together in one amplifying voice, the four soldiers voice their concerns that directs grave attention towards how feelings of isolation, lack of belonging, hopelessness, ineffectiveness and uncertainty fuse as one to produce perceived burdensomeness. Perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness are possible reasons for many suicides – Joiner argues in most cases. Annually on average, 23 veterans a day who die by suicide is a prominent infectious issue we absolutely must address in future research in order to seek out more improved methods on decreasing this number. I contend when soldiers deem themselves to be continuously ineffective and causing turmoil amongst their families and well-being they will produce a sense of perceived burdensomeness, if not adequately dealt with or countered, will lead to the idea and attempt of suicide – producing the suicidal mind. Future research requires more elaborate reasoning on why and how the suicide is considered. Furthermore, the logical explanation on how the idea of suicide gains influential ground within a soldier's mind when isolation, hopelessness and perceived burdensomeness are at the center focus of the examination.

Joiner's perceived burdensomeness and this thesis's argument is significantly important to recognize and understand as we move forward to situate ourselves in the optimal position to help soldiers and their family through a more improved reintegration process. How can we alleviate and resolve the negative ramifications of alienation and perceived burdensomeness soldiers may experience? How can we make soldiers feel belonged and effective within the civilian culture? We must begin the long and extensive journey with redefining a soldier's mission and purpose as they migrate between cultures and return home in the civilian culture.

### ***Advancing Towards the Objective – How to Combat Soldiers' Reintegration Concerns***

As we progress with the development of the argument it's important to understand a soldier's sense of purpose and direction is clear within the military. However, the same cannot be said about their sense of purpose within the civilian culture when they return from a military deployment. This sub-section will provide the ray of hope both cultures need to address and understand as we continue moving forward seeking improved methods to help soldiers mitigate their reintegration concerns. Mary will help validate the vital need for the soldiers to redefine their mission within the civilian world. She voices her concern behind the importance of a soldier's purpose as they reintegrate home – further reinforcing in an attempt to combat Joiner's account of perceived burdensomeness:

*We work together as a team always to accomplish the mission - you are never alone. Soldiers want to feel a sense of belonging to the group and when they return home this idea is crucial for them to continue moving forward throughout their reintegration process. The feeling of isolation and lost creeps in when they do not have this connection to a group when they come home to, even more so a group that*

*gets them and understand who they are as a person. For so long these soldiers have had a mission and a purpose. When they come back they have to seek out their purpose and their current mission! We must help the soldiers prepare when they come back to redefine their mission, purpose and who they are now – their new self.*

Mary also describes the critical need to redefine their purpose as they reintegrate. When we can recognize this grave need, it will help place us in an optimal position to decrease the number of veteran suicides a day and support soldiers and their families with quality understanding on their reintegration process. I must emphasize and reiterate an important consideration Joiner argues, any perception a soldier holds, mistaken or not, can influence their thoughts and behavior. When soldiers' thoughts are flooded with loneliness and the constant feeling of ineffectiveness, they perceive themselves a burden onto others around them which may influence suicide ideation. Consider this idea from another approach, when a soldier returns to the civilian world it's like applying the emergency break – you come to a complete stop. However, life continues around you as isolation increases with unsureness in what direction to continue towards. This feeling of alienation builds and festers when a soldier is alone. A short quote from Blake reinforces this position, "When we are alone, we can only think about ourselves – what we have done and who we are. Sitting alone and being alone and at the end of the day troubling. It is just you and your thoughts. This is where bad thoughts turn to actions." This is a formula for disaster. Soldiers who come home and perceive this feeling are in grave trouble. Even more so when they don't have a mission or purpose within the civilian culture upon returning from a deployment or the military environment. When they reach this point, they

must get help and find their support system quickly – it may literally be life or death if they fail to find their beacon of hope.

