University of Northern Colorado

Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC

Dissertations   Student Work

12-2020

Military Life Narratives and Identity Development Among Black Post-9/11 Veterans

Deon Marcell Hall
University of Northern Colorado

Follow this and additional works at: https://digscholarship.unco.edu/dissertations

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

MILITARY LIFE NARRATIVES AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT
AMONG BLACK POST-9/11 VETERANS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Deon Marcell Hall | CPT, MS, USA

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Department of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education
Program of Counseling Psychology

December 2020

This Dissertation by: Deon Marcell Hall

Entitled: Military Life Narratives and Identity Development Among Black Post-9/11 Veterans

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in the Department of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education, Program of Counseling Psychology

Accepted by the Doctoral Committee

_____
Jeffrey Rings, Ph.D., Research Advisor

_____
Brian D. Johnson, Ph.D., Committee Member

_____
Lory Clukey, Ph.D., Psy.D., Committee Member

_____
Travis Boyce, Ph.D., Faculty Representative

Date of Dissertation Defense _____

Accepted by the Graduate School

_____
Cindy Wesley, Ph.D.
Associate Dean of the Graduate School and International Admissions

ABSTRACT

Hall, Deon Marcell. Military Life Narratives and Identity Development Among Black
    Post-9/11 veterans. Published Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, University of
    Northern Colorado, 2020.

       The purpose of this study was to examine the phenomenological experience of

veteran identity development in post-9/11 veterans who identify within the Black

diaspora. Given that current research suggests that behavioral health providers lack the

sufficient training necessary to meet the unique clinical needs of post-9/11 veterans, this

study aimed to examine military culture and experience in the context of intersecting

cultural identities so as to more effectively frame the services offered by counseling

psychologists working with Black military veterans and service members. More

specifically, this study strengthens the existing empirical framework for addressing the

behavioral health needs of post-9/11 Black veterans by integrating identity into the

discussion. This study explored identity development in the context of the military

members' Black and veteran identities to more adequately inform current veteran

resources and services. Black veterans are a particularly vulnerable subgroup given that

they are the largest historically marginalized ethnic group within the military, experience

homelessness at significantly disproportionate rates (Edens, Kasprow, Tsai, &

Rosenheck, 2011), experience greater rates of injustice within the military court system

(Christensen & Tsilker, 2017), and report higher rates of mental illness and psychological

trauma (Kulka et al., 1990). Thus, the purpose of this study was twofold: (a) to privilege

the diverse experiences of Black military veterans, and (b) to advance a theory of Black

veteran identity development that was useful to mental health professionals who were challenged with articulating the psychosocial needs of Black OEF/OIF/OND veterans. In this qualitative study, an interpretive phenomenology methodological framework was utilized. A total of 12 Black post-9/11 veteran participants were ultimately recruited and interviewed for this qualitative phenomenological study intended to investigate the stories constructed by Black post-9/11 veterans regarding their military experiences and identity development process. Qualitative analysis began with a unique case orientation and within-case analysis that examined and described each individual participant. Demographic/military history questionnaire and field notes were examined to add context to the narratives shared in each participant's interview transcript in order to create a detailed portrait of each participant. Further, common themes that emerged from the participants' interview transcripts were described. Themes fell into six categories: (a) Keep it pushing/suck it up, (b) Family orientation/communalism: "I'm sticking with the community," (c) Seeing green/color-blindness, (d) No protective cloak/microcosm of American society, (e) The military narrative as a chapter book, and (f) Understanding blackness requires a cultural fluency. Several research and clinical implications for counseling psychologists were also discussed.

Keywords: veterans, Black veterans, post-9/11, OEF/OIF veterans, identity development, qualitative study

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To begin, I would like to thank my parents—both military veterans—for providing a foundation that saw my aspirations as simply an extension of my possibilities and potential. They have approached all of my academic and professional goals with unconditional support, and none of my accomplishments would have been possible had my parents not been committed and willing to sacrifice for their children.

Further, I would like to recognize the irrevocable love and support that my wife, Brandy Chaparro Hall, has provided through not only my Ph.D. program, but also the early stages of my military career. She claimed she would never enter into a relationship with someone in uniform; yet somehow, I won her over. Our nine-month old daughter, Selena, has been overwhelmingly encouraging, even going so far as hammering her thoughts onto the keypad anytime daddy took a minute to address revisions.

I want to thank Dr. Jeffrey Rings for his guidance as my research advisor and for his mentorship throughout my doctoral training. Dr. Rings embodies many of the best qualities of a professor and psychologist; it is no surprise that students line up at the gate to solidify him as their advisor. I am fortunate that he was willing to entertain the idea of serving as my research advisor even with knowing that research has never been my focus.

I also want to thank Dr. Brian Johnson for his support and clinical expertise and Dr. Lory Clukey for her expertise with qualitative methodology. Finally, I want to thank Dr. Travis Boyce for his knowledge of historical literature pertaining to Black identity

and Black veterans. This group of scholars has made me a more complete future

counseling psychologist, and I am forever grateful for their support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Looky here, America
What you done done —
Let things drift
Until the riots come.

Now your policemen
Let your mobs run free.
I reckon you don't care
Nothing about me.

You tell me that hitler
Is a mighty bad man.
I guess he took lessons
From the ku klux klan.

You tell me mussolini's
Got an evil heart.
Well, it mus-a-been in Beaumont
That he had his start —

Cause everything that hitler
And Mussolini do,
Negroes get the same
Treatment from you.

You jim crowed me
Before hitler rose to power —
And you're STILL jim crowing me
Right now, this very hour.

Yet you say we're fighting
For democracy.
Then why don't democracy
Include me?

I ask you this question
Cause I want to know
How long I got to fight
BOTH HITLER — AND JIM CROW.

- Langston Hughes,
Beaumont to Detroit: 1943

The Global War on Terror (GWOT) represents an international effort triggered by

the events occurring on September 11th, 2001, when United States (U.S.) commercial

planes were hijacked and subsequently flown into the Pentagon and New York's World

Trade Center, leading to a total of 2,977 deaths (National Commission on Terrorist

Attacks, 2004). The GWOT is a referent to military operations that took place in

Afghanistan and Iraq, including Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi

Freedom (OIF), and Operation New Dawn (OND). GWOT was an umbrella term that

was discontinued in 2009 and is now often replaced with the term "Post-9/11." Post-9/11 conflicts have been the longest-sustained military operations in the history of the U.S. (Bahraini et al., 2014). The post-9/11 military cohort is the first cohort since the U.S. got rid of the draft to become a continuously wartime military. These operations are further unique in that they have employed a military force comprised entirely of volunteers, thus decreasing the military population and increasing the need for service members to complete multiple deployments at a greater frequency. Additional characteristics unique to post-9/11 operations include 24/7 media coverage, advances in technological capabilities that allow for ongoing communication with loved ones while overseas, and increased numbers of female-identifying military members in combat (Zinzow, Grubaugh, Monnier, Suffoletta-Maierle, & Frueh, 2007). A comprehensive review of the literature indicated a literature base that has yet to fully explore the phenomenological experience of veterans who have engaged in post-9/11 operations. Further, post-9/11 veterans represent the smallest percentage of veterans to serve in the armed forces, which further strengthens the divide between civilians and veterans as so few can empathize with their military experiences; 84% of post-9/11 veterans cite that the public does not understand them (Pew Research Center, 2011a). These cumulative circumstances have made for a cohort of veterans with prior military experiences that are vastly different from previous generations. One's military experience is largely dependent on the circumstances surrounding the operation/s in which the veteran served, if any. Thus, this suggests that veteran culture and identity can only be understood under the consideration of context.

Military affiliates form a distinct subset of American society that is governed by unique regulations, norms, traditions, and values (Coll, Weiss, & Yarvis, 2011). Approximately 7% of the total U.S. population has served in the military (Atuel & Castro, 2018). The military can be described as a formal organization that creates a shared value system, as a cultural group governed by norms, and as a social group that provides people with identities (Atuel & Castro, 2018; Convoy & Westphal, 2013; Tajfel, 1982). Military experience can drastically alter the course of an individual's life (Costa & Kahn, 2006). With increased military downsizing, a growing body of literature suggests that the military to civilian transition is one of the most challenging processes for some given the centrality of the military identity in one's self-concept (Atuel, Keeling, Kintzle, Hassan, & Castro, 2016). Smith and True (2014) found that reintegration leads to adverse psychological wellness effects that stem from contrasts between the military's demands for conformity, hierarchy, and dissociation and the civilian identity priorities of autonomy, individuation, and self-advocacy.

Despite the uniformity that is inherent in military culture, military personnel represent a diverse group of individuals who maintain various intersecting identities (e.g., gender, race, affective orientation; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). In many ways, the U.S. military functions as a microcosm of our nation, comprised of cultural norms, values, and various subgroups, and operating off of a sociopolitical landscape that often mimics that of the general public. As Hughes' poem would suggest, Black veterans are often on the receiving end of injustice that occurs within the U.S. military.

The Black military member is of particular interest given that their history in the U.S. military dates back over 200 years and there remains a shortage of research available

to articulate their unique military experiences; there is a particular dearth of research exploring their post-9/11 military experiences. Langston Hughes' poem was—and still is for many—a sentiment shared by countless persons within the Black diaspora who have worn a uniform for the U.S. military. Many are unaware that Black Americans have served in every major U.S. military conflict since the Revolutionary War in 1775 (Lopreato & Poston, 1977). Historically, the military and society in general have overlooked the ongoing presence and contributions of these veterans, treating them as all but disposable. Black Americans are represented in virtually every possible capacity throughout the U.S. armed forces' structure, and yet they continue to sacrifice their lives for a promise of democracy that often seems to exclude them. These courageous military members have remained committed to facilitating and upholding justice by fighting America's enemies abroad while also combatting prejudice at home. Currently, Blacks represent the largest historically marginalized ethnic group in the U.S. military at roughly 17% (U.S. Department of Defense, 2016). Despite having served in every major U.S. theatre of war, the extant research has failed to address and articulate the entirety of their phenomenological experience both as military members and persons from historically marginalized groups. The Black veteran experience has largely been left out of the empirical literature, particularly within the context of the current operations (Black, 2016; Black & Thompson, 2012). Privileging the Black veteran experience will help to address and ameliorate further feelings of marginalization.

Blacks in the United States

African Americans represent one of the largest historically marginalized ethnic groups within the U.S. at a consistent 13% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). African

Americans are mainly of African descent; though, many maintain non-Black ancestry as well. Traditionally speaking, the history of Blacks in the U.S. began in 1619, when 20 Africans were brought to the English colony of Virginia. However, some Africans are known to have assisted the Spanish and Portuguese in exploring the Americas in the early 16th century. When the first persons of African descent were brought to the U.S., they served as indentured servants. By 1750, skin color became a defining characteristic for which persons in privileged positions could use to categorize particular ethnic groups as biologically inferior, thus making Blacks in the early colonies particularly vulnerable for enslavement. Black chattel slavery became common law by the 18th century (Stabler & Green, 2015). By the year 1807 when the slave trade was abolished, roughly 10 million Africans had been forcibly brought to the Americas. Though there are likely no Blacks living within the U.S. who were slaves, Blacks continue to suffer from historical plights, racism, and institutionalized discrimination (Brill, 1999; Henkel, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2006). Such experiences are not lost on Black post-9/11 veterans given that the military often resembles racial relations within the civilian sector. With much dismay, civil rights activists frequently challenge that the Black status within the U.S. is progressing given current growing conditions of homelessness, drug use, violent crime, and police brutality (Cooper, 2015; Jones, 2016; Nunn, 2002; Scott, 2017).

Blacks suffer from humiliation and pain inflicted by generations of racism and the manner in which they are presented throughout various media platforms. The brutalizing effect of centuries of slavery and residual segregation can be seen in the housing and the education systems (Brill, 1999). African Americans describe experiencing rampant injustice within the judicial system (Overby, Brown, Bruce, Smith, & Winkle, 2004),

with mistreatment by police and in being denied full protection under the law. Such exploitation even has been felt in spaces seemingly intended to function purely altruistically and for the betterment of society. For instance, from 1932 to 1972, 600 Black males diagnosed with syphilis were recruited for study participation under the guise of receiving free medical care. However, they were given placebos instead of the well-established medical treatment (i.e., penicillin) so that the researchers could examine the natural progression of syphilitic symptoms; this became infamously known as the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment (TSE; Green, Maisiak, Britt, & Ebeling, 1997). Blacks often live with a sense that they are bound within a perpetual cycle of suffering and despair that is further exacerbated by discrimination from leading institutions. Literature shows a consistent link between perceived discrimination and poor mental health outcomes (Assari & Caldwell, 2018; Assari, Gibbons, & Simons, 2018). Blacks find themselves in a persistent sense of defensiveness as they contend that their challenges are due to economic neglect (Chamlin, 1987; Eitle, D'Alessio, & Stolzenberg, 2002), poor housing (Rogers, 1992; Syme & Berkman, 1976), and inadequate schooling (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007) rather than moral failings.

The American Dilemma

The U.S. prides itself on being founded on principles of equality and justice for all; yet, this same society has actively and consistently excluded Americans of African descent from full participation (Philogene, 2004). African Americans constitute the one ethnic group within the U.S. to have its social position be persistently defined in every aspect on the basis of phenotypic presentation (e.g., skin color; Philogene, 2004). Race permeates every aspect of American culture as can be seen in language, laws, and

political philosophies (Ward, 2018). Racial categorization has remained a determinant factor in shaping Blacks' experiences and general relationships with the general public. Such identification driven solely by racial classification was used to justify the Black community's permanent exclusion from society. By being systemically marginalized due to racial identity, Black Americans have been prevented from fully assimilating and joining mainstream culture in their pursuit of the "American Dream" (Greer, 2013). Historically, enrollment in the U.S. military has been understood as the only hope that Blacks have in actualizing their right to the American principles of democracy and equality.

A Legacy of Adversity

First and foremost, it is important to note that this study does not serve as a misguided attempt to guilt White America for travesties committed against the Black post-9/11 veteran. Rather, I only wish to illustrate the history—both tragic and empowering—of Black service in the U.S. military as identity represents a socially-constructed concept that is irrevocably intertwined in historical context. For instance, the racial identity formed during slavery continues to impact Blacks' perceptions, culture, and identity (Ogbu, 2004). Further, African Americans often express feeling dismissed and unacknowledged, despite having contributed tremendously to American society, specifically within the military. This study does not reinforce this oppressive trend, and Chapter II serves to highlight various examples of Black excellence and achievement throughout their history in the U.S. armed forces. African Americans represent a specific class of post-9/11 veterans who are systematically underserved; illuminating their

military experiences can serve to rectify the ostensibly societal agenda to dismiss their unique identity and culture.

In 2016, the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) disseminated a comprehensive report titled Lynching in America: Confronting the legacy of racial terror, which documented a comprehensive investigation of terror lynchings and racial assault in twelve Southern states. Over 4,000 lynchings occurred between 1877 and 1950, with Black veterans being most susceptible to violence and assault. "We do so much in this country to celebrate and honor folks who risk their lives on the battlefield…But we don't remember that Black veterans were more likely to be attacked for their service than honored for it" (Baker, 2016, para 3). Black veterans—similar to their military peers—received training in various weaponry and self-assertion tactics. This fact made the returning Black veteran a terrifying sight for White America, setting the stage for widespread barbarity against the African American community (Baker, 2016).

Though Blacks have been engaged in every American conflict since the Revolutionary War, it was not until the Civil War (beginning in 1861) that Black Americans began to serve in relatively large numbers, with roughly 200,000 Black men having enlisted by 1865. Initially, the Union Army was reluctant to allow Black soldiers the opportunity to fight in fear that the newly trained soldiers would feel entitled to respect and equal treatment; however, outspoken skeptics relented after witnessing the rising death toll of White military members. Blacks were eager to enlist, accepting that military service would be the only way for them to challenge the institutionalized assertion of biological inferiority based entirely on skin color. By the end of Reconstruction, in 1877, Black military members were targeted and falsely accused of

inciting violence against white police officers (Baker, 2016). Instances of harassment, violence, and—in extreme cases—socially-sanctioned murders against Black veterans are ubiquitous throughout U.S. history. For example, a U.S. Colored Troops veteran in Kentucky was lynched by a mob after being stripped of his clothes, beaten, and extricated of his sexual organs (Baker, 2016). Social sanctions of racial terror continued even after World War II (1939 to 1945) with Black veterans being greeted with hostility rather than recognition of their civil rights; Black military members who wore their uniforms in public were believed to be aggressively asserting that they were empowered and worthy of inclusion (Baker, 2016).

It has been over 70 years since the conclusion of World War II and African American veterans continue to struggle for equal treatment, recognition and respect both home and abroad. The restaurant chain Chili's had a recent incident on Veterans Day where a White customer unjustly questioned a Black veteran's military service because he was wearing an Army hat. The White customer abruptly notified a restaurant employee who then proceeded to take the veteran's food away (Shapiro, 2016). A recent separate report highlighted a significant racial disparity within the military judicial system, with Black veterans being as much as 2.61 times more likely than their White peers to receive disciplinary action against them (Christensen & Tsilker, 2017).

Moreover, OEF and OIF veterans who identity within the Black diaspora are also at increased risk for experiencing homelessness (Edens et al., 2011). Although African Americans represent roughly 11% of the total veteran population, they comprise 39% of the overall homeless veteran population (National Alliance to End Homelessness [NAEH], 2015). Additional research evidences poorer therapeutic clinical outcomes for

Black veterans (Tuerk et al., 2011), higher rates of psychological trauma (Kulka et al., 1990; Laufer, Gallops, & Frey-Wouters, 1984), lower rates of treatment retention (Spoont et al., 2014a), and poorer general health outcomes (Landes, Wilder, & Williams, 2017). Despite blatant atrocities and continued racial disparities, there remains a dearth of research examining the current experiences of Black post-9/11 veterans. The current research paradigm appears to espouse an exclusive empirical agenda that turns a blind eye both to the historical and current experiences of Black veterans. To continue such a restricted means of empirical investigation would only exacerbate current disparities and further stigmatize the large proportion of post-9/11 veterans who identify within the Black diaspora.

Rationale

In 2006, the American Psychological Association (APA) was challenged to address the growing concerns regarding the psychological strain experienced by OEF/OIF combat military personnel. In response, the APA created the Task Force on Military Deployment Services for Youth, Families and Service Members to better identify the behavioral health needs of service members and veterans, to develop strategies for collaborating with military service organizations, and to outline military behavioral health resources accessible through the APA (APA, 2007). Findings from the Task Force concluded that the field of psychology is not adequately meeting the needs of military personnel. Moreover, the Task Force could not identify any empirical consensus or well-disseminated approach for how to provide behavioral healthcare to military personnel. More specifically, to date, there is no unified framework for addressing the mental health needs of OEF/OIF veterans. The APA has identified a growing necessity

for research among counseling psychologists to examine the cultural implications of military culture and service, to provide professional education and training more applicable to military culture (APA, 2007). More than a decade later, the research examining military culture and the mental health needs of post-9/11 veterans remains limited; research addressing post-9/11 veterans who identify within historically marginalized groups is even more absent from the literature base.