One of my greatest allies in life is the most prominent example that I personally know of a soldier who experienced war on a military deployment and has successfully redefined his mission and purpose in the civilian culture that helps other veterans find their own. I have obtained his verbal and written consent to use his real name and identity because he wishes for other soldiers to seek him out to read and understand his story in order for them they to effectively redefine their purpose and mission, as he demonstrates, when they return from experiencing a deployment – and all of its ugliness that accompanies it. His name is Christopher Pomeleo, a veteran who served during the surge of the war in 2007. In fact, his first month in country during his deployment happened to be the deadliest month of the entire war, consequently resulting in 126 American soldiers killed in action. The year of 2007 was the highest death toll for U.S. military personal of all the years of the war (Castner. 2016). Throughout his deployment he had two missions, one was his primary military duty and the other was for his battle buddies within his unit in their free [down] time. His first and foremost most important duty was to listen to radio and watch video communications that would track soldiers' movements, routes and events within their geographical area of interest. This was vital to the mission because if soldiers were to be attacked by a large element of the adversary or by a roadside bomb [IED], Chris would be able to determine the exact location to send help, reinforcements and relay this event up the higher chain of command. Chris was helping and saving his fellow soldiers during these missions when war evoked its wickedness onto those on the ground combatting it. His other mission, in which he brought home with him when he returned to

the civilian world, was cutting hair and allowing whoever was in the barber seat to openly communicate their concerns and experiences during the deployment. This idea provided an opportunity for a mental and emotional escape that allowed soldier to open up and communicate their thoughts. Chris kept this idea alive when he returned to the civilian world in the Twin Cities after time and again from being fired, not fitting in and perceived himself in vital need of finding his purpose before things turned ugly. After successfully completing barber school Prohibition Barber was established and ready to launch an inspirational movement. The Twin Cities recognize Chris's barber shop as veteran owned, warm, welcoming and accepting of anyone who walks through the doors. It's therapeutic in the sense that Chris allows any conversation to be had, no matter how deep or personal, in order to be in a position to mentally and emotionally support the one who is sharing. He helps throughout the community and participates in suicide awareness movements and conversations for veterans. Chris desires to help soldiers in any way he can in order for them to redefine their mission and purpose as he has shown to be truly effective (Mullen 2016). I am honored to know him. He inspires me to help soldiers who are in need of support and aid. Chris has been a tremendous inspiration of this thesis because in the multitude of ways the information provided can help soldiers understand themselves more and civilians can recognize who a soldier is, transforms and develops into along their journey.

I will conclude this section with two optimal solutions soldiers stated will significantly help redefine their purpose, alleviate the emotional and mental anguish within a soldier's mind and allow them to continue their reintegration journey in a more improved way that bridges the disconnect between both cultures. It is important to understand the



suggested solutions below will not achieve maximum success overnight (short-term). It will take a carefully considered reevaluation of our current course of actions to help soldiers in the long-term when we make it everyone's mission to mitigate soldiers personal and social concerns throughout their reintegration.

Francis positions his argument in an ideal step in the right direction towards better methods of reintegrating when he speaks on how a soldier must confront their personal and social concerns by "detoxing" their way through the influential power they hold:

*You have to face that demon. I look in the mirror at myself every day and tell my reflection, "Not today. You are not going to defeat me today." That's what we have to do and if you don't, your mind will consume you and defeat you. We know what the end result of that means – it means suicide. There are trigger mechanisms we have to be aware and recognize that are all around us. I am the only person that can. Support helps yes but at the end of the day my thoughts and who I am are the ones I have to conquer. I think the cure to the issues today soldiers face is we have to lay it out and talk about it. You have to get it out in the open and see for yourself. It's going to suck. It's like going through detox you know? If someone was addicted to heroin, detox is the worst – it makes them feel like death and miserable – but if they push through and confront the issue that tries to defeat them. They will win and be much better. They have to recognize their own trigger mechanisms and find yourself a coping mechanism that counters the strength of that specific trigger.*

Francis contends strongly that moving forward with identifying, recognizing and understanding our influential personal and social concerns is necessary in order for us to mitigate their influential power that follow closely during our reintegration process. If we

fail to do this, a soldier's mind will consume and defeat them through the negativity that manifests within their thoughts and behaviors. We must detox ourselves with the ideas that floods our minds with what we have done, seen and endured throughout our lived-experiences during our time in the military. Furthermore, the emphasis Francis illuminates is that this method will be miserable in the short-term when we consider what detoxing is and means to a someone – a soldier. Detoxing is confronting and facing what troubles you as a person, what gets you to succumb to your thoughts and ideas. For a soldier, as many have stated throughout this research, it could mean perceiving themselves incompetent and burdensomeness onto their loved ones and larger societal community. If we identify and recognize our triggers – by detoxing - we can push through the worse to set up soldier's for success in the long-run throughout their reintegration journey as they continue to migrate between cultures. This idea is powerful and can change the way we consider supporting soldiers through our current course of actions. I am speaking about revolutionizing the methods of communication between the cultures from the soldier's perspective to set them up for mental, emotional and physical success.

Soldiers are often ignored, and their voices go unheard. Amanda voices the importance of community and sharing the stories of soldiers to help them talk through their own concerns:

*Let them share what they did for all of us because soldiers believe they are doing it not for themselves but for the greater good, so many of us don't have to. Give them a chance at an open-mic organized community event to open their heart to everyone. To share their story with the community. We sacrifice for you. Go through what we do for you. It's an emotional journey but it's all for the American people. We are not*

*monsters. We are not war hungry. We are not a political governmental machine. We are humans with emotions and with feelings just like anyone. The military and civilian cultures must realize this. I believe this will move us in the right direction for helping both cultures understand each other a little more than what is happening now. This gives us an opportunity to get on the same page and move in one direction.*

This idea is similar to the preceding account from Francis, however, this advances us one step further by adding the community with the opportunity to speak towards both cultures directly in order to help a soldier in their own journey. This is why the earlier section placed a considerable amount of attention on the civilian and military perspectives towards each other was important to illuminate. A gap of misunderstanding and misinformed perspectives exists between the culture members towards each other – this solution exists to bridge that gap to help understand each other more than we do currently. Amanda, along with many soldiers who voiced their ideas in this research, express the desire to be able to share their stories to the community to help bridge the gap of misunderstanding across the cultures. This is part of the detoxing method because we need to consider getting our thoughts out of our mind and re/interpret our lived-experiences throughout our military career to place sentimental value and sacred meaning to why we did what we do and who we are now because of those reasons. When soldiers have the ability to bridge the divided gap between the military and civilian culture through sharing their stories on behalf of the people they swore to protect this will alleviate mental and emotional anguish that has festered within their mind during their military time in service. The two ideas that Francis and Amanda provided in their statements will help the soldier not feel secluded nor alienated as much as they do currently – it will alleviate the perceived

notion that they are far removed from the culture. Additionally, these ideas will support the journey the soldier endured throughout their reintegration process which involves family and loved one's relationships.

This conclusion is intended to illuminate our priority to recognize and understand three important considerations. (1) how anticipation of a deployment may impact a soldier's thoughts and behaviors that members in both cultures lack the ability to grasp the magnitude in why they develop and progress in the ways they do. (2) both cultures must identify and recognize the effects of a soldier's reintegration that influences on who their new self will continue transform into throughout their journey. Furthermore, numerous soldiers feel as if they are "ghosts" when they return from deployment because they perceive themselves socially ineffective and burdensomeness onto members within the civilian culture – to include their loved one - after experiencing military operations abroad that produced a conflict between the soldier's old self and new self – the divided self. This leads to diminishing overall quality on soldiers' mental health. (3) illuminating how we can move forward with placing ourselves in the optimal position to help soldiers and their families with a more improved reintegration – placing a considerable amount of attention to detoxing a soldier's mental and emotional anguish and applying a communal approach to bridging the gap of misunderstanding of the two cultures. It must become the military and civilian cultures mission to reassess our current course of actions in order to produce a more enhanced way to help soldiers reintegrate into society. Simultaneously, we must understand the soldier's military mindset and their lived-experiences will continue to transform them into someone new as they leave behind their old self during the process. Most importantly we must add emphasis to the idea that soldiers are two different people in two different worlds

and the cultures meet and fuse together producing conflict, tension and distress along their journey.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