In 2011, this issue gained additional national support, prompting the White House to develop Joining Forces, which was an initiative pledged to meet the needs of veterans and their families by privileging the distinct culture that military organizations represent (Meyer, Writer, & Brim, 2016; Ross, Ravindranath, Clay, & Lypson, 2015). Understanding the influence that military culture has on health-related behaviors can assist providers to develop more effective treatment plans to help military-affiliated persons to reach their personal, career, and military mission priorities. Providing culturally sensitive care for the post-9/11 veteran cohort requires that providers be highly knowledgeable in behavioral health as a function of military context, experience, and identity. The ability to understand and appreciate military culture and to tailor clinical practices based on that understanding and appreciation is imperative for clinicians wishing to provide post-9/11 veterans with meaningful, progressive treatment outcomes. Improved mental health outcomes for OEF/OIF/OND veterans require enhanced treatment options such as interventions informed by a unified theory of veteran identity and improved military cultural competence (e.g., an understanding of veteran identity development, culture, and experience). A new perspective is needed when viewing the phenomenon of veteran mental health (Hobbs, 2008; Hoge, Austin, & Pollack, 2007;

Scheper-Hughes, 2008). There has been an increased empirical prioritization for research that explores the link between veteran identity and mental health (Smith & True, 2014).

Given the dearth of research serving to understand veteran identity, culture, and the behavioral health needs of post-9/11 veterans (particularly among Black veterans), the field of counseling psychology is well-equipped to address such limitations as identity development, culturally-informed intervention, and behavioral health are central themes of the profession (APA, 2017, 2018). Smith and True (2014) and Hobbs (2008), call for researchers to begin investigating the cultural implications of military service on veteran identity, as further understanding could be beneficial in addressing the behavioral health needs of post-9/11 veterans more effectively. Given the heterogenous and diverse nature of the OEF/OIF/OND veteran cohort, it would neither be practical nor reasonable to develop a single veteran identity development framework that completely captures the service and post-service experiences of all veterans. Black veterans are a particularly vulnerable subgroup given that they are the largest historically marginalized ethnic group within the military, experience homelessness at significantly disproportionate rates (Edens et al., 2011), experience greater rates of injustice within the military court system (Christensen & Tsilker, 2017), and report higher rates of mental illness and psychological trauma (Kulka et al., 1990). Thus, is why this study aimed to accumulate the extant information on Black veteran identity and experience to assist in constructing a unifying theory of Black veteran identity. Rather than reignite the traditional agenda of examining the negative effects of illness on Black identity (Lively & Smith, 2011), this study investigated Black veteran identity development a priori as to enhance the current cultural

competency literature base and more efficiently meet the needs of post-9/11 veterans, particularly those within the Black diaspora.

Race, gender, and culture are salient, socially constructed identities that serve to structure an individual's sense of self within society and are defined both historically and contextually (Shields, 2008). Traditional identity development models have not proven transferable to diverse populations, and certain societal contexts may render the applicability of traditional models inappropriate (Jones, Abes, & Magolda, 2013). Historically, studies have forwarded identity development models that were specific to predominantly White, middle-class, college men, and thus excluding many populations that may experience identity development differently. Similarly, American society is inundated with societal messages that paint the image of a veteran as being male, White, and heterosexual (Iverson & Anderson, 2013). Black veterans are rarely acknowledged or recognized with the same level of respect as their veteran peers, and their military service and experiences are essentially dismissed. The consequences of identity development for persons within the Black diaspora who have served during post-9/11 and the potential impact of holding intersecting identities on the experience of Black post-9/11 veterans remains unexplored.

By continuing to advance the status of Black invisibility and to overlook this specific generational and racial/ethnic subset of the post-9/11 veteran community, there will be a negative impact on (a) their psychosocial development, (b) the way they are perceived and treated within their communities, and (c) the manner in which they view themselves. Further, identity development and the salience of social identities are highly contextualized (Jones et al., 2013). It is hypothesized that Black military members have

to negotiate a sense of self and an identity that are congruent within the military context to achieve a successful integration and shared sense of belonging. Thus, without illuminating this identity development process for healthcare professionals and also validating this experience for Black post-9/11 veterans, these veterans will continue to experience marginalized treatment and be at the receiving end of uninformed assumptions by society. Lastly, research indicates that phenomenological experiences are interwoven with the systems of power and oppression within contexts (e.g., Jones et al., 2013). Thus, dismissing this fact would only further perpetuate an incomplete and inaccurate understanding of Black veteran identity.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the phenomenological experience of veteran identity development in post-9/11 veterans who identify within the Black diaspora. Given that current research suggests that behavioral health providers lack the sufficient training necessary to meet the unique clinical needs of post-9/11 veterans, this study aimed to examine military culture and experience in the context of intersecting cultural identities, so as to more effectively frame the services offered by counseling psychologists working with military veterans and service members. More specifically, this study strengthens the existing empirical framework for addressing the behavioral health needs of post-9/11 Black veterans by integrating identity into the discussion. This study explored identity development in the context of the military member's Black and veteran identities to more adequately inform current veteran resources and services. Further, understanding the influence of military culture upon health-related behaviors can help the counseling psychologist develop more effective treatment plans to help

OEF/OIF/OND Black veterans reach their personal, career, and military mission priorities. It is also advantageous for counseling psychologists, specifically, to examine military culture more intentionally to ensure that they are upholding current multicultural guidelines (APA, 2017) as it pertains to all intersecting identities (e.g., occupational, racial, gender, etc.).

Research Questions

The following research questions were explored in this study:

Q1   What narratives do post-9/11 era veterans who identify within the Black diaspora produce about their service and post-service experiences?

Q2   What is the process of military veteran identity development from entrance to separation for post-9/11 era Black veterans?

Q3   What are the implications for counseling psychologists, and more specifically, what do these behavioral health providers need to understand about post-9/11 Black veterans to provide more holistic, effective treatment services?

Delimitations

For the purposes of this study, participants were required to be post-9/11 U.S. veterans who identified within the Black diaspora. With Black veterans representing the largest historically marginalized ethnic group within the U.S. armed forces at roughly 17% (U.S. Department of Defense, 2016), it was anticipated that their phenomenological experience of veteran identity development, in general, would be uniquely different from other racial and ethnic military subgroups that have been more intently examined. This study was restricted to examining those from post-9/11 era operations as each military conflict represents a distinct experience, and veterans engaged in post-9/11 operations are particularly vulnerable to poor mental health outcomes given that it is the longest military conflict in the history of the U.S. (Bahraini et al., 2014; Coll, Weiss, & Yarvis, 2011).

Definitions of Terminology

To fully appreciate and understand some of the background information, the following constitutes a list of key terminology that will be used throughout this dissertation. The following terms may provide further context to better understand military culture, Black post-9/11 veterans, and identity development, as well as explain some of the core principles underlying the theories presented in later chapters.

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The standard nomenclature given to refer to the military operations in and around Afghanistan; more specifically, it is a reference to the war against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. This combat operation was announced by then-president G. W. Bush in October 2001 and did not officially conclude until December 2014. OEF took place in regions that included Afghanistan, Pakistan, Georgia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, all of which were described as combat zones at the time by the Department of Defense (DOD).

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). This name is in reference to military operations that took place in DoD-designated combat zones in Iraq and surrounding countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Turkey) under the since-unsubstantiated claim by the G. W. Bush administration that Iraq was in possession of weapons of mass destruction at the time. OIF began in March 2003 following an announcement by President G. W. Bush. On August 31, 2010, President Obama declared an official end to all OIF combat military operations (Mulrine, 2011).

Operation New Dawn (OND). This conflict marked the end to OIF and consisted of the remaining 50,000 U.S. military personnel serving in Iraq to shift from primary security operations to stability operations, now focused on advising, assisting, and

training Iraqi Special Forces to build Iraq's civil capacity (Defense Casuality Analysis System, 2018).

Post-9/11 Veteran. For the purposes of this study, a Post-9/11 era veteran will be any individual who has a history of military service (i.e., Army, Marine Corps, Air Force, Navy, and/or Coast Guard) following September 11, 2001. This term includes active-duty and reserves forces. For health care benefit eligibility, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) defines a veteran as "a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable."

Military Narrative. For the purposes of this study, a military narrative represents the unique stories that veterans tell themselves and others about their personal experiences of military service from indoctrination to reintegration back into civilian life.

Phenomenology. Phenomenology is defined as a research methodology that aims to examine individuals' internal experiences. Moreover, phenomenological investigation focuses on the unique elements of a lived human experience embedded within a person's world of immediate experiences, or lifeworld as coined by Habermas (van Manen, 1997, 2007), and considers the meanings one ascribes through being in the lifeworld (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014).

Black diaspora. Diaspora originates from the Greek diasporá, meaning "a dispersion or scattering". Moreover, it is an inclusive term that accounts for all variations of intersectionality, nationality, and ethnic backgrounds within a given geographic region. For the purposes of this study, persons within the Black diaspora will denote any individual who is of African descent or has ancestry in Africa.

Black/African American/Black American. Historically, these terms can represent distinctly different populations, and particular individuals will often express their preference for a given identity. For the purposes of this study, these terms will be used interchangeably to represent any member who identifies within the Black diaspora. The Black community has adopted various racial labels to define themselves (Smith, 1992). Slaveholders used terms such as "colored" and "negro" to refer to Americans of African descent. By the twentieth century, colored was replaced with Negro as leading Black figures (e.g., Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois) found the term to be stronger and more versatile. "Negro" was eventually replaced with "Black" in the 1960s in an effort to shed any residual effects of slavery and racial serfdom (Smith, 1992). In the 21st century, terms Black, African American and Black American have been widely used.

Identity. Identity provides one with the means of answering the question "Who am I?" For the purposes of this study, this term denotes a mental representation of a collection of personal characteristics, attributes, and self-schemas that define an individual (Migliore & Pound, 2016). More specifically, veteran identity is a "veteran's self-concept that derives from his/her military experience within a sociohistorical context" (Harada, Villa, & Andersen, 2002, para 1).

Intersecting Identities (or more broadly, intersectionality). The concept of intersecting identities highlights the notion that individuals are multidimensional with identities that consist of multiple intersecting layers such as—and not limited to—sexuality, class, gender, ethnicity, and religion (Brah & Phoenix, 2004).

Identity Development. This term denotes the psychosocial transition process from one point in the lifespan to another, during which the individual strengthens in their sense

of identity. Historically, identity development literature has focused on the transition from adolescence to adulthood (e.g., Archer, 1994; McLean, 2005; Waterman, 1982) with increasing attention being given to identity development among adult populations only recently (Fadjukoff & Kroger, 2016; Jones et al., 2013; Trautwein, 2018). For the purposes of this study, identity development will be restricted to the military narrative.

Summary

In this chapter, background information regarding post-9/11 operations, military culture, and Black veterans was provided. An overview was provided of the unique challenges faced by post-9/11 veterans such as longer and more frequent deployments. An overview of the intricacies of military culture was also outlined to emphasize the growing need to acknowledge military populations as distinct subgroups with their own unique language, norms, values, and traditions. An overview of the Black post-9/11 veteran experience was also introduced. The rationale for the study and research questions were delineated as they relate to the field of counseling psychology. Finally, an overview of essential terminology to be used throughout this research study was provided to offer context to better understand the phenomena being investigated.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The unique culture of the military is, indeed, a diverse group of people in
American society that must be understood as uniquely different from the civilian
world. All experiences originate from a particular cultural context; the [behavioral
health professional] must be attentive to this context and the role that cultural
identity plays in a client's life. (Dass-Brailsford, 2007, p. 78).

Overview

U.S. veterans of the post-9/11 armed conflicts represent a new cohort of military

personnel faced with perplexingly unique obstacles and experiences. The post-9/11

military operations have been traditionally capsulated under the official designations:

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan; Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and

Operation New Dawn (OND) in Iraq; and most recently, Operation Inherent Resolve

(OIR) (Zogas, 2017). Conveniently, this generation of veterans is most commonly

categorized as "OEF/OIF/OND veterans" (Zogas, 2017). In 2016, the National Center for

Veterans Analysis and Statistics (NCVAS) reported that there were 4.2 million Post-9/11

Veterans (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics [NCVAS], 2018). Since

2001, roughly 2.5 million U.S. military service members have been deployed to Iraq

and/or Afghanistan (Primack, Borsari, Benz, Reddy, & Shea, 2017).

The purpose of this study was to examine the phenomenological experience of

veteran identity development in post-9/11 veterans who identify within the Black

diaspora. Given that current research suggests that behavioral health providers lack the

sufficient training necessary to meet the unique clinical needs of post-9/11 veterans, this

study aimed to examine military culture and experience in the context of intersecting cultural identities, so as to more effectively frame the services offered by counseling psychologists working with military veterans and service members. To do so, first, it is important to reflect more broadly on military culture and experience as it is currently understood within the related literature. The military population is comprised of personnel who form a distinct subset of American society, governed by its own laws, norms, traditions, and values (Coll, Weiss, & Yarvis, 2011). Such norms dictate how members of the armed forces will engage with the rest of the world. Each branch operates from a unique set of military ethos; though, there are unifying qualities that reign true across the various military divisions (i.e., Marine Corps, Army, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard, and Reserve units) such as honor, courage, commitment, loyalty, and integrity (Exum & Coll, 2008; Exum, Coll, & Weiss, 2011).

The U.S. is no stranger to warring conflicts, neither foreign nor domestic, and the research consistently shows that each military operation has presented unique challenges to its military personnel. Since the late 18th century, the (now U.S.) has been actively involved in the following major wars: the American Revolution (1775 to 1783), the War of 1812 (1812 to 1815), the Indian Wars (approx. 1817 to 1898), the Mexican War (1846 to 1848), the Civil War (1861 to 1865), the Spanish-American War (1898), World War I (1917 to 1918), World War II (1941 to 1945), the Korean War (1950 to 1953), the Vietnam War (1964 to 1975), and the "Global War on Terror" (2001 to present) (Torreon, 2017; U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2017). The culture surrounding each operation is multidimensional and largely dictated by various extant sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and sociocultural factors (Coyne & Mathers, 2011). Given the distinct

culture and experiences inherent in each major war, this study examined military culture and identity development as it pertained to the post-9/11 era. Moreover, the existing research—however minimal—on the Black veteran experience examines circumstances surrounding earlier operations (Black, 2016; Black & Thompson, 2012; Martineau, 2007); thus, this study investigated Black veteran identity development and military experience as they pertained to post-9/11 operations.

Post-9/11 Military Operations "Global War on Terror"

The Global War on Terror (GWOT)—as it was emphatically dubbed—was an international effort activated under the G.W. Bush administration; however, GWOT was an umbrella term—discontinued in 2009—to capture the military operations that took place in Afghanistan and Iraq. Moreover, GWOT is now often replaced with the term "Post-9/11" to collectively denote all military operations occurring after September 11, 2001. The transnational conflict was triggered by the horrific events of September 11th, 2001, when four U.S. commercial airplanes were hijacked by a group of religious zealots in connection with the terrorist group, al-Qaeda. Two of the airplanes were flown into the North and South Twin Towers of New York's World Trade Center, while a third was flown into the westward wall of the Pentagon. The fourth was, presumably, retaken by the plane's courageous passengers and subsequently crashed into a field before the al-Qaeda collaborators could reach their intended target. A total of 2,977 employees, firefighters, police personnel, workers, and service members were killed during this tragedy (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, 2004). This heinous act constitutes the impetus that motivated so many individuals to rise and join the armed forces.

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) is the standard nomenclature given to refer to the military operations in and around Afghanistan; more specifically, it is a reference to the war against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The Taliban is a fundamentalist Sunni political organization motivated to spread the Muslim religion and establish a total Islamic law (Laub, 2014). Al-Qaeda is an extremist group of the Sunni Islam tradition, founded in 1988 by Osama Bin Laden, with the agenda of "driving Western influence from Islamic lands" (Habeck, 2012, para 2). This combat operation was announced by then-president G.W. Bush in October 2001 and did not officially conclude until December 2014. OEF took place in regions to include Afghanistan, Pakistan, Georgia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, all of which were described as combat zones by the Department of Defense (DOD). Further, in March 2003, President Bush announced the beginning of the controversial Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), which thrusted Americans into further conflict under the since-unsubstantiated claim that Iraq was in possession of weapons of mass destruction (Richelson, 2004). OIF took place in DOD-designated combat zones to include Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Turkey.

On August 31st, 2010, then-president Barack Obama declared an official end to combat military operations in Iraq (Mulrine, 2011). This announcement marked the transition of OIF to Operation New Dawn (OND), which watched the remaining 50,000 U.S. military personnel serving in Iraq at the time shift from primary security operations to stability operations, now focused on advising, assisting, and training Iraqi Special Forces. By this time, OEF and OIF had claimed the lives of nearly 4,500 U.S. service members (Torreon, 2017). In October 2014, the DOD announced Operation Inherent

Resolve (OIR) to capsulate the military efforts to eliminate the terrorist group known as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Torreon, 2017).

The post-9/11 U.S. military operations are unique compared to previous combat operations given the longer active-duty tours and more frequent deployments with briefer periods on non-combat for its personnel (Baptist et al., 2011). Further, the post-9/11 era includes the longest-standing U.S. military in American history. The types of warfare and injuries sustained by today's military members and veterans are also different than those seen in previous conflicts (Kang et al., 2015). Moreover, today's military members are all volunteers, older, and more likely to be married with children. Women also make up a greater percentage of military members than their pre-9/11 counterparts (Kang et al., 2015). Such inherent features of the post-9/11 conflicts have been correlated with higher rates of behavioral health problems and general life dissatisfaction among returning veterans (Mental Health Advisory Team [MHAT], 2006). One's views of their military and post-service experiences are largely dependent on the circumstances surrounding the operation/s in which a veteran served. Thus, veteran culture and identity can only be understood under the consideration of context. Given the unique features of post-9/11 operations, we need to know the impact that these features have of veterans' culture, military experiences, and identity development.

**Behavioral Health
and Functional
Impairment**

Post-9/11 military personnel, particularly those with combat exposure, are increasingly susceptible to developing trauma-related and mood disorders (Kaplan, McFarland, Huguet, & Valenstein, 2012; Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008; Tsai, Rosenheck,

Kasprow, & McGuire, 2013), substance abuse (Burnett-Zeigler et al., 2011), anxiety

disorders (Britton et al., 2012), and general physical functional impairment (Hoge,

Auchterlonic, & Miilliken, 2006). Veterans are reporting additional physical and societal

consequences that include traumatic brain injury (Belanger et al., 2011; Silver,

McAllister, & Arciniegas, 2009) and homelessness (Tsai & Rosenheck, 2015). Despite

our military success with the post-9/11 operations, these conflicts clearly take a toll on

military members. The post-9/11 generation appears to be at a greater psychological and

physical risk than military personnel from prior conflicts given their longer and more

frequent deployments (Institute of Medicine, 2008; Thomas et al., 2010). An estimated

41% of OEF/OIF veterans meet diagnostic criteria for at least one mental health disorder.