#### ***Moving Forward: Understanding Who a Soldier is and Becomes***

The mission and objective of this thesis intends for us – both civilian and military cultures – to increase our awareness and understanding on who a soldier is and who they become throughout their military career. The soldier starts off as a civilian [their old self] and becomes their new develop self that holds a military mindset or autonomic hyperarousal, at the center controlling their thoughts, behaviors and actions. We place a considerate amount of attention for us to be able to recognize how the military mindset and the soldier are fused together which influences distress, tension and conflict on the soldier's well-being and their relationships in civilians and community, most importantly who they progressively become. Secondly, how the perspectives of each culture inevidently clash consisting of misinformed and misunderstood ideas on who a soldier is, what they have experienced and why they behave and think the way they do, is the important consideration on how this affects soldier's reintegration process. Lastly, combining both the military mindset and the perspectives of both cultures influence soldier's reintegration process as they anticipate and endure a deployment throughout their time in service. The conclusion will briefly reiterate the information provided in this thesis towards how we increased our awareness and understanding of these crucial ideas in order

for us to move in a more-improved position to truly help soldiers reintegrate more successfully.

### ***Debrief: The Military Mindset***

First, we increased our understanding on how the soldier continues to develop into someone new – leaving their old self behind in the process - throughout their military career through their lived-experiences and their military mindset. A soldier's military self reminds them that it knows what to do if a threat were to arise because they have been conditioned, hardwired and capable of mitigating and eliminating elevated levels of risks. Civilians may not necessarily scan for threats or be as situationally aware of their surroundings compared to soldiers. Most are not conditioned, drilled, and trained to think the way soldiers are. Leading to abrupt awareness that these two mindsets – military and civilian – are part of two distinct worlds that are different from another on who we are and what we are. Roberts Park speaks of the Marginal Man when he describes how people exist between cultures experience conflict, tension, and disruption in limbo of multiple worlds. A soldier is between worlds and minds at any given moment – civilian and military culture and mindset. Soldier arguably battle and feel tension with their military self and civilian self, leading them to experience disruption between cultures. Future research should explore the military mindset more in-depth in order to determine how exactly it gains ground or power given the soldier and their social environment. Additionally, future research should also investigate why soldiers go in certain occupations than others. Specifically, many of the soldiers in this thesis are in law enforcement positions in their civilian life. Research can benefit on knowing and understanding why soldiers flock to

certain positions within the civilian culture than others – there is rich discoveries to be found. I intend to investigate more in another research study that focuses on how the military mindset influences certain behaviors, interests, feelings and ideas a soldier contemplates throughout their military career given multiple deployments to determine if their military self becomes more influential over their civilian self.

### ***Debrief: Soldiers and Civilians Perspectives***

Secondly, soldiers expressed that if civilians lack first-hand experience or don't know someone close to them who in the military, unfortunately they end up obtaining their information on who soldiers are and what the military is through mass media. This typically means that most of the civilian understanding and opinions towards the military are formed through what they've been showed from Hollywood and viral social media posts. This idea increases our awareness on how misunderstanding is shaped and gains powerful influence throughout the civilian culture when they look at soldiers, who they are and what they represent. The data throughout this section validated and justified that there exists a gap of misinformation and misunderstanding between the cultures that is strengthened throughout inaccurate representation that inevidently produces a significant lack of awareness towards who soldiers are and become. Consider how Hollywood is portraying a soldier and selling war. Also consider Gregory Salcido's comments towards military personal and social media's viral image of soldier's body position and techniques while throwing grenades at the range. Future research must investigate why certain social media and Hollywood depictions intend to skew representations of soldiers. Is there a reason? Does War really sell? And if so – at what personal and social cost? Future research needs to pin-point the reasons why certain inaccurate, misrepresented and misunderstood



images of soldier are circulating throughout conversations, social media and media outlets and how they are being understood by the receptor of this information. Furthermore, future research should examine how a soldier is depicted given our political climate and dynamics. There seems to be a push on a militaristic political environment. How does this reinforce perspectives? How does this skew perception civilian's hold towards military personal? There is rich and profound discoveries that will come of the future research ideas examining perspectives between civilian and soldiers.

***Debrief: Anticipation of a Military Deployment***

Thirdly, both cultures have increased their awareness as we identified significant and crucial considerations to recognize as a soldier prepares for an upcoming deployment, even more so for the first time. We have stressed on the uncertainty and unknown that gains influential power within a soldier's mind when they start to question the possibilities that could happen to them while deployed or their families back at home. Furthermore, we increased our awareness of how the anticipation is persuasive and generates distress in the mental, emotional and physical realms of the soldier's mind and their families that are left behind when the soldier must conduct military missions for long periods of time away from them. Future research should help bring more illumination on the Jody Phenomenon and how this affects the stability of soldier's relationships as they anticipate and endure a deployment. A rich research idea could capture perspectives of how soldier's view Jody and their personal experiences being a victim to the emotional boogeyman in order to determine better ways a soldier can increase their knowledge and prepare themselves from the worse-case scenario as they always do. Additionally, future research will benefit if we explore how "off-ramped" soldiers must accommodate their livelihoods after preparing

their families and themselves for the deployment but now remain in the civilian world because their higher chain of command has ordered them to do so after being pulled from the mission. Military culture needs to appropriately support and assist soldiers who have been off ramped because our current course of actions demonstrates there is nothing being done to alleviate off ramp stress and conflict from the soldier's family or the soldier themselves. To my understanding, there is no program or support group to help soldiers who have been off ramped. This implementation must be considered to mitigate a soldier's uncertainty whether they are deploying after preparing, readying and believing they will conduct military missions abroad for an extended period of time.

***Debrief: Reintegration from a Military Deployment***

Lastly, we increased our understanding on how soldiers who have lived-experiences of a deployment and reintegration process how they perceived themselves as if they were ghost or strangers when they return from military missions abroad because they feel and think differently than the members within the civilian culture, and because they have become continued to develop into someone new. The important takeaway from this thesis is to understand within many soldiers' voices to recognize families become accustomed to not having their soldier's physical presence at the home because of their deployment, so they must adapt and overcome to the conditions that are forced upon them which inadvertently creates the "ghost" feeling when they return. This idea is logical validated through many soldiers' voices when it was shattering to them that they are accountable for generating conflict and distress within their own household towards their family. A soldier's military mindset persuades they can't fit in or belong within the civilian culture because of the inability to connect with populace because of the lived-experiences

and autonomic hyper arousal they endlessly strengthen throughout their time in the military. Many soldiers validate how alienation is a reoccurring feeling that is extremely influential within their mind through perceived disconnection towards the populace and ruptured relationships of family and loved ones. Remember on average 23 veterans a day perceives themselves with no other options with severe amount of hopelessness, therefore, they rational decide to take their own life. I would argue a soldier wouldn't need to have experienced combat or see the worse of the worse for this perpetuating feeling of isolation or lack of connection to the civilian populace. Simply being a soldier and returning to a place where nobody gets you can have serious detrimental impact on the human psyche. Future research must explore why and how the suicide ideation gains influential ground within a soldier's mind when isolation, fractured relationships and perceived burdensomeness are at the center focus of the military mindset. Both cultures need to focus on qualitative – interpersonal, in-depth and adequate care - rather than quantitative - quickly rushed and timed sessions - methods of support of soldier's mental health. Furthermore, we need future research to investigate into how we need to help soldiers redefine their purpose and mission when they return to the civilian culture. Using and understanding Chris Pomeleo and Prohibition Barber as our text-book example. He found his mission and is now helping both the civilian and military communities to increase awareness on many concerns soldier have when they endure their journey. How can social support movements and program organization support soldiers to find their mission and purpose when they come back from a deployment or military high operational tempo and return into the civilian world? Arguably, soldiers within the military culture know their mission, have a clear understanding on why they are doing what they are doing and has a

clear commander's intent that guide them throughout missions and operations. The same can't be said when soldiers return to the civilian culture, we need them to understand their mission when they return home, their life literally depends on this critical notion.

## **Limitations**

There are two main limitations throughout this thesis that I would like to address.