Moreover, 51% of post-9/11 veterans describe having difficulty in readjusting to civilian

life, which is twice as many as do pre-9/11 veterans (Pew Research Center, 2011a). There

has been a 65% increase in diagnosed mental health disorders among active-duty service

members since the start of military operations in 2001 (Primack et al., 2017). Veterans

are estimated to represent 20% of completed suicides within the U.S. while constituting

only 1% of the total population (Harrell & Berglas, 2011). Despite these increased rates

of functional impairment and inclining rates of suicide (Kaplan, Huguet, McFarland, &

Newsom, 2007), many veterans who would benefit from behavioral health care do not

utilize such services due to barriers including stigma (Vogt, Fox, & Di Leone, 2014),

personal beliefs about mental illness (Stecker, Fortney, & Sherbourne, 2011), and access

(Spoont et al., 2014b).

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) is a post-9/11 veteran

organization committed to addressing a staggering report revealing that roughly 20

service members and veterans—from Vietnam to present conflicts—die from suicide daily (Office of Suicide Prevention, 2016). IAVA conducted a survey of their membership and determined that 65% of members knew a post-9/11 veteran who attempted suicide, and 58% knew a post-9/11 veteran that died by suicide (IAVA, 2017). Given these statistics, there has been a scholarly commitment to identify the factors that increase veterans' susceptibility to mental illness and suicide. Vogt et al. (2014) reported that veterans are hesitant to utilize psychological services due to explicit and implicit messages disseminated throughout society inferring a lazy and weak disposition for persons seeking mental health services. Stecker et al. (2011) reported that personal beliefs about mental health often present as barriers for seeking psychological support. Many veterans, particularly those of color, are taught that emotionally personal information should not be discussed about outside of the family system. Spoont et al. (2014b) identified lack of access to services as a major barrier for veterans needing mental health services; access barriers include veterans' disability status and proximity to the nearest VA facility. Additionally, veterans consistently report not feeling understood by civilian behavioral health professionals (Gade & Wilkins, 2012; Johnson, 2010), which may evidence a gap in cultural competency. Clearly, there is a need for additional research that can identify practical strategies for meeting the overall mental health needs of post-9/11 veterans and addressing the military veteran cultural competency of healthcare professionals working with veterans.

Military Cultural Competence

The call for cultural competence has remained ubiquitous within the medical and behavioral health literature for decades (Betancourt, Green, Carrillo, & Ananeh-

Firempong, 2003; Korman, 1974; Sue, 1998). Sue and Torino (2005) described cultural

competence as the ability to create and facilitate conditions that maximize the optimal

development of the client through the service provider's acquisition of awareness,

knowledge, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic society (p. 8). Yet,

the consideration of military cultural competence has only recently gained momentum

within the last decade (Hobbs, 2008; Reger, Etherage, Reger, & Gahm, 2008). These

publications, along with the Joining Forces initiative in 2011 set by First Lady Michelle

Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, helped garner national attention for the idea that the military is

a unique culture that deserves the same compassionate, culturally-informed and inclusive

approach as do other cultures (Meyer et al., 2016; U.S. White House, 2012). The

Research ANd Development (RAND) corporation surveyed 522 psychiatrists,

psychologists, and licensed social workers to find that only 13% met criteria for military

veteran cultural competency (Kime, 2014). Current research suggests that providers

working with military populations necessitate special training and education to have the

skills required to meet the complex clinical needs of the post-9/11 military cohort

(Signoracci, Bahraini, Matarazzo, Olson-Madden, & Brenner, 2014). Thus, there is a

need for increased scholarly commitment towards understanding the unique culture and

military experiences as well as mental health concerns of post-9/11 veterans.

A veteran's culture dramatically shapes their military service and experiences,

which explains why culture and identity continue to be embraced as primary components

of the cultural competency framework (Meyer et al., 2016). Military cultural competence

can thus be defined as the process of developing awareness for one's own attitudes and

knowledge of military experiences, culture, and identity (Convoy & Westphal, 2013).

Lastly, possessing military cultural competence with an understanding of identity can create opportunities for insights that otherwise may have gone unnoticed. For example, Smith and True (2014) argue that much of veterans' mental health is strained by identity conflict resulting from postwar reintegration. Understanding the influence of military culture upon health-related behaviors may assist mental health treatment providers to develop more effective treatment plans to help military personnel reach their personal, career, and military mission priorities.

Providing culturally sensitive and informed mental health care for post-9/11 military veterans requires that the provider be knowledgeable in behavioral health as a function of military context, experience, and identity. The ability to understand and appreciate military culture and to tailor clinical practices based on that understanding and appreciation is imperative for mental health clinicians working with veterans. Improved mental health outcomes in military members and veterans require enhanced treatment options (e.g., a unified theory of veteran identity) and improved military cultural competence (e.g., an understanding of veteran identity development). Such is why this study aimed to accumulate the extant information on veteran identity development and experience to assist in constructing a unifying theory of veteran identity development. Rather than reignite the traditional agenda to examine the negative effects of illness on identity (Lively & Smith, 2011), this study investigated military veteran identity development so to enhance current cultural competency literature and more efficiently meet the needs of post-9/11 veterans. This helped to (a) strengthen mental health professionals' military cultural competence and (b) develop a healthcare system that is

more culturally informed. The following is a brief delineation of the extant research about military culture and identity formation.

Military Veteran Culture and Identity

Identity can be understood as "who I am," a mental representation of a collection of attributes, characteristics, and self-schemas that define an individual (Migliore & Pound, 2016). Military service, similar to other significant life events, influences an individual's identity and values. Consistent with the formation of identities tied to social origins, the socialization inherent in the military can construct identities that dramatically affect a veteran's beliefs, attitudes, and values (Gade & Wilkins, 2012). Military veteran culture (within the U.S.) developed out of a historic tradition dating to before the eighteenth century, when the Second Continental Congress enacted the American Army on July 14, 1775 (Stewart, 2009). Military culture is a professional, dynamic system composed of guiding ideals and values, behaviors, and beliefs that create a shared value system among military personnel dedicated to defending a nation (Convoy & Westphal, 2013).

Military culture is driven by an ethos that places high value on courage, selflessness, stoicism, loyalty, excellence, morality, and a commitment to nation and society. Although there appears to be some formalized socialization process that begins with indoctrination, at which time the service member is instilled with the aforementioned ethics, there has still yet to be a systematic examination of what the overall socialization process looks like and how it influences the military and post-service experiences of veterans. The current research agenda seems to be focused on how military experience and the adoption of these values leaves many veterans with a sense of

role incongruity, disillusionment, isolation, and alienation upon reintegration into the civilian sector (Danish & Antonides, 2013; Rozanova et al., 2015; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010).

Military Socialization and
Training an Ethos

Much of the extant literature on occupational identity and socialization finds its origins in the scholarship of Van Maanen and colleagues interested in organizational socialization (e.g., Van Maanen, 1973, 1975; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), which define organizational socialization as a learning and adjustment process through which an individual must espouse a role within the organization that allows them to flexibly navigate both personal and institutional needs. Assessing military indoctrination as a socialization process is necessary for understanding veteran culture and identity development (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978). Research on military socialization indicates that a set of attitudes, beliefs, and values are instilled in military personnel which are essential for the overall effectiveness of the military as a total institution. There is a transformation of identity that seems to, in general, begin with basic training, which is a period of rapid resocialization and enculturation and often occurring under conditions of isolation and confinement (Novaco, Cook, & Sarason, 1983). Basic training may range in duration from an estimated eight to 16 weeks depending on the branch and particular military occupation for which the service member is being trained. Basic training is both psychologically and physically demanding in the service of two primary objectives: adjustment to the work task setting; and assimilation to the organizational culture, values, and beliefs (Dalenberg & Buijs, 2013). It is often cited that military members change

more during the initial months of training than their parents could achieve in 18 years (Bik, 2013; Dalenberg & Buijs, 2013).

Ineffective socialization has been cited as an important reason for why service members may be discharged (Dalenberg & Buijs, 2013; Vandenberg & Seo, 1992) or elect to voluntarily separate from the service (Dalenberg & Buijs, 2013; Louis, 1980). Military members who struggle to effectively socialize may be hazed and humiliated. Persons from historically marginalized groups may find this socialization process particularly challenging given that military culture and policy tend to mirror that of society's ideologies (Segal, 1993). For instance, society maintains a dominant ideology that men are warriors and women are peacekeepers. The systemic exclusion of service women from combat roles was used to maintain the male-charged power structure of the military until January 2013 (Roulo, 2013). Post-9/11 female veterans represent the largest percentage of female-identifying persons in any other military cohort, and the military's hegemonic masculinity essentially relegates women to an inferior status to men (Santovec, 2012). Women veterans are expected—explicitly or implicitly—to suppress their feminine attributes and perform in traditionally masculine ways if they want to succeed within the military (Maples, 2017).

Relatedly, the military system was built on values of masculinity and strength further solidified by a heteronormative assumption. Service members who do not fit neatly into that box such as gender and sexual minorities are often tasked with proving their worth to their peers. It was not until September 2011 that the discriminatory "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy was repealed, affording LGBT-identifying persons the opportunity to serve in the armed forces (Pruitt, 2018). We know that the military system

has traditionally been informed by exclusive ideologies, however, our current veterans' mental health treatment options continue to minimize the role of military culture and identity on veteran's service and post-service experiences. Mental health professionals working with today's veterans can benefit from privileging the voices and unique military experiences of persons from underrepresented, marginalized groups.

Storytelling and the Military
Experience: A Route to
Recovery

Affording military veterans with the opportunity to share of their military experience has been described as a pathway to recovery, interpersonal engagement, and public understanding of veterans' mental health (Wilson, Leary, Mitchell, & Ritchie, 2009). Storytelling, in general, has been cited as an essential aspect of recovery from psychological trauma (Herman, 1992). It is particularly important for mental health professionals working with veterans to recognize the therapeutic benefits of storytelling such as the normalizing of their experiences, transformative healing, meaning-making, social engagement, and education (Wilson et al., 2009). A veteran's military story can be conceptualized as a tool for reigniting a sense of purpose and making meaning of the circumstances one has experienced throughout their military career. There remains a gap within the literature base of research investigating the phenomenological experience of veterans and, specifically, how identity is reconstructed throughout the military cycle. Studies that do privilege the phenomenological experiences of veterans can aid in developing more culturally informed and more effective psychological service treatment options.

Following a comprehensive review of the literature on the military experience, one primary current research tradition—for the last decade—has been to focus on military veterans' phenomenological experiences of the transitional reintegration phase, referred to as the homecoming experience (Ahern et al., 2015; Griffith, 2017; Moore & Kennedy, 2011; Wilson et al., 2009). While in the service, service members often describe the military as their primary family and community; though, upon discharge, they tend to report a ubiquitous sense of disconnection and disillusionment from their loved ones and society, in general. Many post-9/11 veterans experience disconnection from their loved ones, lack of support from institutions, lack of structure, and a loss of meaning upon their reintegration into civilian life (Ahern et al., 2015). Their transition can be further complicated by marital and family problems, job loss, divorce, medical, mental and physical issues, and homelessness (Brunger, Serrato, & Ogden, 2013). This reintegration phase has been cited as one of the most traumatic and taxing experiences that a veteran has to face (Rozanova et al., 2015); however, there is minimal empirical literature that takes a historical approach (e.g., from enlistment to homecoming) to assess how military acculturation and socialization may lead to such identity conflict upon the return home (Rozanova et al., 2015).

Rozanova et al. (2015) utilized qualitative methodology to examine the military journey of OEF/OIF/OND armed forces personnel from indoctrination to separation in order to identify factors influencing growing resistance to behavioral health treatment now as veterans. They found that veterans believed having a mental illness diagnosis would negatively impact their identity such that mental illness is incongruent with the 'noble superhero' identity. Also, veterans were trained to believe that mental illness was

tantamount to career-termination. However, the contexts of identity and military socialization were not directly explored. More specifically, the authors did not examine how the implicit teachings, informed by military values such as duty and courage, impacted veterans' willingness to utilize psychological services. Also, the authors neglected to assess the relationship between post-9/11 veterans' cultural identities and help-seeking attitudes. This study investigated post-9/11 veterans' military experiences, in the contexts of cultural identities and military socialization, to more effectively meet their unique behavioral health needs.

**Privileging and Honoring
a Forgotten Patriot**

It is imperative to attend to the multidimensionality of identity and to recognize that military culture is heterogenous—just as any other cultural group—and thus is comprised of various subcultures with their own distinct military identity and experiences. One population of particular interest is Black military members (i.e., service members and veterans) as they represent the largest ethnic minority group (e.g., U.S. Department of Defense, 2016) within the U.S. armed forces. The current sociopolitical climate which sees NFL stars kneeling during the national anthem in protest of police brutality has—in some ways—created a grossly inappropriate divide between veterans and people within the Black diaspora, which dismisses the 300-year-long legacy of Black military members. Further, it has been argued that "there is probably no irony in American history more pointed than the American Black soldier fighting and dying for the basic American freedoms while being denied most of those same freedoms at home" (Donaldson, 1991, para 1). Persons who identify within the Black diaspora have fought in every major American war since the American Revolution, and still they are denied

freedoms equal to those of their peers. What follows are comprehensive accounts of the current understanding and knowledge, surrounding (a) Black identity development and (b) Blacks' experiences in the armed forces.

Black Identity and Culture in America

According to recent census data, Blacks make up 13% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). In 1619, the Dutch introduced the first Africans to America. Slavery was heavily practiced throughout the American colonies until the mid-19th century when the abolition movement provoked debate challenging the lawfulness and rightfulness of slavery. It was not until the end of the Civil War in 1865 that slavery in America was regarded as unlawful with the passage of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. constitution (U.S. Const. amend. XIII). However, the legacy of slavery very much remains, and Blacks are largely depicted as an oppressed, lazy, unsophisticated group. Blacks remain both metaphorically and literally shackled by institutional and structural processes driven by racism and discrimination. As Feagin explains, "being Black in U.S. society means always having to be prepared for anti-Black actions from whites—in most places and at many times of the day, week, month, or year. Being Black means … living with various types of racial discrimination from the cradle to the grave" (Feagin, 2014, p. 187). The collective influence of racism shapes many aspects of life for Black Americans throughout the life course, including socioeconomic opportunity and status (Farley, 1984, 1988; Grodsky & Pager, 2001). And still, over the years Blacks have been responsible for some of the most invaluable inventions and innovations. Blacks continue to gain representation in all socioeconomic strata and education levels that were recently restricted for majority-identifying individuals (Brown & Atske, 2016).

**Black Identity, Development,
and Theory**

Black racial identity is often defined as the process of becoming Black (i.e., nigrescence; Cross, 1971, 1991). Racial identity remains one of the most heavily researched areas that focuses on the psychological experiences of persons within the Black diaspora (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). Early research conceptualized Black racial identity within the context of the group's stigmatized status in American society, with minimal regard for the role of unique cultural experiences (Clark & Clark, 1939; Horowitz, 1939). Gaines and Reed (1995) refer to this more traditional paradigm as the mainstream approach. Mainstream approaches typically focus on the universal cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of group identity (Baldwin, 1984; Cross, 1971, 1991; Helms, 1986; Myers, 1993). Mainstream approaches primarily conceptualize Black identity as a linear process commencing with an unhealthy, stigmatized identity and ending with a positive self-definition (Constantine, Richardson, Benjamin, & Wilson, 1998). In the late 1960s, multiculturally-aware psychologists began to modify the mainstream research tradition to emphasize, instead, the uniqueness of Blacks' oppressive and cultural experiences. This research has been referred to as the underground perspective due to its scholarship being largely ignored by mainstream psychology (Gaines & Reed, 1994, 1995); the underground approach has its historical origins in the revolutionary scholarship of W. E. B. DuBois (1903). This perspective operates under the assumption that despite many Blacks having faced discrimination, there are positive cultural influences that help Blacks to shape a healthy self-concept without first having some degree of self-hatred.

The most widely used model of African American racial identity within the mainstream tradition is William Cross's Nigrescence Theory (Cross, 1971), considered by many to be the seminal Black identity developmental model (Ritchey, 2014) for which many other more contemporary models have been derived. Cross used the term nigrescence to explain the Black identity and consciousness process for Black Americans. The resocialization experience of nigrescence is defined as "an identity change process as a negro-to-Black conversion experience" (Cross, 1991, p. 189). Cross's five-stage Nigrescence Theory beings with the Pre-encounter stage, which is when one maintains attitudes and beliefs that are relatively race-neutral or anti-Black. This is followed by the Encounter stage, during which time one initiates a change in ideology and worldview; one may experience an event that leads them to challenge their present outlook on life. Immersion-Emersion, stage 3, illustrates the psychological vortex of nigrescence where the Black-identifying individual begins to construct a new frame of reference about race and identity; this new outlook may be more inclusive and flexible. Internalization and Internalization-Commitment (stages 4 and 5) describe the point at which a new identity is internalized and a committed interest in Black affairs is formed. Cross (1991) said that "immersion is a strong powerful dominating sensation that is constantly energized by rage [towards White people and culture], guilt [at having been tricked into believe Black ideas were negative] and developing a sense of pride [in one's Black identity]" (p. 203). Lastly, during this stage, Black persons will deconstruct their negative stereotypes associated with Black culture and begin to view Black identity through a more adaptive lens.

Generally speaking, the mainstream (e.g., Baldwin, 1984; Cross, 1971, 1991;

Helms, 1986) and underground (e.g., Baldwin, 1984; Kambon, 1992) traditions of Black

identity development are more complementary than contradictory, and there has been

effort to construct a more integrated model that harnesses the most meaningful aspects of

each approach so as to generate a more comprehensive understanding of Black racial

identity (Sellers et al., 1998). Sellers et al. (1998) attempted to achieve such integration

through the development of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI). The

MMRI defines racial identity for individuals within the Black diaspora as the significance

and phenomenological meaning that individuals attribute to their membership within the

Black reference group. More simply put, the MMRI is focused on addressing the salience

of ethnicity in the individual's perception of self and the meaning they ascribe to holding

such membership.

The MMRI operates from four testable postulations. First, it assumes that

identities are contextually influenced while also being stable properties of the individual.

Second, the model proposes that individuals maintain many different identities that are

hierarchically situated (Rosenberg, 1979; Stryker & Serpe, 1982). This is advantageous

as it allows for an investigation of racial identity within the context of other identities

such as gender and occupational identity (Sellers et al., 1998).