(1) All 28 soldiers who participated were U.S. Army National Guard or Reserves component, there was no active duty personal in this study. The reason for this course of action was in attempt to reveal who a soldier is, develops into and becomes throughout both cultures, civilian and military. The soldiers who participated in this research capture this objective as they bounce between cultures constantly while they attempt to meet the demands they have in both worlds. Furthermore, the title of this thesis helps reveal why this course of action was decided on, we get to see how conflict, tensions and distress may influence a soldier's role within the civilian culture. Future research should gain the insight, perspective and experiences of active duty members in order to see commonalties and differences amongst the component status of a soldier. (2) Roughly 75% of the sample populace military occupation status (MOS) was military police (MP), therefore most of them have opportunities to share the same ideas, perspectives and insight throughout the military and civilian culture. This demonstrated not to be an issue throughout this thesis as we have captured a wide range of ideas and concerns that help readers increase their knowledge and understanding on who a soldier is and becomes. However, a large portion of this sample populace was MP in which they typically experience similar training and deployments throughout their military career. As I move forward with future research of my own and a suggestion to others, ensure the project is capturing more of diversity with

the MOS's soldiers are trained and experienced in order to capture a wider perspective towards military and civilian cultures and the concerns that influence who they are and who they will become. Moving forward we need to implement these two limitations to continue to place ourselves in the most optimal position to help and support soldiers throughout their reintegration process. By gaining a more improved recognition of all component status soldiers and their MOS's duties we can further increase our understanding of military personal and their role within both cultures.

***My Final Thought: Who I am and Who Will I Become?***

I desire to close the thesis's conclusion is with my validation on the Jekyll and Hyde characterization – the military mindset, and my personal thoughts of uncertainty as I anticipate my first deployment at the end of the year. A question I often ask myself as I prepare is: I am aware that LT Ahlfs is as ready as he can be for this upcoming deployment, but is Matthew prepared and ready for this deployment? How will Matthew change over the course of the deployment and once he reintegrates? My military mindset will help and support Matthew as we push forward before, during and after a deployment. The important consideration for readers to consider is that I am anticipating becoming someone new through my experiences overseas which means I must leave my old self behind. What does this exactly mean to me at this moment in time, I am unsure, but I understand the uncertainty and unknown coupled with the military mindset influences the new self to reveal itself when it wishes or must.

Recall in the first chapter I spoke about how soldier's military selves reveals and makes its presence known in any given social environment when their civilian selves goes about everyday life in the civilian culture. Allow my own account to justify and validate

the reasoning behind the logic that the military mindset (LT Ahlfs) takes over the civilian mindset (Matthew) when it needs to – as Jekyll does Hyde or as LT Ahlfs does Matthew.

For me I believe LT Ahlfs comes out all the time. I am passionate now with this Jekyll and Hyde characterization because in the story, that one personality always tries to come out and take over. While Jekyll was trying not to let Hyde take over – at the end of the day it's impossible for him not to – two minds share the same physical body. When I go to public areas I am looking around and analyzing everybody I see. LT Ahlfs comes out. He checks for all the entry and exit points just in case something happens – and I need to take control of a situation. LT Ahlfs can identify chokepoints security vulnerabilities and gets in the mind of a threat to determine the course of actions they will execute and engage with if they seize an opportunity to produce lethal harm onto the social environment's populace. This is just something we think about as soldiers because we are conditioned and trained to in order to be ready and prepared for the worst to happen when we least expect it. So, LT Ahlfs [military self] was assessing the situation and possible threats while Matthew [civilian self] may not be able to. It's so interesting to me that our situational awareness is so blown up – we have our green, amber, and red status when we think about anything and everything no matter what environment we find ourselves in. The green, amber and red status means the threat level analysis and based on this determines a soldier's course of action to mitigate the potential threat to gain ground and lethality. This military training that LT Ahlfs has been conditioned through is always going to pop out and take over even when Matthew is trying to relax and enjoy dinner with his two friends in the civilian world. It's just impossible for LT Ahlfs not to show himself when Matthew is going about the civilian world – when Matthew is grocery shopping, in a classroom

studying or at the movies, LT Ahlfs is there and takes control when he needs to in order to protect and defend everyone in the area from a threat if one were to arise.

My point of emphasis I must illuminate is that it's impossible for the military mindset to not come out – a soldier is hardwired to think in this way; it must come out in order to control the thoughts, decisions, and behavior of the civilian mindset. I am hardwired to think, feel, and live with the military mindset. I am the military mindset. The military mindset is who I am. The question that I ask myself daily is, how much control will my military self hold when I endure a deployment and return? I am convinced all of the control. I can already feel it taking over and controlling my thoughts, actions and behaviors, and I am not even deployed yet! Three months away from my first deployment and I can articulate LT Ahlfs is spilling over into the civilian world pushing Matthew away as we prepare to fully immerse within the military culture and mindset to be ready for the nearing operations abroad. In addition, LT Ahlfs is distancing Matthew from his loved ones as the military mindset becomes stronger as deployment gets closer – we must be fully ready and prepared for the military missions. I speak from the heart and validate the physical, emotional, and mental distances that is produced between our loved ones and ourselves when we must conduct military operations around the world.