A third assumption of the MMRI is that individuals' perception of self is the most

valid indicator of their identity; thus, it espouses a phenomenological approach to

investigating racial identity that privileges the individual's personal experience (Weiner,

1974). This is not to ignore the societal and systemic factors that influence Blacks' sense

of identity but rather it is an effort to honor the importance of ethnicity for the specific

individual. The MMRI also underscores the person's perception of what being Black means for them. There are qualitative differences in the meaning persons ascribe to identifying within the Black diaspora. This challenges the traditional approach by which value statements are given to denote a healthy versus unhealthy racial identity (Sellers et al., 1998). Fourth and last, the MMRI differs from more traditional developmental stage theories through its focus on the status of one's racial identity rather than its position along a developmental sequence (e.g., Cross, 1971, 1991). The MMRI examines racial identity and its status at a given point in the individual's life. The model acknowledges that the meaning and significance that one places on their Black identity is likely to shift across their lifespan.

Sellers et al. (1998) propose the following four dimensions of racial identity to address the aforementioned assumptions: racial salience, racial centrality, racial regard, and racial ideology. Racial salience is defined as the degree to which one's ethnic identity is an important part of their self-concept within a particular moment or situation. Salience is a process variable that is influenced both by situational and personal factors. Racial centrality denotes the extent to which a person is generally inclined to define themselves with regard to their ethnic background. Underground models tend to assume that race is centrally located in the self-identity of the typical African American (Baldwin, 1984; Baldwin, Brown, & Rackley, 1990). The centrality of one's racial identity has been suggested to be an indicator of both one's (a) identity development and (b) mental health (Baldwin, 1984; Sellers et al., 1998). Racial regard refers to the positive and negative feelings ascribed to identifying within the Black diaspora. This dimension is based heavily on the work of Crocker and her colleagues on collective self-esteem (Crocker &

Major, 1989; Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990), which found that self-esteem was highly correlated with psychological well-being and life satisfaction. This dimension is further divided into public and private regard. Public regard addresses the extent to which individuals feel that society views African Americans in positive or negative terms. Private regard refers to the extent that individuals ascribe positive-negative valence towards African Americans or about being an African American, themselves. Lastly, the fourth dimension of racial ideology denotes the individual's collective values, attitudes, and beliefs regarding how they believe that members of their ethnic group should behave (Sellers et al., 1998).

Moreover, Black identity can be understood as the degree to which one's Blackness is central to their sense of self (Sellers et al., 1998). One's "Blackness" is often characterized by skin color; however, being "Black" means more than having a particular phenotypic presentation. Rather, it implies shared cultural and psychological states as a function of race and ethnicity. Black identity is inextricably linked to the aforementioned generations of experienced disregard for the group's humanity. This blatant disregard is reflected in the structural subjugation of Black people within the U.S. (Neville, Viard, & Turner, 2014), which has resulted in health (Black, Haviland, Sanders, & Taylor, 2008), wealth (Pew Research Center, 2011b), education (Norman, Ault, Bentz, & Meskimen, 2001), and criminal justice (Crutchfield, Fernandes, & Martinez, 2010) disparities between Blacks and other ethnic groups. Black identity is a dynamic and fluid process influenced by sociohistorical, sociopolitical, and sociocultural factors.

Determinants of Black Identity

Black identity is "emerging, changing, and complex" (Hecht & Ribeau, 1991, para 8). Studies suggest that Black identity is multidimensional and a function of various social and demographic factors (Allen, Dawson, & Brown, 1989; du Plessis & Naude, 2017). Broman, Neighbors, and Jackson (1988) found that people within the Black diaspora who were older, Southern, rural, and less educated reported greater closeness to other Blacks. Age has been purported to situate Blacks into sociohistorical contexts (e.g., Porter & Washington, 1979), with older individuals often endorsing stronger racial ties. Allen et al. (1989) found socioeconomic status to be negatively related to closeness with other Blacks and Black autonomy; however, it was positively correlated with favorable evaluations of the Black ethnic group. Childhood socialization within the family context is considered to be the most influential socialization setting for forming one's sense of self, values, and beliefs (e.g., Gecas, 1981). The social class of one's family plays a significant role in opportunity and resource accessibility, types of schools available, friendships developed, attitudes, and values (Gecas, 1979). Relatedly, family and friends offer an important context for structuring attitudes toward oneself and others (Hughes & Demo, 1989). Interracial interactions have also been shown to structure interpersonal schemas in ways that profoundly influence Black identity (Rosenberg, 1975).

The empirical literature on determinants of racial identity development among Black adults is particularly limited as socialization theory and research have focused on children, thus having neglected the social psychological processes shaping the identity of adults (Demo & Hughes, 1990). More is needed here, which will help to provide a fuller understanding of racial identity development. This study examined adult identity

development for persons within the Black diaspora within the context of occupational

identity (e.g., military status), further adding to the adult identity development literature.

Blacks in the American Military

Blacks have a longstanding history on the American battlefield, extending from

pre-colonial conflicts to the current military operations (Lopreato & Poston, 1977). Black

Americans have participated in every war fought within the U.S. to include the

Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, the

Spanish-American War, World Wars I & II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf

War, and the current post-9/11 military operations. These courageous veterans have

remained committed to facilitating and upholding international justice by fighting

America's enemies abroad while also combatting racism at home. The U.S. military is a

separate culture comprised of its own norms and values, and in many ways, the U.S.

military is also a microcosm of the nation evidenced by its sanctioning of racial

segregation lasting until the elimination of the last all-Black unit in 1954 (Berger, 2017).

A Symbol for Undesired Change

> No one was more at risk of experiencing violence and targeted racial terror than
> Black veterans who had proven their valor and courage as soldiers during the
> Civil War, World War I, and World War II. Because of their military service,
> Black veterans were seen as a particular threat to Jim Crow and racial
> subordination. Thousands of Black veterans were assaulted, threatened, abused, or
> lynched following military service. (Baker, 2016, para 2)

The Equal Justice Initiative released a 2016 report titled Lynching in America:

Targeting Black Veterans in which director Bryan Stevenson provided a critical

examination of the Black veteran experience during the Reconstruction Era. Military

service activated dreams of racial equality and liberation for Blacks dating back to the

American Revolution. However, most Blacks found that their military service would go

largely unrecognized upon returning from war. Blacks served in the U.S. military with gallantry and sacrificed their lives for the freedoms of others. Yet upon homecoming, they were not welcomed or honored for their service. The simple act of wearing a military uniform often placed persons within the Black diaspora at risk for racially charged violence (Williams, 2010).

The enslavement and disenfranchisement of Black people in the U.S. for over 300 years established an ideology that Blacks were a naturally and permanently inferior ethnic class. Following emancipation, there was societal fear across the U.S. that Black veterans who demanded equality would disrupt the social order that was built on white supremacy. Given that Blacks were being trained with weaponry to fight America's battles, many American citizens feared that Black troops would use such means to incite political change. These Blacks were perceived as rejecting their rightful place at the bottom of the region's racial hierarchy (Williams, 2010). As Black veterans returned home from war, Whites were inclined to respond with racial terror that often manifested through protests, lynchings, and destruction of property (Williams, 2010). The amalgamation of these historical experiences has had both a direct and indirect influence on the service and post-service experiences of Blacks serving in current operations.

A Historical Account

  The American Revolutionary War (1775 to 1783). The Revolutionary War was a battle for American independence; the 13 colonies were seeking freedom from what they experienced as a tyrannical British matriarch. Black men (free and enslaved) had an instrumental role in securing American independence (Frey, 1999). Talk of promised liberation gave thousands of Blacks hope and expectations of freedom with many eager

to fight for a democratic revolution. However, many colonists were vocal opponents of recruiting Black men and found the idea of arming slaves more terrifying than opposing the British. Some slave owners allowed their slaves to enlist on promises of freedom, though most were placed back into slavery at the war's conclusion. Blacks were relegated primarily to supporting roles such as digging ditches if they did enlist. Many records have been lost to time, but it is estimated that at least 5,000 Black soldiers fought for the Patriots during the American Revolution (Quarles, 1961).

The War of 1812 (1812 to 1815). The War of 1812 (labeled as a second War of Independence) was partly instigated by British attempts to restrict U.S. trade and the Royal Navy's impressment upon American sailors to hinder territory expansion (Heals, 2012). Black men found themselves fighting on both sides in an effort to advance their agenda of solidifying their freedom as the British government was advertising freedom for any slave who joined His Majesty's service. In spite of explicit racism and discrimination, Black volunteers committed themselves to protecting American homelands that paradoxically deprived them of the basic freedoms for which they fought (Althoff, 1999). Though, Blacks still found themselves in secondary, supporting roles such as Naval mechanics, riggers, and ship caulkers (Heals, 2012).

The Mexican-American War (1846 to 1848). The Mexican-American War followed the 1845 annexation of Texas, which Mexico still considered a part of its territory at the time. Black men served primarily on Navy vessels including the U.S.S. Treasure and the U.S.S. Columbus. The Louisiana Battalion of Free Men of Color—an all-Black militia comprised of refugees from Haiti—also participated. However, few

Blacks were allotted the opportunity to serve due to the Militia Acts of 1792, which prohibited them from bearing arms in the military (May, 1987).

The American Civil War (1861 to 1865). The American Civil War was a dispute between Northern and Southern states over the economics of slavery, political control of the domineering system, and ultimately, states' rights (National Archives, 2017). Northern (Union) and Southern (Confederate) states had also been experiencing simmering tension due to efforts of westward expansion. Southern states maintained distrust with the federal government and remained opposed to espousing what they perceived as oppressive, Northern values and ideologies. Contrary to widespread belief, the moral legitimacy of slavery played only an indirect role in this conflict. The Presidential election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 is often considered the final impetus at which time seven Southern states chose to secede and form the Confederate States of America. The American Civil War represents the deadliest and most financially taxing war ever fought on American soil (Donaldson, 1991).

Black men—both free and runaway slaves—served in the American Civil War on both the Union and Confederate sides. By 1865, the South was allowing slaves to enlist due to a lack of manpower (Escott, 2009). Blacks throughout America were invigorated with hopes of equality and liberty because they believed that their sacrifice would be honored, and that they would finally achieve the freedoms given to their White counterparts. In 1863, Frederick Douglass was quoted saying,

> Once let the Black man get upon his person the brass letter, U.S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on earth that can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship. (Moore & Neal, 2010)

Frederick Douglass remained a vocal proponent of Black military service as he considered it a direct route to citizenship for Blacks. Roughly 179,000 Black men served in the Union Army with another 19,000 serving within the Navy driven by promises of liberation and equality that remained largely unactualized following both the American Revolution and War of 1812 (Escott, 2009). At this time, Black women were unable to enlist; however, many served as nurses, spies, and scouts with the most notorious being Harriet Tubman. Black men found themselves serving in artillery, infantry (albeit infrequently given the aforementioned systemic prejudice), and all noncombat support functions with an estimated 40,000 Black soldiers dying over the course of the domestic conflict (Freeman, Schamel, & West, 1992). Blacks suffered many injustices during the course of the American Civil War. Black troops who became Confederate prisoners of war (POWs) were typically treated more severely than white POWs, and it was not until 1864 that Congress began to grant equal pay to Black troops. Even after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued in 1863 to liberate the slaves—though it served more as a militaristic strategy to weaken the South—no dramatic improvement in Blacks' political or social status would occur for some time. And still, Blacks were instrumental in establishing what is now the U.S. Following the American Civil War in 1866, Congress established four all-Black regiments (infamously known as the Buffalo Soldiers) to help rebuild the country and protect the Western frontier during the Indian Wars (Escott, 2009).

The Spanish-American War (1898). The Spanish-American War secured the U.S. as a Pacific power. The war was a joint effort by the U.S. to secure Cuban independence from Spanish control and to ensure peace and tranquility on the island of

Cuba (Johnson, 1899). Black service members maintained little reservation about joining the Cuban expedition; though, a large segment of the Black community felt differently. Although Blacks were sympathetic to the plight of Cuba, many could not help but to challenge the irony as America was inflicting brutality on Black Americans identical to what Spain was committing on Cuban residents. Many Blacks questioned the U.S.'s crusade to end Spanish oppression of dark-skinned Cubans; however, Blacks' commitment to expand opportunities for racial equality remained, and participating in American conflicts such as the Spanish-American War presented as the only option for securing equal citizenship (Johnson, 1899).

Each of the U.S. Army's four Black units (i.e., the 9th and 10th Calvary and the 24th and 25th Infantry) performed duties during the military operation, garnering five Medals of Honor and 29 Certificates of Merit for acts of bravery in battle. Thousands more served in the volunteer Army (Johnson, 1899).

World Wars I and II (1917 to 1918; 1941 to 1945). After resisting entering yet another foreign conflict, then-President Wilson declared war against Germany in an effort to garner global democracy. Blacks were once again invigorated with thoughts of democracy and racial equality as they remained—by and large—second-class citizens. For Blacks, World War I became a test of America's commitment to democracy and the rights of citizenship for all people, regardless of race. Moreover, the war was viewed as an opportunity for Blacks to prove their loyalty, patriotism, and worthiness for equal treatment (Bryan, 2015). Although Blacks were technically eligible for all functions in the military, few got the opportunity to serve in combat roles. Even the well-established four all-Black regiments from the Spanish-American War were not used in foreign

combat roles. Due to criticism from the Black community, the 92nd and 93rd Divisions were created as primarily Black combat regiments. Prior to World War II, less than 4,000 Blacks were serving in the military, of which only 12 had become Officers (Barbeau, Henri, & Nalty, 1974).

World War II saw an unprecedented number of African Americans—both female and male—dedicate their lives to the U.S. military. More than 2.5 million African Americans registered for the draft, with upwards of 1.2 million being accepted to serve during the war. Although the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 prohibited race-based discrimination in recruitment, African American troops generally did not train, camp, or serve with their White peers (Stouffer, 1949). Black troops even received separate blood when wounded or in need of a blood transfusion. Segregated planes and trains transported Black soldiers home at the War's conclusion (Stouffer, 1949). Even after proving their gallantry in the various theaters of prior conflicts, Black men were primarily assigned to non-combat units restricted to duties such as maintenance and transportation; many African American women volunteered as nurses (Clark, 2018).

Mounting troop loses from combat necessitated a larger combat force, which led to African American troops occupying positions such as infantrymen, pilots, tankers, and medics. World War II represented the first time in American history that African Americans were allotted the opportunity to fly for the U.S. military (Black, 2016). The first Black pilots were recognized as the "Tuskegee Airmen," which refers to all who were involved in the "Tuskegee Experiment," an Army Air Corps program to train African Americans to fly combat aircrafts. These Airmen served to escort bombers set to target enemies in Southern Europe. They lost fewer bombers than any other escort group

of the 15th Air Force. World War II laid the foundation for post-war integration within the

U.S. military. The global conflict led African American leaders and organizations to

establish the "Double V" campaign, calling for victory against enemies overseas and

victory against racism on the homefront. This new Black consciousness and the defiant

rejection of unjustifiable racism planted important seeds for the post-War civil rights

movement (Black, 2016).

The Korean War (1950 to 1953). The U.S. Defense Department's (DoD)

realization that African Americans were being underutilized because of racial prejudice

led to new opportunities for African Americans serving in the Korean War. Segregation

within the U.S. armed forces began with President Truman's Executive Order 9981,

which served to abolish racial discrimination and segregation within the services; though,

it was a while before full compliance was actualized as senior personnel often ignored the

directive (American History Archives [AHA], 2015). The Korean War was the last U.S.-

involved conflict involving segregated units (AHA, 2015). An estimated 600,000 African

Americans served in the armed forces during the Korean War with roughly 5,000 dying

in combat. In 2001, Director of the Korean War Commemoration Committee, Colonel

David J. Clark, described the plight of Black troops during the Korean war as "both a

tragedy and triumph. [It was] astonishing that they fought for others' rights while lacking

[them] at home. It is a tragedy it occurred at all; a triumph that a fundamental

injustice…began to turn the wheels of change in America" (Williams, 2001, p. 2).

The Vietnam War (1964 to 1975). The U.S.-Vietnam conflict marked the first

major combat deployment of an integrated military and the first time that African

American participation was encouraged by the general public (Tucker, 1998). The

Vietnam War saw the largest proportion of Blacks to serve in an American war with African Americans representing at least 9% of troops in Vietnam (Chambers, Anderson, Eden, Glatthaar, & Spector, 1999; Tucker, 1998). U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia occurred simultaneously with the civil rights movement on the homefront. Blacks represented 13% of the U.S. population, but were only 9% of the nation's men on arms (Tucker, 1998). The President's Committee on Equal Opportunity in the Armed Forces began to acknowledge disproportional promotion rates, token integration, restricted opportunities and systemic discrimination as causes for low African American enlistment (Dalfiume, 1968).

The Selective Service Act saw an influx of African American draftees to allot for more equal representation. However, the draft proved discriminative in nature (e.g., Westheider, 2003) as Selective Service regulations offered military service deferments for college attendance and numerous other essential civilian occupations, which favored middle- and upper-class whites. This led to African Americans supplying a disproportionate number of combat troops to the Vietnam operations (Appy, 1993; Tucker, 1998). Though Blacks represented about 13% of the U.S. population, they accounted for roughly 20% of all combat-related deaths during the war (Tucker, 1998). Black women were often denied the opportunity to serve in Vietnam, and those who did were often restricted to traditionally feminine jobs such as nursing corps and supportive roles (Holm, 1992). Contrary to widespread beliefs, African Americans were well-trained, highly motivated professionals who fought with courage and honor, both internationally and domestically. African Americans played an essential role in changing the complexion and system of the U.S. Armed Forces and challenging systemic racism at

home (Westheider, 2003). At the beginning of the war, Blacks accounted for 9% of the U.S. Armed Forces; by 1976, they represented approximately 15% of all men in arms (Tucker, 1998).

The Persian Gulf War (1990 to 1991). Despite there being minimal empirical research on the Persian Gulf War and the Pre-9/11 cohort specifically, it is estimated that Blacks comprised upwards of 20% of the military and 30% of frontline troops (Eisenstein, 1994; Page, 1991). Many Black leaders found themselves serving as vocal critics of U.S. involvement and Black involvement in this conflict (Puddington, 1991). Black Americans had facilitated a tradition of valor in war, patriotic service, and sacrifice for the freedom of others while still remaining a target of segregation, racism, and cultural ignorance both in the military and society. This war saw the first ever promotion of the U.S. military force as male and female (Eisenstein, 1994; Moore, 1991). Black women represented approximately 33% of the women in the military; though, they were still often restricted to support and administrative roles (Moore, 1991). After acknowledging this brief historical account of Blacks in the American military, it is crucial to also recognize the unbalancing effect that the aforementioned history had on the American system and its citizens. Addressing the persecution that many African American veterans experienced due to their racial and military status is an important step in understanding the sociocultural and sociohistorical factors that influence Black veteran identity development.

The Black Service Member in the Post-9/11 Cohort

According to U.S. census data, Blacks/African Americans serve as the largest ethnic minority group within the armed forces at 17% of the total active-duty military

force and 16% of the selected reserve members (U.S. Department of Defense, 2016).

Blacks make up 19% of the active-duty enlisted ranks and a markedly lower 9% of the

active-duty Officer ranks. In general, the percentage of Black enlisted members and

Officers on active duty has remained constant since 2010, with a slight increase of those

serving within the selected reserves (U.S. Department of Defense, 2016). Though the

military remains a male-dominated institution, women continue to enlist at greater rates,

and Black women represent one-third of all females within the U.S. armed forces

(Defense Manpower Data Center [DMDC], 2016). Black Americans find themselves

represented in virtually every possible capacity throughout the U.S. armed forces. Blacks

continue to sacrifice their lives for the freedoms of others, with persons identifying within

the Black diaspora representing 12% of OEF fatalities (i.e., 191 deaths), 10% of OIF

fatalities (i.e., 439 deaths), and 9% of OND fatalities totaling 638 military deaths

(Defense Manpower Data Center [DMDC], 2017) since the GWOT began in 2001.

The Current Research Paradigm
for Black Service Members
and Veterans

The current research paradigm highlighting the Black veteran experience

emphasizes a comparative—primarily quantitative—form of analysis examining racial

disparities in therapeutic clinical outcomes (Tuerk et al., 2011), rates of psychological

trauma (Kulka et al., 1990; Laufer et al., 1984), treatment retention (Spoont et al., 2014a),

and general health outcomes (Landes et al., 2017). Black veterans have been found to be

considerably less likely to engage in treatment for PTSD (e.g., Roberts, Gilman, Breslau,

Breslau, & Koenen, 2011; Stecker et al., 2016), which represents one of the most

common forms of psychological trauma within the military community. Recent research

has also evidenced a considerable racial disparity within the military justice system as Black service members are at least 1.29 times more likely than white service members to have disciplinary action taken against them; depending on their branch of service, they are as much as 2.61 times more likely to receive disciplinary consequences (Christensen & Tsilker, 2017). Veterans within the Black diaspora are also at increased risk for experiencing homelessness (Edens et al., 2011).

Overall, the phenomenological experience of Black veterans and service members have largely been left out of historical rhetoric and empirical literature (Black, 2016; Black & Thompson, 2012; Martineau, 2007). Many authors have sought to privilege African Americans' military experience within the context of prior conflicts such as— American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm (Buckley, 2002); Black Yanks in the Pacific: Race in the Making of American Military Empire after World War II (Green, 2010); Fighting in the Jim Crow Army: Black Men and Women Remember World War II (Morehouse, 2006); The Divided Skies: Establishing Segregated Flight Training at Tuskegee, Alabama, 1934-1942 (Jackman, 1992); Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military (Nalty, 1986); The US Army's First, Last, and Only All-Black Rangers: The 2d Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) in the Korean War, 1950-1951 (Posey, 2009); and Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans (Terry, 2004). Latty (2004) recorded the narratives of African American veterans from World War II to early operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Below are some of the themes offered by Black veterans, but none have explored the service and post-service experiences of Black post-9/11 veterans as fully as this study, or with the intent of restructuring current behavioral

health treatment options. This qualitative study sought to broaden the current research paradigm so to further honor Black veteran identity and provide insight into the phenomenological experience of Black service members and veterans from post-9/11 operations as they navigated intersecting cultural identities. This is important to do because it will help (a) to construct a fuller understanding of the unique Black veteran experience, (b) to honor the voices of veterans who are particularly susceptible to psychological trauma, (c) aid with recovery, and (d) ensure that mental health providers are engaging in culturally-informed practice.

Being a Disposable Hero

Black (2016) investigated the experiences of war and suffering among Black veterans who served in World War II, The Korean War, and The Vietnam War with veterans describing three thematic response patterns regarding expectations related to war, suffering as an African American, and perception of present identity. Similar to historical accounts, Black veterans tended to describe the military uniform as a symbol of improved status in society (Black, 2016; Burger, 1997). However, expectations of respect and equality rarely came to fruition (Black, 2016; Fleury-Steiner, 2012). African American veterans frequently described their experience of war and service as disheartening as information referencing their performance was often falsified (e.g., Black, 2016). Rarely, were their achievements recognized, and it was not until 1996 that the first African Americans were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Acknowledging historical context and its role in shaping Black identity has emboldened many African American service members and veterans to not waiver in the face of overt racism and discrimination on the battlefield (Black, 2016). The phenomenological

experience of the Black veteran is apparently two-fold; there is profound suffering that results from holding the Black identity label while there is also tremendous pride of service that emboldens returning veterans.

Fleury-Steiner (2012) conducted life-history interviews with 30 African American male veterans from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan to organize a detailed account of the racial indignities faced in African American male veterans' lives before service, during active duty, and after military life. The stories generated by Black veterans were complex and nuanced, not easily separated from their experiences with living in often racially aggrieved conditions in the general community. Fleury-Steiner (2012) pays particular attention to post-war experiences as Black veterans would describe a "war at home" that saw many Black veterans under marginalized conditions characterized by substandard healthcare, minimal educational opportunities, and insufficient housing. To name a few relevant limitations of the Fleury-Steiner (2012) study, he restricted his life-histories to those of African America males, and the majority (all but two) of the veterans who were interviewed came from pre-9/11 operations. My study differed in that I strongly encouraged participation from Black veterans with various intersecting cultural identities (e.g., sexual and gender minorities), and I only interviewed Black post-9/11 veterans. This helped to (a) capture the diverse voices and experiences of veterans who identify within the Black diaspora, (b) develop a more inclusive model of Black veteran identity development, and (c) strengthen the military cultural competency of mental health treatment providers who are working with post-9/11 veterans with intersecting cultural identities.

Summary

In spite of adversity and limited opportunities, African Americans have played a significant role in U.S. military history over the past 300 years. Throughout the nation's history, Black soldiers, sailors, and Marines have contributed conspicuously to America's military efforts. From the Civil War through the Korean War, segregated Black units, usually officered by Whites, performed in both combat and support capacities. To date, most research regarding the Black veteran is historical in nature. Very little empirical research has been published to examine the phenomenological experience of Black service members and veterans in the context of intersecting identities.

This chapter included a comprehensive review of the literature regarding American military culture, Black identity, and Black veteran culture and experience. I sought to describe the extant literature on military culture, which has only recently been understood as genuine and distinct with its own norms, language, and identity. The negative effects of war and service have been explored at lengths, including how war experiences can shape the identity of returning veterans leaving them with a sense of disillusionment, disconnection from loved ones, and lack of purpose. Minimal research has examined how this reconceptualization of identity occurs or what it looks like from service entrance to service separation. The Black service member has remained a vital component of military efforts since colonial times. The identity development of veterans identifying within the Black Diaspora as they transition from service induction to civilian reintegration is expected to present unique challenges that are distinct from the development process of traditional majority-identifying veterans.

The theoretical orientations chosen to guide this phenomenological qualitative study helped to frame the research questions and were based on a review of the literature. The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) incorporates elements relevant for illuminating Black identity development in the context of military experience. Ultimately, this study helped to construct a unified theory of post-9/11 Black veteran identity development.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

A central theme in counseling psychology is the identity development of persons who suffer from mental health issues (American Psychological Association [APA], 2018). Many extant theoretical orientations such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT; Beck, 1964, 2011), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT; Hayes, Follette, & Linehan, 2004), and interpersonal process therapy (IPT; Teyber & Teyber, 2017) that guide evidence-based practices are informed by some general understanding of personality/identity development. Additionally, there has been theory and research developed to focus on identity development as it pertains to specific ethnic demographic groups such as Black (Model of Black Identity Development; Cross, 1971) and LGBTQ+ (Homosexual Lifespan Development Model; D'Augelli, 1994) identities. However, following a comprehensive literature review, there appeared to be no unified theory—at least at present—for Black military veteran identity development. Importantly, the veteran population is far from homogenous as it is comprised of various subgroups of persons with diverse intersecting identities. Black service members and veterans represent the largest ethnic minority group within the U.S. Armed Forces at 17% (U.S. Department of Defense, 2016).

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was twofold: (a) to privilege the diverse experiences of Black military veterans, and (b) to advance a theory

of Black veteran identity development that was useful to mental health professionals who were challenged with articulating the psychosocial needs of Black OEF/OIF/OND veterans. A significant portion of the United States (U.S.) armed forces will remain stigmatized and marginalized if the literature base continues to neglect the unique experiences of Black OEF/OIF/OND veterans. Moreover, the behavioral health professionals who are tasked with addressing the unique needs of Black post-9/11 veterans will remain limited in their capacity to provide culturally-competent and culturally-informed care if further research is not dedicated to these courageous veterans. Phenomenological approaches were used to describe and understand the identity development of Black veterans as they transitioned from military service to civilian reintegration. This study served as the foundation for a unified theory of veteran identity development that was applicable to post-9/11 Black veterans.

The primary research questions of this phenomenological qualitative study were as follows:

Q1   What narratives do post-9/11 era veterans who identify within the Black diaspora produce about their service and post-service experiences?

Q2   What is the process of military veteran identity development from entrance to separation for post-9/11 era Black veterans?

Q3   What are the implications for counseling psychologists, and more specifically, what do these behavioral health providers need to understand about post-9/11 Black veterans to provide more holistic, effective treatment services?

In this chapter, the methodology that was used in this study is presented, including the theoretical framework for the study (the epistemology and theoretical perspective), the specific methodological framework (participants, setting, data collection process, and the data analysis process), and researcher positionality. The procedures that

were used before and during data collection and analysis to help enhance the trustworthiness of the study—sampling methods, the use of expert auditors, peer debriefings, member checks, and an audit trial—were included in the descriptions of the data collection and analysis process, and were further explained in the section on trustworthiness that follows. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the researcher's positionality, ethical considerations, limitations, and strategies used to strengthen the study's trustworthiness.

Theoretical Framework

The following sections describe the basic theoretical framework for this qualitative study, including the epistemology and theoretical perspective that informed and guided my worldview and approach to this research.

Epistemology – Social Constructivism

It is customary practice for qualitative researchers to view the nature of reality as socially constructed (Denzin, 1978). The epistemological perspective that informed this phenomenological qualitative dissertation is social constructivism. Dissimilar to more traditional positivistic or post-modernistic frameworks, research interpreted from a social constructivist lens does not begin with a deductive hypothesis; rather, theory develops inductively (Crotty, 1998). The social constructivist paradigm proposes that there is not a single objective truth that can be discovered. Instead, truth is more accurately conceived as infinite meanings that emerge from our engagement with the realities of the world (Crotty, 1998). Social constructivism emphasizes "how individuals construct their lives" and assumes that "reality is more relative and locally situated and constructed than a

positivist would contend" (Conrad & Serlin, 2006, p. 409). Thus, meaning is constructed rather than found.

The social constructivist paradigm was appropriate for this study, which examined the identity development process of Black post-9/11 veterans, because the meanings that we create are a function of one's identity and help to shape it as part of an ongoing process of construction of one's identity and understating of the world (Crotty, 1998). The meaning that Black OEF/OIF/OND veterans gave to their previous military experiences was guided by their various intersecting identities while also serving to shape their ongoing identity development process. The meaning that these Black veterans created about their military and post-service experiences were inextricably linked with their intersecting identities, which are further affected by sociohistorical context (Thomas, 2004). Further, the social constructivist lens was culturally and morally necessary for this study given that persons identifying within the Black diaspora have historically been prescribed meaning by others (Boylorn, 2008; Entman, 1994), and this approach allowed the historically marginalized veteran to be empowered by constructing their own truth.

Theoretical Perspective

Theoretical frameworks are essential as they provide structure for the researcher and guidance in constructing meaning from the phenomenon being examined (Crotty, 1998). A researcher may risk becoming overwhelmed by the amount of data collected and lose direction if their study is not informed by theory (Ponterotto, 2005). For this study, I used the qualitative philosophy of interpretivism, which was integrated with theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), organizational socialization (Van Maanen

& Schein, 1979), and the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI; Sellers et al., 1998).

      Interpretivism. The qualitative philosophy of interpretivism allowed for multiple understandings of Black OEF/OIF/OND veterans' experiences of identity development to emerge. Myers (2009) argues that access to reality is only made possible through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meaning. Thus, is why qualitative researchers use meaning—instead of measurement—oriented methodologies such as interviewing and naturalistic observation. As such, researcher-participant interactions were relied on heavily to assist in the discovery of meaning surrounding the identity development experiences by Black OEF/OIF/OND veterans. Interpretivism also emphasizes the need to engage in context-driven analysis (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). Thus, understanding how sociohistorical context influences Black veterans' experiences was essential for adequate data analysis. Further, Abes (2009) stated that interpretivism has the potential to uncover the participant's understanding of their experience with a social phenomenon. Accordingly, interpretivism served to assist Black post-9/11 veterans with understanding the meanings that they attributed to their military experience in regard to identity development, intersecting identities, and sociohistorical context.

      Intersectionality. Intersectionality is rooted in feminist sociological theory (Crenshaw, 1991), and serves to maintain a deeper understanding of "the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relationships and subject formations" (McCall, 2005, p. 1171). This approach maintains that one must privilege the multiple, layered identities of an individual to gain a more thorough understanding of any aspect of social identity. These intersecting identities developed from historical

foundations, social interactions, and the function of structured power that privileges and disadvantages certain social identities based on subjective criteria such as race, sex, and class (Collins, 2000). Dill and Zambrana (2009) delineated the following assumptions of intersectionality: (a) multiple intersecting identity categories result in privilege and unearned benefits for some individuals, at the expense of others, solely based on identity categories; (b) the current situation of oppressed groups is a result of historical and systematic disadvantage based on identity categories; (c) ideologies are created and supported by cultural representations of individuals and groups based on identity category membership; and (d) identity is derived from, and occurs within, a network of socially-defined identity statuses that vary in salience within different contexts and historical moments.

When considering the lived experiences of Black post-9/11 era military veterans, intersectionality was a compelling choice for multiple reasons. First, intersectionality acknowledges the multiple identities of individuals and considers the connections between them, particularly when individuals are marginalized by the influences of their social identities. Second, intersectionality privileges the entirety of the human condition, rather than reducing it to a single social identity. Intersectionality refrains from examining an individual's layered identities in an additive manner; rather, one's identities are examined collectively as an integrated element (Collins, 2000). Approaching this study from an intersectional lens provided a contextual filter through which to examine the interaction of context, social identities, and the shaping of identity when contextualizing the individual experience. Introducing an intersectional lens also revealed

aspects of identity beyond that which would have been possible through the application of a single theoretical framework.

Organizational socialization. Organizational socialization describes the dynamic adjustment and learning process that occurs when an individual assumes a new or changing role within an organization (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). During this process, an individual acquires the values, attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge requisite for them to participate effectively in organizational life. The military indoctrination experience is an overwhelming adult socialization process (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978) that is exacerbated when one maintains intersecting, historically-oppressed social identities. This study aimed to map the military socialization process of Black post-9/11 veterans as it pertained to sociohistorical factors and intersecting identities such as racial, occupational, and gender.

Multidimensional model of racial identity. The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) is a synthesis of mainstream and underground Black identity development frameworks (Sellers et al., 1998). The MMRI provides a conceptual framework for understanding both the significance of race in the self-concepts of Blacks and the constructed meanings they attribute to belonging to this historically marginalized ethnic group (Sellers et al., 1998). The model operates from the following four testable assumptions: (a) identities are both contextually-derived and stable constructs of the person, (b) identities are intersecting and hierarchically arranged, (c) individuals' perceptions of their ethnic identity are the most valid indicator of their identity, and (d) the status of one's racial identity is paramount to its development process. Please refer to Chapter II for a more in-depth explanation of the conceptual framework for the MMRI.

Methodological Framework

In this qualitative study, an interpretive phenomenology methodological framework was utilized. Phenomenology is defined as a research methodology that aims to examine individuals' internal experiences. Moreover, phenomenological investigation focuses on the unique elements of a lived human experience embedded within a person's world of immediate experiences, or lifeworld as coined by Habermas (van Manen, 1997, 2007); it also considers the meanings ascribed through being in the lifeworld (Jones et al., 2014). This is particularly useful in the field of counseling psychology as understanding the internal world of the client is considered paramount for overall development (Chao, 2015). Furthermore, this phenomenological study was transcendental, which required the passage of time between the moment of recollection and event of interest as this separation enhanced participants' capacity to make meaning of the event (Moustakas, 1994).

Crotty (1998) commented that humans "are essentially languaged beings" (p. 87). The entirety of the human experience is shaped by language (Crotty, 1998; van Manen, 1997, 2007). The meanings of a social phenomenon are mediated by everyday interactions that are defined and shaped by perceptions and produce contextually-influenced connotations of experience (van Manen, 1997, 2007). Reality is, therefore, socially constructed and multiple realities are assumed by interpretivist researchers (Crotty, 1998; Jones et al., 2014). The focus of interpretivist inquiry rests on the specific, unique experience situated within historical and cultural contexts (Crotty, 1998). Jones et al. (2014) described the social world of the interpretivist as an explanatory rendering of culturally- and personally-meaningful understandings. Thus, research exploring a

particular social phenomenon requires examination of the historical and sociocultural contexts in which people live in order to better understand the meanings that individuals may attach to their experiences (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). This was an important consideration when examining the internal world, perceptions, and experiences of persons within the Black Diaspora were historically subjugated by sociocultural and sociopolitical factors.

Participants

Merriam (2009) stated that sample size in qualitative research varies according to the purpose of the study, and thus it is challenging to determine prior to its beginning. Various authors have described criteria and expectations for what they believe to be an appropriate sample size for qualitative research studies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended that sampling should continue until the data has reached a point of saturation, which denotes the point at which the data do not provide novel information. This criterion is general, subjective, and still may result in a range of sample sizes. For example, Creswell (2013) found one to two participants to be sufficient, whereas Polkinghorne (1998) conducted qualitative studies with as many as 72 participants. Patton (2002) suggested that a minimum sample size should be based on "expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study" (p. 246). Thus, the appropriate sample size for this study was informed by extant qualitative studies with similar purpose and methodology.

Black identity development has been explored by numerous researchers (e.g., Henry, West, & Jackson, 2010; Johnson & Quaye, 2017; Peck, Brodish, Malanchuk, Banerjee, & Eccles, 2014; Porter & Dean, 2015); however, a comprehensive literature

review could not reveal a single published qualitative study that served to examine Black

veteran identity development. Porter and Dean (2015) utilized qualitative

phenomenological methodology to capture the lived experiences of four Black

undergraduate women navigating through a predominantly white institution. Winder

(2015) used an intersectional approach to examine the religious and sexual identities of

26 young Black gay men. Harrod, Miller, Henry, and Zivin (2017) implemented an

exploratory, qualitative research design to examine phenomenological experiences with

sustained employment among 10 veterans. Iverson, Seher, DiRamio, Yarvis, and

Anderson (2016) utilized a qualitative design to assess the experiences of 12 female

student veterans who were navigating military and campus cultures. Hammond (2015)

implemented a qualitative study—from a constructivist lens—to examine perceptions of

identity and the lived experiences of 19 student combat veterans. Based on the

aforementioned studies, a sample of 10 to 19 participants was sought to participate in this

study. Recruitment commenced following the 12th interview given that saturation was

deemed to have been reached. Saturation is the point at which the data begin to repeat

itself and do not provide novel information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Recruitment Criteria

A purposive, non-probabilistic sampling method was used (Merriam, 2009) to

complete this study. Each veteran had direct lived-experience with the phenomenon

under investigation so that rich description of the event could be created (Creswell,

2013). Inclusion criteria was as follows: participants (a) identified within the Black

diaspora, (b) were at least 18 years old, (c) served in the U.S. military during post-9/11

military operations (e.g., OEF, OIF, and OND), (d) maintained veteran status (i.e., were

honorably discharged), and (e) experienced one or more military deployments overseas for a total aggregate period of at least 90 days. This specific duration represents the minimum period of service necessary to be eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits (Radford, 2009).

Call for Veteran Participation

Following IRB approval, recruitment occurred in two ways to ensure that saturation was reached and to enhance representativeness. Given the inherent diversity within the Black diaspora, efforts were made to interview a diverse age and socioeconomic status (SES) sample as the literature indicates that age and SES are highly influential in one's experience of Black identity development (Allen et al., 1989; Broman et al, 1988; du Plessis & Naude, 2017). First, I contacted the National Association for Black Veterans (NABVETS) via email (Appendix B) to determine their willingness to forward an email to their membership containing inclusion criteria for the present study with a hyperlink for interested Black veterans to click upon (Appendix B). The hyperlink led them to a Qualtrics survey that contained contents to be described in the next section. Second, efforts to reach potential participants were made through social media—via recruitment posts (Appendix B) on websites such as Facebook and LinkedIn—a hashtag was added to increase visibility for interested parties. A hashtag is a tool that social media users implement to make their posts more visible, which allows them to more easily be found by other users who are interested in those specifically-used terms. Such hashtags relevant to this study included #AfricanAmericanveteran, #BlackVeteran, #Blackwarrior, etc. Once a user searched for one of these hashtags, they were presented with inclusion criteria for the present study and the hyperlink to the Qualtrics survey described below.

Qualtrics Survey

Once a potential participant showed interest in the study by accessing the Qualtrics hyperlink, they first were taken to the informed consent document (Appendix C) to participate in the study. My contact information (i.e., email address and phone number) was provided on this page so to ensure that the potential participant could reach me if they experienced any technical difficulties. The informed consent document (a) provided information about the study, (b) highlighted any potential risks and benefits of participating in the study, (c) contained inclusion criteria to help them to determine their eligibility and suitability for the study, and (d) explained the ways in which their identifying information would be kept confidential. Participants provided their informed consent by selecting "Yes, I agree to participate" at the bottom of the webpage. Once a participant provided informed consent, they were directed to a second webpage, which inquired about their demographic and military history information (Appendix D). This page inquired about branch of service, dates and locations of military service, marital status (both current and while active duty), military occupation, military discharge status, and highest military rank acquired. Such information added necessary context to each of the experiences being reported. At the end of this screen, participants were asked to provide their telephone contact information so that I could contact them to schedule an interview. Additionally, at the end of the Qualtrics survey, all potential participants were taken to an exit page where a final message appeared that thanked each veteran for their interest. A mutually convenient time was arranged for the veterans to be interviewed at a safe, convenient, and confidential location of their choosing; however, each interview was arranged over the phone as direct contact proved inconvenient for the participants.

Lastly, after participants expressed interest, snowball sampling was encouraged as each veteran was asked to forward the email to potentially eligible friends/family, colleagues, and community members who they suspected might be interested in participating. Snowball sampling is a technique for identifying potential research participants where one participant gives the researcher the name of another who may also be interested in the study or participants give others the information directly (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). Moreover, participants were encouraged to disseminate the Qualtrics link through their social media to any other potentially interested veterans. All interviews were audio-recorded.

Setting

As noted above, semi-structured interviews were conducted over the phone, while each were audio-recorded. A litany of research supports the validity of using this data collection method (e.g., Greenfield, Midanik, & Rogers, 2000; Midanik, Hines, & Greenfield, 1999; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004).

Data Collection

Data collected consisted of demographic and military history form responses (Appendix D), semi-structured interviews (see Appendix E for list of the proposed structured questions to be asked), and observational notes. Denzin (1978) reported that the use of multiple sources of data is one form of triangulation, which can also enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail was used to provide a detailed account of the research process and authenticate the results; this is a strategy that allows readers to understand the research process and how

the researcher reached their findings (Merriam, 2009). I engaged in this reflective process immediately following each interview.

Prior to beginning the interview, informed consent was revisited to remind the participants about the study, confidentiality, and the potential risks and benefits of their participation. Then, these veterans participated in an audio-recorded, semi-structured, informal interview (Merriam, 2009). Interviews took roughly 60 minutes for participants to complete (see Appendix E for interview questions). Participants had the option of identifying a pseudonym for which all their responses and information were coded. Participants were asked to describe and reflect on their military experiences and identity development process. I took observational notes during the interviews to monitor affective presentation (e.g., sighs, tears, pauses, etc.) and record any irregularities and peculiarities in the participants' behaviors (e.g., changes in affect, tone, etc.). At the end of each interview, time was also allotted for debriefing and to give each participant the chance to discuss their overall interview experience. I provided referrals to counselors and other veteran-specific resources in case they (a) were interested in further processing their military experience and/or identity development, and/or (b) felt any emotional distress from the interview (see Appendix G for Debriefing statement and list of veteran-specific resources). All participants then were asked if they could be contacted at a later point to authenticate the accuracy of their transcriptions and the conclusions of the study. This is a procedure used to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative studies known as member checking (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

A digital file of each interview was then downloaded onto a password-protected folder on my personal laptop, for which only I had access. Each interview was

downloaded into a separate file folder under the pseudonym of the veterans' choosing. I then transcribed each interview. De-identified analyzed data were also stored within NVIVO 12 software (QSR International, 2018). NVIVO 12 is a computerized software package used for organizing and analyzing qualitative data. For the purposes of this study, NVIVO was used to help facilitate the coding, categorization, and overall aggregation of interview data. Transcripts of the participants' interviews were imported into NVIVO 12 and subsequently examined by me to identify any relevant points or emerging themes. Codes were developed to identify the emerging themes across the participants' interviews, and the codes were used to "tag" similar text in the transcripts that match the identified theme (QSR International, 2018). In addition, annotation features in NVIVO 12 allowed for the integration of my reflections as a researcher to be recorded and associated with the relevant data in the transcripts (QSR International, 2018). Lastly, the recordings were destroyed after all data were collected, transcribed, analyzed, and member-checked for the purposes of establishing trustworthiness. In accordance with UNC's IRB policy, signed informed consent forms will be kept for at least three years and then destroyed in a secure manner.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Data Organization

I transcribed the interviews for each of the participants. The data included demographic/military history data forms, audio-recordings of the interviews, transcriptions of the interviews, and observational notes.

Qualitative Analysis

In this study, an interpretive phenomenological approach was utilized to analyze the data. Data from the demographic/military history data forms provided context to the narratives and observational field notes allowed for an additional level of analysis. Preparing data from in-depth interviews required a procedure known as data transcription. Rubin and Rubin (2012) noted that the transcripts of the data need to contain the interview questions and answers of the in-depth interview verbatim. The transcription process is indispensable in ensuring the credibility of the data and in tracking the details and insights from the interviewees.

Coding. Initial reading of the interview transcripts was followed by coding (Creswell, 2014). Coding served as the next stage in the analysis of the data because it moved the focus of the research "from description toward conceptualization of the description" (Charmaz, 2002, p. 683). Coding entails "aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code" from various sources of data (Creswell, 2014, p. 184). The analysis was based on the premise, discussed by Patton (2002), that qualitative analysis that begins with a "unique case orientation" (p. 55) and builds on specific observations towards general patterns is the most effective form of inductive analysis. A cross-case analysis followed; I utilized paradigmatic thinking to describe the themes that emerged from the content of the interviews. The observational notes were subsequently analyzed along with the participants' interview transcripts. The participants' stories were aggregated and organized into themes.

Charmaz (2006) recommends initial coding of the data as a mechanism to help to avoid injecting personal preconceptions into the data, as it is critical to avoid drawing

hasty conclusions (Charmaz, 2006). Coding was the foundation of data analysis as it formed the basic components that allowed categories and broader themes of a theory to emerge. Codes can be labeled in several different ways, and I followed Creswell's (2014) suggestion to use in vivo coding, which was the process of using the descriptions that the participants made about their experiences, and the phenomenon under study, to label the codes. Additionally, other code labels were borrowed from social science literature, and I created labels that were most appropriate in conveying the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014).

Categories. Categories emerged as I connected themes among the codes through deconstructing the qualitative data (Creswell, 2014). The connection between particular codes is called "axial coding," as the relationship is centered on an axis of a category (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 13). Categories—according to Rubin and Rubin—provide an "explanation of why something happened, or what something means, or how the interviewee feels about the matter" (2012, p. 194). Codes that are related to each other were grouped into categories.

Categories are made up of codes that capture "processes, actions, or interactions" (Creswell, 2014, p. 186). The data were reduced into a manageable set of significant themes that were written into the final narrative (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Rubin and Rubin (2012) offer four guidelines that I used in order to winnow the qualitative information into a reasonable number of categories. First, they recommended that I start with categories that were explicitly mentioned during the interviews. Second, I selected the categories that the interviewees evoked. Third, I looked for the categories that were based in the reviewed literature that also showed up in the collected data. And fourth, the

categories selected suggested closely related categories that were marked with the purpose of using them in the construction of the theory (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Following the selection of the initial set of categories, the most salient categories from the data then were selected (Creswell, 2014). These categories were the ones that the participants discussed repeatedly or were categories of particular conceptual interest—as it seemed central to the processes being investigated in the research. As suggested by Creswell (2014), the selection of the most salient categories was followed by additional review of the data meant to develop axial coding. Creswell (2014) defines axial coding as the re-examining of the data for ideas and codes that are related to the central phenomenon.

Moreover, to strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis, each theme that emerged across the participants' stories were shared with participants via the member check process, given that they had agreed, during the interview, to be contacted. Member checking is a procedure commonly used in qualitative research during which participants are afforded the opportunity to check the accuracy and validity of any emergent themes as the themes relate to their lived experience (Crotty, 1998). Following data analysis, participants who agreed to engage in this process were emailed a document containing the themes that developed from their own interview and were asked to authenticate whether or not the themes were representative of their respective lived experiences. Five of the twelve veterans responded to have their themes authenticated. Themes within and across participants' transcripts were also checked for accuracy and appropriateness.

Merriam (2009) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) denote a trustworthiness enhancement procedure known as peer debriefing, which is a method of objectifying the themes that emerged during the initial analysis in order to ensure that the themes were not influenced by personal bias and are indeed reasonable. This external perspective came from a fellow counseling psychology doctoral student with graduate-level training in qualitative research, methodology, and ethics. This doctoral student helped to better ensure that the emerging themes were a true representation of the data. This peer reviewer completed his data analysis of the transcripts and then developed independently constructed codes. Once he completed his review of the data, we then examined its degree of consistency and/or inconsistency with my own independently-constructed codes. Any intersubjective disagreements were explored, and only the emerging themes that were consistent across each of our analyses were included in the study.

Trustworthiness

Several methods were used to strengthen the trustworthiness (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and integrity of the data analysis. Trustworthiness describes the reliability and validity of data within a qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) used the term trustworthiness to describe the various criteria by which qualitative research might be evaluated. These criteria include credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This represents the most common conceptualization of trustworthiness within qualitative inquiry. Williams and Morrow (2009) delineate an additional way to understand trustworthiness as it pertains to the field of counseling psychology using these three basic categories: integrity of the data, balance between reflexivity and subjectivity, and clear

communication of findings. The procedures used to meet Williams and Morrow's definition are highly compatible with the methods described below; thus, I used the former conception of trustworthiness.

Credibility describes the degree to which I can confidently assert that the research findings corresponded with that which was intended to be measured; often described as being synonymous with validity in quantitative research (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) described several methods to enhance credibility, and every effort was made to include those strategies in the study. Prolonged engagement denotes the amount of time spent in the field to sufficiently understand the social context of the participants in order to develop adequate rapport with them, to build trust, and to facilitate meaningful researcher-participant interactions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, interviews lasted roughly 60 minutes to ensure that the veterans had adequate opportunity to examine and share their military experiences. A demographic/military history data form was used to facilitate understanding and add context to the veterans' interview responses. Every effort was made to facilitate rapport-building and to establish genuine relationships with them for them to feel safe enough to share their personal stories.

Triangulation represents another strategy for strengthening credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation involves the use of multiple data collection and/or data source methods (Denzin, 1978). In this study, data were collected via the demographic questionnaire/military history form, in-depth interviews, and use of the researcher journal. In addition, multiple sources of data were used. A sample size of 12 participants was sufficient to maximize the chance of acquiring novel, diverse perspectives from

different participants. Also, multiple analysts were used to authenticate the findings (Merriam, 2009). Following the initial analysis, findings were presented to a peer who was trained in counseling psychology, qualitative inquiry, and research ethics; this is a process referred to as peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Please refer to pg. 70 for more details regarding this procedure. Member checking served as an additional strategy to enhance credibility and trustworthiness of the data (please see pg. 70 for more details; Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

Second, transferability denotes the degree to which I demonstrated that the research findings were applicable and relevant for other participants and sites (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, transferability was enhanced through the use of observational notes; the demographic/military history data form; and the rich, thick descriptions garnered from the veterans' narratives. Recruiting participants until saturation is reached and having a diverse participant pool enhanced transferability through the inclusion of multiple perspectives (Merriam, 2009). I strived for maximum variation in sampling, until saturation was reached, among Black OEF/OIF/OND veterans to strengthen the applicability of the findings.

Third, confirmability refers to the degree of neutrality in the results; more specifically, it denotes the degree to which the findings could be corroborated and confirmed by others. The purpose of this facet of trustworthiness was to ensure that the research conclusions were shaped by the participants rather than via my preconceptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As described above, member checks were implemented to allow participants to certify the accuracy of the data within their transcripts. Further, the data

and the themes were checked by a fellow counseling psychology doctoral student trained in qualitative research and ethics to ensure the study results were participant-driven.

Finally, dependability denoted the extent to which the study could be repeated with consistent findings (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As described above, peer debriefing and triangulation both were procedures for enhancing dependability and trustworthiness (Merriam, 2009). Moreover, dependability was demonstrated through my reflexivity and capacity to openly address any biases and assumptions that could influence the interpretations of the data (Merriam, 2009). As the researcher, I strived for reflexivity and integrity by writing and reflecting on my own experiences both with the military and my own Black identity development in order to assist in setting such preconceived notions aside and in recognizing how these experiences may shape my assumptions.

Ethical Considerations

The UNC Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed this study prior to the commencement of any research activities. Participants completed phone interviews at a safe and confidential location where they were emailed copies of their informed consent document (Appendix C). First and foremost, it was important that all participants were fully informed of the research purpose, process, and potential risks and benefits. Participants were asked to share some potentially personal and sensitive information, and thus, measures were taken to maintain their confidentiality. Pseudonyms were employed to protect their identities, and these pseudonyms were used throughout the research process to identify them, their responses, and any observational notes made about them. All audio recorders with interview data, demographic questionnaire/military history

forms, signed consent forms, observational notes, and transcriptions were kept in a locked file cabinet and destroyed immediately following transcription. All digital files of recorded interviews were stored on a password-protected folder on my personal laptop and subsequently deleted immediately following transcription.

Challenges and Limitations

Shields (2008) suggested that I consider the context that surrounded the participant and the timeframe between the interview and target event as these aspects could greatly influence self-reporting. This was essential as self-report represented the primary method of data collection. Additionally, participants could have withheld important information due to the sensitive nature of the events and the phenomenon that was discussed. Military and racial experiences were difficult to share because they were often traumatic in nature. Participant recruitment was open to any Black veteran who had experienced at least one military deployment overseas lasting at least 90 days. These inclusion criteria did not consider the heterogeneity of the Black OIF/OEF/OND veteran community (e.g., Black men/women, Black LGBTQ-identifying persons, branch of service, military operation, etc.). It is necessary that future studies have inclusion criteria that are more specific so to maximize the emergence of existing themes.

Researcher Positionality

Positionality refers to the bias inherent in the researcher's ability to reflect on their place in the context of the study and how their frames of reference may inadvertently influence data collection and analysis (England, 1984). I maintained reflexivity throughout the research process in a manner that brought transparency to how my background and perspectives could potentially influence different stages of the

research (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Interviewing placed me in direct interaction with the participants, and I was tasked with maintaining an ethical, empathic stance towards all participating veterans.

My identity as a Black male Army soldier and doctoral student in counseling psychology offers both challenges and advantages. My familiarity with Black culture and experiences, and therefore my position as an "insider," gave me invaluable insights and access to the participants. However, this familiarity also potentially put me at risk of drawing unwarranted conclusions from the data or hinder me from important insights which could illuminate the process of identity development for Black OEF/OIF/OND veterans.

To minimize the effect of such potential biases emanating my positionality, I wrote and reflected on my own experiences with the military and identity development to assist in setting such preconceived notions aside and in recognizing how these experiences shaped my assumptions while interpreting the data. Further, being transparent about these presumptions rather than suppressing them to meet an unrealistic standard of objectivity allowed me to not only navigate the data more extensively, but also to enhance the rigor of the research (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

Researcher's Self-Reflection
Process

As I progressed through this research process, I found personal reflection and introspection to be vital components of thorough qualitative research. As part of this process, I identified several aspects of my own personal experiences and development that potentially influenced my perspective during this study. By reflecting on my own experiences with the military and Black identity development, I was better equipped to

manage any biases that I brought into the study that could otherwise contaminate the data analysis process as well as influence other aspects such as recruitment and interview questions. Being mindful and highlighting such biases also allows readers of this study to challenge the extent to which I was successful in bridling these potential biases, and more specifically, whether this study achieved an appropriate level of trustworthiness.

First, I identify as an African American male; though many may conceive those as two distinctly separate identities, I find that they are inextricably intertwined. My identity as a Black man is rooted in a sense of pride that has been shaped by centuries both of hardship and achievement, not restricted to solely male-identifying persons within the Black diaspora. My sense of blackness is characterized by a sort of shared consciousness with African Americans from past, present, and future generations. My experience as an African American is shaped not only by my personal narrative, but also by sociohistorical and sociopolitical context. As a child, I was taught that in order for me to earn half—at best—the freedoms and resources of my White peers, I would have to perform twice as well. I have always found this teaching to be incongruent with the ubiquitous "trust in the process" that is often disseminated throughout graduate counseling programs because I never understood how or why I would trust in a process that was not necessarily made for persons similar to me to succeed. Thus, I have always taken it upon myself to create my own opportunities and to advocate for experiences that I believed would be advantageous. Moreover, my parents ensured that my blackness was never lost on me, as society would be sure to continually remind me of my marginalized status in the world. Growing up, racism and discrimination were considered cultural inevitabilities; however, I was taught to never use such cultural expectations as "crutches." Thus, although I was

raised to believe that racism was always right around the corner, that was never an excuse to not achieve one's goals and aspirations.