As I anticipate deployment I am leaving behind my loved ones, but I also understand the soldiers I deploy with are also leaving behind theirs. We will be in a position where we understand each other and be able to support one another as we are struggling from the physical separation from our loved ones – our home, our support system. It's going to suck and we're going to miss out on many family events and activities as we are working in the desert heat of the sun in a place that doesn't want us and could kill us at any moment. Uncertainty is around

every corner and on every step, hidden explosives (IED's). Anything can happen to us at any moment. There is always that thought that we are not going to come back. We must understand this as we attempt to leave home and our relations with our loved one's as best as we possibly can, it very well could be our last time we see them, touch them, hug them, kiss them and be with them.

The point of emphasis to consider within my personal account - as I anticipate my first deployment - is to recognize soldiers are experiencing similar physical, emotional and mental effects that I am. We can support each other because we understand the unique circumstances. We get what each other are experiencing, perhaps more soldiers than others depending on specific circumstances but the point to be made is we feel, know and relate to the soldiers we leave with because of the unbreakable bond that's continuously strengthening on deployment. This is exactly the emphasis Lincoln argues, that we recognize ourselves in the ones who feel a bounded sentiment and affinity to be an insider of the culture reinforces the support system we demand as we endure a deployment together. The troubling realization when we reintegrate is discovering our loved ones and civilian culture members – unless they have served in the military currently or in the past – will not understand the magnitude on what we are enduring as we progress throughout everyday life bouncing between cultures, even more so when we endure our reintegration process.

With this increased awareness and understanding on who a soldier is and who they become, we need to make this our mission and our priority to help and support them. We need to recognize, absorb, and accept this thesis's information in order for us to advance towards the main objective, more improved reintegration solutions for our U.S. Armed



Forces men and women. I strongly believe when we do, the “23 Veterans a Day” narrative will decrease, and we will drop that number down to as close as zero as we possibly can. It must be done together. There is no other way but together.

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Appendix I

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Letter



RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE  
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669  
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799  
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

July 6, 2018

Matthew Ahlfs  
Sociology  
Tampa, FL 33613

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**

IRB#: Pro00034942

Title: The Role of the Solider in Civilian Life: Personal and Social Concerns that Influence Reintegration Processes

**Study Approval Period: 7/6/2018 to 7/6/2019**

Dear Mr. Ahlfs:

On 7/6/2018, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

**Approved Item(s):**

**Protocol Document(s):**

[Protocol Version #1](#)

**Consent/Assent Document(s)\*:**

[Adult Consent Version #1.pdf](#)

\*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent documents are valid until the consent document is amended and approved.

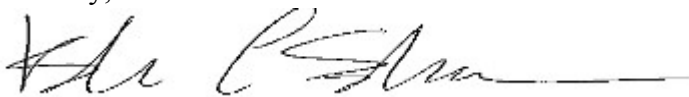
It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

- (6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
- (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with USF HRPP policies and procedures and as approved by the USF IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) business days

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristen Salomon', followed by a horizontal line.

Kristen Salomon, Ph.D., Chairperson  
USF Institutional Review Board



## Appendix II

### IRB Consent Form



### **Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk**

Pro # 00034942

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You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called:

#### **The Role of the Soldier in Civilian Life: Personal and Social Concerns that Influence Reintegration Processes**

The person who is in charge of this research study is Matthew J. Ahlfs. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. Matthew J. Ahlfs is being guided in this research by his academic mentor, Dr. Will Tyson.

The research will be conducted at USF-Campus or in some cases Skype if soldiers are deployed or in any other geographic area conducting military training or operations.

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#### **Purpose of the study**

My intent and emphasis of this research is to alter our perspectives on our current course of actions as we bring back soldiers reintegrating into the civilian culture. Their voices need to be heard from their perspective and for too long literature, applied practices and the community has not allowed the soldiers to speak for themselves. This notion carries drastic influence over their perspectives through the reintegration process in a grave influential way. I intend to change that.