While researching Black identity development, I was displeased to discover that much of the earlier, mainstream literature (e.g., Constantine et al., 1998; Gaines & Reed, 1994, 1995) described Black identity as beginning with a fractured sense of self that was based in self-hatred and White superiority. Yet, personally, I cannot account for a single period in my personal development when I felt ashamed of my identity as an African American. However, I did appreciate the multifaceted, process-oriented nature of more contemporary models of Black identity development (e.g., Sellers et al., 1998) because these models often highlighted the complex, heterogenous nature of Black identity. It is my personal belief that Black identity is neither a linear nor standardized process, and the context surrounding the individual must be taken into consideration when assessing one's Black identity. Further, for the last two years, I have maintained a professional appointment through which I work closely with the race-based cultural centers on campus. In working with the cultural center that services Black-identifying students, I have learned that many Black students believe that Black identity is uniform, which exacerbates feelings of marginalization and alienation for persons who perceive themselves as being "the wrong kind of Black." The phenomenon of interest for the current study is a particular passion of mine because I am presently navigating aspects of my own identity development process. Moreover, I want to provide a space for Black-identifying individuals to explore and reflect on their own cultural and identity-related experiences. I am driven to reduce oppression and discrimination experienced within

historically marginalized groups—particularly the Black community—and to illuminate the unique needs of veterans so as to provide them with more effective treatment options.

Next, the military community is the one community to provide me with a sense of belongingness. I maintain extensive experience with military life, both indirectly and directly. I was born into a military family, and thus, I am no stranger to the complexities of military culture. My father served as a U.S. Marine for 20 years, and my mother served in the Army for four years. I also have an older brother who is completing his 13th year in the Air Force. As for me, my earliest memory of the miliatry begins at age 10. Age 10 is a special day for any child of a military veteran because it marks the moment when the child qualifies to receive their first military dependents' ID card. I carried around that ID as if it were a badge of honor, and although both of my parents had separated from the military prior to my birth, I can still recall the sense of camaraderie that would overcome me whenever I entered a military installation. Most of my formative years were spent on military bases whether it be for school, shopping for groceries from the commissary, or for the low-expense movie theater. Further, the experience of living within a military family has instilled in me certain values to include selflessness, integrity, and commitment. Such that, I was taught to engage in ways that benefit others, to be honest, and to dedicate undying energy to any tasks or activities in which I participate.

Furthermore, through the early stages of my doctoral training in counseling psychology, I was consumed with a perpetual feeling that something in my life was absent. It was not until I connected with my university's veterans' resource center that I began to experience a sense of fulfillment. This experience led me to have meaningful conversations about volunteer/clinical opportunities within a neighboring Veterans

Medical Center. Recently, I have accumulated two-and-a-half years of intensive clinical training experience with veterans—Vietnam-era through post-9/11—through the Veterans Health Administration. Such experience has been invaluable in both my professional and personal journeys towards becoming a military psychologist. From intimate conversations with veterans about their military experience to direct supervision under mental health providers who are trained to address veterans' issues, I have learned about the necessity of strengthening one's military cultural competence when working with veterans. These experiences have also taught me that many veterans are hesitant to trust persons who are not military-affiliated as they perceive their military experiences to be both incomparable and incomprehensible to civilian experiences. Importantly, such reluctance can present as a true barrier for non-affiliated clinicians who intend to ask veterans to share their personal military narratives.

Finally, I am a Black Officer in the Regular Army. While researching African American history in the U.S. armed forces, I became emotionally-intrigued when learning of the legacy that I would be joining. To learn that miliatry service represented Blacks' one true hope of equality immediately humbled me and affirmed my privilege as an African American soldier in the 21st century. Anything that I achieve—both personally and professionally—is made possible by the tenacity and sheer determination of the many veterans who have risked their lives for democracy. Black veterans have contributed considerably to my life as many returned home during earlier operations to then serve as activists for the civil rights movement. Thus, the actions of veterans are why I am able to present this study as a doctoral student. Had the civil rights movement not been remotely successful, I would not be allowed on this or any other campus. I hold an unwavering

admiration and appreciation for the military community. I maintain a sense of obligation both to African American and military communities, and their respective intersections. It is my personal hope, in conducting this study, (a) to engender a conversation that privileges the Black post-9/11 veteran experience so that they, too, may feel acknowledged for their sacrifice, and (b) to develop a structured outline of the military narrative so that counseling psychologists and additional mental health providers may provide them with culturally-competent care.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the methodology for this study on the identity development of Black OEF/OIF/OND military veterans. An interpretive phenomenological qualitative methodology was utilized to examine the lived experiences of Black OEF/OIF/OND veterans as they navigated military organizational culture and their ethnic identity development process. An interpretivist approach was implemented to examine the individual meanings of the phenomenon in question. The methodology for this study was described, including details about the sampling, recruitment methods, setting, and data collection procedures. Organizational socialization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) and the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (Sellers et al., 1998) were used to guide questioning during the semi-structured, informal interviews. Data were collected via a demographic questionnaire/military health form, in-depth interviews, and researcher journaling. NVIVO software facilitated the data analysis process. This chapter concluded with a discussion regarding trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and my own positionality/self-reflection to mediate any biases that may have influenced the various stages of the research process.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Introduction

A total of 12 post-9/11 Black veteran participants were ultimately recruited and

interviewed for this qualitative phenomenological study intended to investigate the stories

constructed by post-9/11 Black veterans regarding their military experiences and identity

development process. While 16 veterans expressed interest in participation, two did not

meet full criteria (one identified themselves to be outside of the Black Diaspora, another

had not been deployed), one failed to provide accurate contact information, and one met

inclusion criteria but was not interviewed due to saturation. Saturation was reached after

12 interviews, meaning that with the 12th interview, data collection began to be redundant

and no new information was collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The following research

questions informed this qualitative study:

Q1   What narratives do post-9/11 era veterans who identify within the Black
      Diaspora produce about their service and post-service experiences?

Q2   What is the process of military veteran identity development from
      entrance to separation for post-9/11 era Black veterans?

Q3   What are the implications for counseling psychologists, and more
      specifically, what do these behavioral health providers need to understand
      about post-9/11 Black veterans to provide more holistic, effective
      treatment services?

As noted in the description of the methodology in Chapter III, multiple sources of

data were used to help enhance trustworthiness in the analysis: demographic

questionnaires, observational notes, and interview transcripts. The demographic questionnaires supported in contextualizing the stories provided by the veterans, allowing for more rich accounts of their military and veteran experiences. The observational notes allowed me to demonstrate a more accurate representation of each participant by including more process-oriented information such as voice trembling, changes in tone of voice, body language, engagement/willingness to disclose, and so on. Additionally, the interview transcripts provided the thick, rich descriptions necessary to convey the phenomenological experiences of each participant. Also, all participants were provided the opportunity to be contacted again for member checks in order to authenticate the accuracy of the data they had provided as well as the themes that emerged during analysis; all 12 veterans agreed to be contacted for this follow-up. Of those, five responded and verified the accuracy of their transcripts and also authenticated the themes identified as emerging during analysis.

All 12 interviews were conducted over the phone at the request of the participants. A Skype option was offered; however, the participants preferred the convenience—and simplicity—of a phone call. The interviews were scheduled for a duration of 60 to 90 minutes. However, the participants took an average of 50 minutes, with a range of 40 to 80 minutes, to complete the interview. Further, trustworthiness during the analysis process was also enhanced through peer debriefing by having a counseling psychology doctoral student with graduate-level training in qualitative research and ethics check the themes—while also generating their own to be compared—for accuracy and dependability.

Below, Table 1 provides demographic information about the participants. Participation was divided evenly across gender (i.e., six women veterans). The majority (10 participants) served in the U.S. Army, with one having served in the Air Force and the other having served both in the Army and the Marines. The participants served in a range of Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) from mechanic to combat medic to field artillery specialist. Per the inclusion criteria, all participants had experienced at least one deployment; three had completed a direct combat deployment. Additionally, all of the participants had been discharged from their perspective service branches—operating as civilians—for at least one full year. The range of time that had passed since separation from discharge and the completion of the interviews ranged from one to 14 years.

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Characteristics and Military History (n = 12)

Participant*	Age	Sex	Branch	Years of Service	Service Component	# of Deployments	Direct Combat	Highest Rank	Current Relationship Status	Age of children, if any (in years)
Derek	39	M	Army	7	Active-duty; Reserves	1	Yes	E-5	Married	18, 11, 6
Brenda	41	F	Army	13	Reserves	1	No	O-3	Married	10, 7
Ashton	42	M	Air Force	8	Active-duty	1	No	O-3	Divorced	18, 15, 12
Adaline	38	F	Army	6	Active-duty	2	No	E-5	Single	12, 2
Specialist	32	M	Army	6	Active-duty; National Guard	2	Yes	E-4	Single	N/A
Richard	31	M	Army	7	Active-duty; National Guard	1	No	E-5	Divorced	N/A
Jasmine	34	F	Army	7	Active-duty; National Guard	1	No	E-5	Married	12, 10, 8m
Jaz	41	F	Army	18	Reserves	1	No	O-4	Married	23, 8
John	33	M	Army	12	Active-duty	1	Yes	O-3	Single	N/A
Sarah	36	F	Marines; Army	11	Active-duty	2	No	E-5	Single	10
Mary	38	F	Army	6	Reserves	1	No	E-5	Single	N/A
Maxwell	41	M	Army	5	Active-duty	1	No	E-5	Married	11, 8, 1

* Pseudonyms

Data analysis was guided by the premise, as discussed by Patton (2002), that qualitative analysis is most effective when it begins with a "unique case orientation" (p. 55) and builds on specific observations towards general patterns. The inductive analysis approach to the data gathered from participants and presented in this chapter therefore begins with a within-case analysis and proceeds to cross-case analysis. For the within-case analysis section presented below, each participant's narrative and its context was analyzed and is presented separately as a unique case in the form of a participant profile in which data from the demographic/military history questionnaires added context and information to the stories told by these participants in the interview transcripts. All participants' names were changed to pseudonyms chosen by the participants prior to the start of the audio-recorded interviews.

Cross-case analysis is then presented afterward in which the themes that emerged are then described through thick, rich descriptions using detailed examples from the narratives. Cross-case analysis follows "an analysis of narratives" (Polkinghorne, 1998, p. 9) in which I utilized paradigmatic thinking to describe emerging themes from the content of the interviews across cases.

Within-Case Analysis

Derek: Success

Derek is a 39-year-old biracial, married, heterosexual male with three children (ages 18, 11, and 6). He described his mother as White and his father as African American. Derek met study criteria because he self-identities within the Black Diaspora. He was born into a military family with his father also having served briefly in the Army. He also has relatives who have served across the branches. Derek served in the U.S.

Army from 1998 to 2005, during which time he engaged in one combat tour in Iraq and reached the rank of Sergeant (E-5). A Sergeant is a non-commissioned officer (NCO; enlisted rank), who typically leads a team or section (five to 10 service members) of Soldiers. He completed his initial four years of service on active duty while serving his final two years with the Reserve component. He currently works for the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) as a social worker.

Derek was friendly and cooperative throughout the interview. I found him to be responsive yet concise in his account of his military experiences. For instance, in commenting on his discharge experiences, he noted that, "Some bad experiences over in Iraq" resulting in, "a lot of anxiety" led him to decide to not reenlist, despite him having ambitions of making the military his career. My typical sequence of events across the interviews was to begin with an open dialogue about the participants' most salient, valued cultural identities. I provided each participant with the following prompt to help them conceptualize identity: "The current literature defines identity as that which explains who a person is. Identity can be understood as a social category distinguished by specific traits or attributes. Tell me about the identities that you hold that are important to you."

Derek demonstrated a particular inclination toward his family-based identities. For example, when I inquired about the identities that he held as integral to his personhood, he acknowledged the identities both of father and husband. He mentioned that his familial identities were instrumental in informing his initial decision to join the military. First, he was born into a military family and felt a pressure "to do something as well." Second, though he was neither a father nor husband at the time, he expressed wanting to provide for his family whenever the time came that he did have a wife and/or

child. Third, he had witnessed his older siblings and many of his friends "drop out of school or end up in jail." Further, he recounted a significant life moment when he was seven years old, and his father—while on his deathbed—instructed him to, "get a good education." He viewed his enlistment in the military as the only way to honor his father and family while also ensuring that he secured a good education for himself.

Moreover, Derek commented that he was "unique" because he did not feel as if his racial identity influenced his military experience. He alleged why he thought his ethnicity might not have played a salient role in his service experiences through the following statement:

> My mother is White, and my father is African American. So, I always tried to "get in where you fit in." During the military, everything was good. I got to meet a bit of everybody. I got to have conversations with White folks that they never would have had with Black folks. I tell people sometimes, "I know both sides." I think when I was in sociology, they would say, "You only have one ethnicity," and I didn't get that. I was like, "Well, how do you choose that?". My circumstances were different. I grew up with my mother's family. So, I grew up with a White family but always had Black friends that were close. There were a lot of things I liked about the Caucasian side and African American side. I didn't know how to choose. It's a weird thing because my experience may be different from someone who's all the way Black or all the way Caucasian. For me, there was always this part of me that thought someone may reject me because I'm too light or too dark. Even in working with Vet Affairs, if I'm in a rural community where there's just a bunch of Caucasians, I can see their racism come out real fast. Then I have to decide if I'm going to say something or not.

Derek's comments were poignant and highlighted a particular cultural nuance that exists within the Black community; specifically, there is a discernible separation within the Black community that is also informed by skin color, similar to the larger U.S. population. Simply put, light-skinned and dark-skinned persons within the Black community have a different phenomenological experience of Blackness. In recounting his journey as a seven-year Army soldier and now veteran, military service presented to

Derek as the only option he felt he had to ensure that he could meet his life goals: to provide for his family and to attain a higher education.

Derek's formal introduction to the military began with the U.S. Army Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program, which is a leadership and military introduction program for high school students. Following his high school graduation, he enlisted in the Army and attended roughly 10 to 12 weeks of basic combat training (BCT) before proceeding to advanced individual training (AIT), which was an additional eight weeks. BCT and AIT are meant (a) to provide introductory-level knowledge on military and branch-specific culture, (b) to instill a military ethos, (c) to prepare for physical and task demands, and (d) to train job-relevant skills (U.S. Army, 2019). Derek described his basic training experience as, "a lot of coming to formation and having your boots shined." He noted that he "matured" and experienced a great deal of growth during these initial stages.

Following this initial entry training stage (i.e., BCT and AIT), Derek identified his "reporting to first duty station" as the next distinct stage of his military narrative. He was assigned to a military installation in Germany, and he described this experience as the first time his other salient identities began to conflict with his military status. For instance, now he was a father with a young son, and he was struggling to fulfill his familial responsibilities while also completing his soldier tasks; this was particularly true during his deployment.

However, Derek noted feeling lucky because he only deployed to Iraq once, while his peers were deploying overseas upwards of five times due to the increased deployment tempo following 9/11 and the various deployment "surges" that took place during the

wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Further, he noted that, generally, a service member's

military narrative is dictated greatly by their goals and MOS. He could not personally

identify any distinct stages between his first duty station and discharge, insisting that, "It

was just growth throughout." Ultimately, he decided to discontinue his service with the

Army—after his contract ended—because he wanted to live closer to his son. He

divulged the following:

> The whole time I was over there [in Iraq], I had one son. He was two or three. I deployed in 2003. He was born in 2000. I hadn't been around a lot. I was in Germany for a three-year tour. It took him and his mom, like, a year to get over there [Germany] for housing. So, the whole time I was living in Germany, I was looking back at my son, thinking, "I'm supposed to be with this guy."

> Derek described a smooth transition out of the military that was supported greatly

by the fact that he had secured civilian employment within the VA before he had

completed his discharge process from the Army. He described his transition as, "pretty

easy," further stating, "I got out and at the same time, didn't get out. When I got out, I did

do a year in the reserves," which allowed him to still have one foot in military culture and

another in the civilian sector. Despite several "bad experiences in Iraq" and having to be

separated from his three-year-old son, he seemed to cope through

compartmentalization/minimization as he could speak about his experiences concretely

but without any apparent associated emotional impact. As Derek spoke about his then-

toddler son, his voice became a bit softer and slower. Moreover, he continued to remain

connected to the military culture even 14 years after discharge. He stated,

> I think once you're in, it's going to shape you for the rest of your life. It's going to mature you. From things like showing up to work on time. You'll remember the 15 minutes early thing. I don't think you can really change. Some people can change. Other than eating habits and exercise, I think it remains. When you get out, you're not in uniform but the military brand stays in your heart. That's why a lot of people walk around with the

veteran hats on. I tell the guys that are getting out, "You know right now, you're a part of the Army team. Once you get out, you join another team, and that's veterans.

Ultimately, Derek defined his overall military narrative as positive and titled his story, "Success." For him, it was a success because he was able to earn his bachelor's degree following his exit from service. In describing the impact of his service on his values and outlook, he noted,

> I was always kind of mature, but it matured me into wanting to be better. After being in the military and you come home, you learn a lot about the things you need to protect. When you're there, you got your comrades. When you're home, it's your family. It kind of made me more of a family man in some ways.

Lastly, Derek provided some insightful feedback regarding behavioral health professionals and what they need to know to be more helpful for Black veterans. He disclosed having utilized mental health services through the Vet Clinics for, "anxiety attacks and issues surrounding [his] divorce." Derek had the following to share for behavioral health providers working with Black veterans:

> They just need to be aware of our experiences and how we interact as a family. I think they should be aware of the culture. Don't just look at the veteran thing. Not every veteran is the same. Racism is still a very real thing. It does happen in the military. You got to look at where we came from. I think I heard one time, "The only reason you went into the military was because nothing else was given to you." If not for the military, you weren't going to get an education. In my case, that was true. It was my only option for success. I think that differs from Caucasians and I think a lot of other races.

Derek described his overall service and post-service experiences with a curious emotional separation, which could have been due to the duration of time that had elapsed since his discharge in 2005. His responses often teetered between discussing military life in general and referencing his experience of military life. This particularly was true when he acknowledged the chapters of his military story. He acknowledged chapters that were

fairly generic and non-specific to his cultural identities. Derek was more responsive to my encouragement to keep his responses specific to his phenomenological experience following repeated prompts. Further, Derek's perspective on the post-9/11 Black veteran experience is invaluable and unique given that he identifies within the Black Diaspora and also maintains a multiracial background; his mother is White while his father is Black. This cultural dimensionality to Blackness is worthy of capturing as his experiences demonstrate the dynamic nature of Blackness and challenge its presumed uniformity. This was a point that Derek found to be invaluable for behavioral health providers as the Black veteran experience varies from individual to individual.

Brenda: Self-Defining

Brenda is a 41-year-old married, heterosexual female with two children (ages 10 and 7). She served in the U.S. Army from 1996 to 2009 during which time she was deployed to Kuwait for 15 months. She completed her commission in the grade of O-3 (Captain). A Captain in the Army is a company-grade Officer who often commands and controls company-sized units (60 to 200 soldiers). She now works as a global studies manager. Shortly after beginning her interview, I prompted her to identify her most salience, valued identities, and she described herself as family-oriented. She also identified her religious identity as a core component of her sense of self. During her interview, she spoke of the intersection for her between her family and the military, acknowledging that the camaraderie she gained with other Soldiers during initial entry training often served as a supplement for her family-of-origin while she was on deployment. However, she also spoke about the prevalent familial disconnect and false perception she believed that families often have of their deployed loved ones. Brenda

relayed the following when I inquired as to how she navigated her family and

work dynamic:

> Yeah, I think it was hard. You know, I think it's really weird when you think about it, because when you're deployed and you're calling home, you know, they're probably thinking of what is going on, and it's not, it wasn't bad for me. No, not for where I was and for what I was doing, but that's not what they see. So, it's hard trying to reassure them that you're safe when they're not able to see you. They just know that you're somewhere deployed in a zone doing something that they pretty much don't have an idea about, but they think they do. It's hard especially when you're not able to talk as often, you know? Whether it's once a month or once every two weeks, it's really hard to, um, feel the closeness that you had. You know it's there, but without talking to them, without expressing it to someone, it's really hard to feel the love. It's one of those things where you just have to keep pushing and not really think about it, if that makes sense.

This "just keep pushing" mentality was a sentiment that was pervasive throughout

my interview with Brenda. She presented as very adept at protecting herself from

possible emotional distress by providing minimal depth and/or minimizing the emotional

impact. Interestingly, there also seemed to be some degree of identification with me as a

current service member, despite her lacking any information about my military

background. Brenda made frequent assumptions that I knew what she was referring to,

which might have been another reason why she neglected to provide much depth in her

responses. I challenged her to provide increasingly more detail as the interview

processed; however, she remained reluctant.

In recounting her 13-year journey as an Army Officer and now veteran, it began

with Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). ROTC is a military training and

leadership program for college students; it allows college graduates to enter the U.S.

military as commissioned Officers rather than via the traditional enlistment route where

new recruits begin their military career as entry-level soldiers. She disclosed that ROTC

was instrumental in her overall development as, "That was probably the one place where,

as a female, I felt very comfortable." She did not provide specifics on what made the ROTC environment more accepting of her female identity. She made frequent inferences to the influence of her gender identity, often without explicitly acknowledging the role of her female identity. When I queried for any additional chapters that she perceived beyond ROTC, she evaded, alleging, "No, it's all a blur." I came to expect this from her as during my interview with her, it seemed increasingly likely that she was protecting herself and intentionally being less than forthcoming about, possibly traumatic, experiences perhaps in order to maintain an intact narrative of courage and strength, both of which are highly valued in the military and Black communities.

During my interview with Brenda, I nevertheless was impressed by her capacity to speak confidently and matter-of-factly about her military experiences. She reluctantly shared about her experiences in navigating her intersecting historically marginalized identities while serving in the U.S. military. She commented on the societal perception of the U.S. service member and how she often had to ward off surprise and confusion from friends, family, and community members who argued that she did not fit the archetype of a U.S. soldier or veteran. She communicated,

> People in general just have an idea of what they think military is and usually it's the male. I'm sure they know that females are veterans and they know females served. But I still think that the majority of people are still shocked to know that a woman that they know was in the military. And then it's like, if you're a female and you do it, it's like, "Why?"

Further, Brenda asserted, "I felt like I had it triple. I was Black, female, and I was young." Despite often being the senior-ranking solider in her unit, she described feeling "intimidated" during her interactions with the soldiers in her command because, "The majority of my unit was White, older males." She disclosed that many of her soldiers

"did not take [her] seriously," given her various historically marginalized identities. Relatedly, she described an encounter where a higher-ranking officer referred to her as "girl" rather than her proper title because she was attempting to get accountability for a task passed down from her chain-of-command. When I inquired about the intersection of her Blackness while serving in the military, she communicated the following:

> Hair was a big thing for me. I felt like I could not be natural. I could not have the Black girl experience because I had an image to maintain, if that makes any sense. Because I was an Officer, I had to tone down the Blackness and the appearance in my meetings with people.

Additionally, Brenda's years of service, which comprised of both pre- and post-9/11 era, allowed for her to speak briefly to the culture of the post-9/11 military as she saw it. She described the post-9/11 culture as follows:

> I probably would say that… after 9/11 maybe… we were such a different group of people, especially with how we communicated and interacted. It was more like a family. It was more caring. There were things you wouldn't say or discuss because literally, that was your family. After all of that, we became people to one another and not rank.

Ultimately, Brenda described being grateful and appreciative of her military experiences as it enhanced her confidence and professional development. However, she did disclose that she would make the following change if she had a second chance:

> I probably wouldn't be as timid. One thing that I think, for me, and maybe for every female is that you're always going to get men in the military who will try to… not belittle you, but not give you the respect that you deserve. Sometimes I didn't push back, and I probably wouldn't do that today. Also, a lot of times, as a female, you get hit on by every male. Especially when you're deployed, and I would usually just brush it off and keep moving. Today, I'd probably be a bit more firm in my response to them.

When prompted to provide feedback for behavioral health professionals seeking

to improve their effectiveness with Black veterans, Brenda elected to speak more broadly

to how they might elicit more targeted, meaningful interventions for veterans, in general.

Informed by her prior interactions with veterans, she described a process through which

veterans sometimes get stuck in their negative military experiences and forget how to live

a meaningful life. Brenda stated that it is important for providers to take the time to

identify and understand their "stuck points," so that they might support them in healing.

Ashton: Truly an Honor

Ashton is a 42-year-old divorced, heterosexual male with three children (ages 18,

15, and 12). He was born into a military family via his father, who retired from the Army.

Ashton served in the U.S. Air Force from 1999 to 2007 and attained the rank of Captain

(O-3). He is currently employed as a program manager for the VA. Ashton began his

interview by describing himself as, "a big family person." His family identities (i.e.,

father and son) were most salient for his sense of self. His journey began with ROTC,

which he noted had a lasting impression on him due to the camaraderie he gained with his

fellow ROTC cadets. While serving as an Officer, he noted being unable to fully express

his Blackness while in uniform. He reported:

> As an Officer, the thing I noticed very quickly was that the majority of the Blacks
> were enlisted, and in the Officer realm, the majority were not Black. Ultimately, I
> was in an area where I had to associate with people who were not Black… so
> some music I didn't listen to, some shows I did not watch.

Ashton's military narrative began during his senior year of high school. He

recounted when a Marine recruiter came to his school, driving a sports car "with a big

booming system." Impressed by the recruiter's presentation, he immediately went to the

recruiter's office, signed most of the paperwork, and subsequently "chickened out"

before completing the enlistment paperwork. At the time, the thought of deploying and possibly dying in combat was more than Ashton was willing to commit to at 18 years old. His formal introduction to the military began with ROTC in college.

Ashton noted that the sequence and components of one's military narrative are greatly shaped by a service member's military tasks and goals. Given that ROTC placed him on the Officer-track, he described the next stage of events following ROTC as "learning what Officership is." This is when he learned about the nuanced nature of Officership. He spoke further on the intersection of his Blackness and Officer status. "I had a guy tell me that you may come in as a Black Officer, but you'll leave as a sharp Officer." His comment suggests that there is a certain dialogue throughout the military that emphasizes the role of race at the Officer-level.

However, Ashton also felt that time allowed for the salience of race/ethnicity to diminish, and that recognition for one's attained military prowess eventually overshadowed any racial differences. Further, Ashton insisted that maybe a sort of colorblindness by White soldiers eventually develops as Black Officers demonstrate certain abilities; however, the specifics regarding which abilities were not provided. He recalled adopting the following mantra, "It's your attitude, not your aptitude, that determines your altitude." Initially, one would suspect that he was referring to intelligence. However, upon inquiry, it was discovered that Ashton's meaning was much broader and poignant. He was referring, more generally, to how he navigates situations in which there are certain aspects that he cannot change. For instance, his experiences taught him that the discrimination that often coincides with identifying as Black is less important than how one chooses to respond to such discrimination. Ashton chose to

modify his own attitude while in the service, rather than to harp on any of the existing racial barriers that he had encountered. Further, though soldiers who identify within the Black Diaspora may begin their service as Black soldiers, Ashton challenged that, "They don't see color anymore" after time, given that the uniform created a sense of camaraderie that perhaps overrode cultural background and created senses of, "All in this together," and "Everyone has the same mission." The ubiquitous "they" that Ashton made references to was, "The rest of the military, Whites, everyone."

Lastly, Ashton elected to not continue his commission with the Air Force because he was married, and he wanted his wife to have the opportunity to follow in her career aspirations. Overall, he recounted a successful reintegration experience as he had also secured employment prior to leaving his active-duty job. He titled his military narrative, "Truly an Honor." It was evident that he held his military experiences in high regard as he described his reasoning for choosing his title. He elaborated,

> You have to think about all the people who have worn the uniform, all the people who have gone through and done great things for their country. I had an uncle who was a POW in the Korean war. I think about my father, my brother, who is in the Army training now. It's just an honor to do those things for your country. Some may say it sounds cheesy, but I think it's a real honor because some guys tried and couldn't make it. They wish they could have served and never got the chance.

After Ashton's chose a title for his military narrative, he seemed to become more engaged in the interview. Sometimes, it was difficult for him to speak generally about his service and post-service experiences; however, when I asked him to title his narrative, that opened the door for further, more in-depth discussion. The prompt seemed to trigger or activate certain memories that might have been difficult for Ashton to recall had he not

been encouraged to title his narrative. Lastly, he offered the following feedback for

behavioral health providers working with Black veterans:

> Um one thing for us is, we have pressures that are not seen from just the general eye. Expectations, fitting in/not fitting in, associations, cliques, there's a lot of different nuances to being Black in the military. As a counselor, you have to be sensitive to that and kind of factor it into your communication with that person. Understand that the challenges they have, they haven't shared with anybody, but they made it work. So just understanding that they're coming from a world of different pressures is important for counselors.

Adaline: Been There, Done That

Adaline is a 38-year-old single, heterosexual female with two children (ages 12

and two). Adaline now works for the federal government as a psychiatric hospital staff

member; she also is enrolled in a psychology master's program. Her father served in the

military; though she was not raised by her father, she believed that this connection had

some influence on her decision to join, even if just due to her increased familiarity with

military culture. Adaline served in the U.S. Army from 1999 to 2005, attaining the rank

of Sergeant (E-5). During her military commitment, she deployed both to Kuwait (2003)

and Mosul (2005). She was also less forthcoming about her military experiences of the 12

veterans that I interviewed. Interestingly, she did seem more willing to engage and to

provide greater detail when the topic pertained to family or non-military related matters.

For instance, within the first five minutes of the interview, she shared that her sister had

recently passed away, making her sibling identity particularly salient for her in that

moment.

Adaline's most salient, valued identities included being a mother, a sister, and a

veteran. She has two children, and her family was the impetus directing most of her

decisions throughout her careers both during and beyond the military. Further, she noted

that her veteran identity, for her, means "stability." She enlisted in the Army immediately following high school; the military gave her structure, while also teaching her how to become financially adept. She described herself as "one of the lucky ones" because she felt that she experienced neither racial nor gender discrimination as a Black woman during her service. She made inferences to a culture within the military where service members are marginalized due to their various underrepresented identities; however, she initially denied any personal instances of this occurring during her service.

Adaline's military introduction was typical of most service members and veterans. She was in high school when an Army recruiter came to campus to present on the benefits of military service. She was interested in having her college paid for by the government and decided to enlist with a friend. Adaline reported that she was pleased with her military experiences because she was able to support her family as a result. However, she did describe a moment in her military service that she thought might have occurred due to the historically marginalized identities that she held. She shared that she was attached to an Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) unit and described it as such: "[Her] hardest unit. It was a unit of all males, and I was the only female, and I was the only Black person. I was the only female and… and they didn't like me because I outranked them; they didn't like it." However, she acknowledged that once they all deployed together, the rest of her unit seemed to accept her as one of them. Her narrative illuminated a discomfort that was activated by ongoing general responses she received due to her holding multiple underrepresented identities rather than necessarily experiencing unique instances of explicit discrimination.

As Adaline inferred, her identities simply had a different kind of influence. Adaline identified six stages throughout her military narrative. Adaline's military narrative began with chapter 1, which she titled Adulthood. During this stage, she described learning how to pay bills, take care of herself, and gain "basic life lessons." She titled her second chapter as Learning to Live Without Your Immediate Family. Of her chapter 2, she noted that she had to, "become comfortable pulling back and not making them live it with [her]." She referenced a military notion where service members are expected to suppress their personal needs in order to complete the military objective. Chapters 3 and 4 were titled First Duty Station and First Re-Enlistment, respectively. She maintained positive feelings regarding her first duty station, given that she had visited the location several times before as a child when her father was stationed there himself. Adaline labeled her fifth chapter, First Deployment. She commented that, overall, she had a positive experience during this chapter because she served as a "mother-figure" for the male members of her unit. She acknowledged cooking them food and cleaning their clothes. Further, she denied feeling pressured to do these activities for her unit; she conceded having a naturally nurturing way about her, and she felt comfortable.

Adaline's final stage was coined, It's All Over. She elected to discharge from the Army because she wanted to have a family, and she did not believe that to be doable as a service member. Her reintegration experience was slightly unorthodox given that she went from active duty to reserve status prior to becoming a civilian. She commented that her temporary Reserve status allowed for a smoother reintegration experience for her. Now that she has fully separated from the reserves, she alleged that she has "fully reintegrated." Though, she acknowledged that it was somewhat difficult initially because

she was "just so aggravated" by civilians who she thought to be lazy. Following

discharge, she even elected to work as an Army contractor so that she could still maintain

"some sort of attachment" to the military. Lastly, Adaline titled her complete military

narrative as, Been There, Done That. She stated the following regarding her title: "I

appreciate everything the military gave me. It's just not who I am now, you know? It

gave me the jumpstart into life, but now that chapter is over and, although I appreciate it,

I don't want to go back."

Specialist: Don't Do It.
Don't Do It

Specialist is a 32-year-old single, heterosexual male, born to a military family

(i.e., Army mother, Retired Air Force father). He began his service in the Regular (e.g.,

active-duty) Army in 2004 before joining the Army National Guard in 2009, serving a

total of seven years. He completed two combat tours in Iraq for a combined 27 months

deployed. He attained the rank of Specialist (E-4) during his enlistment, which clearly

informed his choice for his pseudonym. Specialists in the Army can manage enlisted

soldiers of lower rank.

My interview with Specialist began with a discussion regarding his most salient

identities. He was particularly eloquent in his conceptualization of his identities, and it

was evident to me that he had spent considerable time—prior to the interview—reflecting

on his salient identities. When I prompted him to disclose of the identities that he found

to be most important for him, he communicated:

> Just who I am as a man and as a Black man and really a veteran isn't
> really primary. It is a part of me, it is my history and the people I have met
> and the connections I've made. It's something I recognize. Things I've
> received and things I've gotten since I've discharged from the military.

It's a good portion of my life, so it has a good amount of merit, but first
and foremost is me as a Black man.

Specialist's sense of Blackness was primary and integral to his sense of self, and

it informed much of his thoughts and behaviors beyond that of his veteran identity. He

carried a great deal of pride for both his racial and gender identities. However, he had

some difficulty separating these two identities as he found them to be very much

interlinked. His phenomenological world could not be understood just by examining his

identities as singular components; he made significant meaning from the intersection of

these two identities. Specialist also described the personal significance and gradual

development of his most treasured identities:

> If you had asked me this question 12 years ago, there would be certain things I
> wouldn't be able to say. I don't know if I would know how to answer, but now
> it's our history, it's a culture. Here in America, we've adapted and grown strong
> and we're original. Our intellect, our inventions, our music, food, our skin, our
> power, and our reverence. I can see why many want to destroy us and hold us
> back. I see that it is because they fear us. There is so much to the core of a Black
> man that a lot of people do not realize. There is so much compassion within us.
> You know, even though we have the hardships, we've still thrived.

Specialist's irrevocable passion for Black culture was undeniable, and he shared that he

continues to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for his Black and male

identities. He noted that he was not as "woke" on Black culture while in the military, but

through various life events (since the military), conversations, and research, he developed

a more informed, fluid appreciation for his Blackness and for the Black culture in

general.

Specialist could not recall any specific situations during the military that shaped

his identity development in the ways that it presented during the interview. He was

clearly passionate about Blackness as it related to his personal journey; however, it was

difficult for him to describe how this development had actually occurred for him. He described his identity development process more as a "journey." Regarding the intersection between his identities as a Black man and prior-enlisted service member, he reported having experienced "not too many negative instances" of discrimination during his service. He stated, "I mean for the most part, it wasn't like it was 50 years ago with blatant discrimination or racism. Like, a lot of the superiors were Black or of another race." Though undoubtedly true—racism in the Armed Forces presumably is not as overt as it was 50 years ago—this strategy of generational separation seemed to be one approach that he used to minimize any potential perceived racial barriers he may have encountered.

Specialist demonstrated a conflicting outlook on race in the military throughout the interview. At times, he displayed a particular trust in military culture that might have served as a guard against potential, perceived racism. He noted,

> I didn't feel treated differently because I am Black. Of course, because you can't really outright do something like that because you have all the regulations and rules and those, you know, equal opportunity. If there is a blatant issue, you can say something, it's written up.

I began to expect Specialist to rationalize any occurrence or apparent absence of discrimination within today's Armed Forces. This time, rather than discrimination not being, "like it was 50 years ago," the absence of discrimination was rationalized as being due to the current military regulations, which would not allow it. Specialist also offered this statement when I asked him about the role of gender in his military service:

> If you're a man or a woman and no matter where you're at, you know that is, like, first thing. It always plays a role, you know, unless you identify as non-gender, which there are people out there now in the military. But yeah, I mean, it's first and foremost in everything, you know, influencing how you're treated, you know, the work you do. There's a lot of misogyny

and patriarchy. You have a toxic patriarchy, and a toxic masculinity and people get to the point where they ruin it for everyone.

Specialist displayed an impressive awareness of the cultural nuances and how they may manifest within the military. Additionally, I asked him if he had ever felt as if he had to censor certain pieces of his identities while navigating the military system, to which he disclosed the following:

> Sure, like, not allowing you to say what you want to say… what's on your mind. You know? Not allowing you to just show your full emotions, you having to hold back and even being gone as far as being told, even if your superior is wrong, "Just suck it up and deal with it." And it was to the point where it's affecting you and your job and it's really affecting you psychologically.

Of note, Specialist was asked to describe personal experiences of having to censor himself. He chose to somewhat distance himself from the