I will, with your help, explore *why* their reintegration issues exist and *how* their social concerns gain traction through the clash between the two cultures. That is our mission. Together.

### **Why are you being asked to take part?**

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you are a member of the U.S Military with a unique experience, insight and perspective that is vitally important in helping other soldiers be in a better position to reintegrate and educate military personal and civilians on the difficulties of the current course of action.

### **Study Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, we will conduct an in-depth interview. Together, we can better understand why and how the concerns impact the soldiers. Furthermore, we can gain understanding about certain feelings as the soldier progress through the reintegration process that otherwise would not be able to obtain without a formal interview. We have the means to help many people in both cultures better understand the problematic transitioning process that raises vast amount of issues along soldiers' reintegration journey.

The interview will include questions about your perspective on how military has changed you as a person, how you view soldiers and civilians, your perspective on anticipated or actual deployment concerns, what strategies and techniques to help prepare you from your anticipated or actual deployment concerns, and lastly, what are your biggest personal and social concerns when you must reintegrate into the civilian culture.

The interview will take about 45-90 minutes to complete, or however much we would like to discuss and explore the topic and questions that we will go in depth with. With your permission, I would also like to tape-record the interview to ensure your perspective and ideas are accurate when I look back and reflect on them for the writing of the research report.

### **Total Number of Participants**

A total of 28 soldiers will take part in this study at USF or if they are geographically separated by distance while they conduct military training or operations, they have the option, in their free time, to conduct a Skype interview with me in a secured and private location on both of our ends to ensure their confidently.

### **Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal**

You do not have to participate in this research study. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current or future relationship with myself or the US Army. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time. At any moment you wish to stop this discussion you let me know and we will cease the conversation.

### **Benefits**

The potential benefits of participating in this research will better help soldiers and civilians understand the reintegration process that we endure. Discussing your own (or future expected)

personal and social concerns that arise during their reintegration process can help soldiers understand various experiences and perspective that can alter our way of thinking. The goal of this investigation is to educate, assist and support soldiers who are struggling with their own personal and social concerns and that we can aid in one another's process and journey. With your help, ideas, perspective and experiences, together, we can help our brother and sisters who are struggling to find help.

## **Risks or Discomfort**

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

However, the following risks may occur:

There is the risk that you may find some of the questions about your lived experiences throughout your military service to be sensitive. I will provide you with information to help with additional emotional and mental support should you experience discomfort with any questions I ask of you throughout our discussion.

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study. The findings from this research may result in the future development of products that are of commercial value. There are no plans to provide you with financial compensation or for you to share in any profits if this should occur.

## **Privacy and Confidentiality**

We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. Anyone who looks at your records must keep them confidential. These individuals include:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator, study coordinator, research nurses, and all other research staff.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study, and individuals who provide oversight to ensure that we are doing the study in the right way.
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, including staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

A federal law called Title IX protects your right to be free from sexual discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. USF's Title IX policy requires certain USF employees to report sexual harassment or sexual violence against any USF employee, student or group, but does not require researchers to report sexual harassment or sexual violence when they learn about it as part of conducting an IRB-approved study. If, as part of this study, you tell us about

any sexual harassment or sexual violence that has happened to you, including rape or sexual assault, we are not required to report it to the University. If you have questions about Title IX or USF's Title IX policy, please call USF's Office of Diversity, Inclusion & Equal Opportunity at (813) 974-4373.

**You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints**

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, or experience an unanticipated problem. If you have questions, you may contact myself at [matthewahlfs@my.usf.edu](mailto:matthewahlfs@my.usf.edu) or [matthew.j.ahlfs.mil@mail.mil](mailto:matthew.j.ahlfs.mil@mail.mil) or at 763-600-4123 If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 607255-5138 or access their website at <http://www.irb.usf.edu>. You may also report your concerns or complaints anonymously through If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at [RSCH-IRB@usf.edu](mailto:RSCH-IRB@usf.edu).

**Consent to Take Part in this Research Study**

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

**Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent**

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person obtaining Informed Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent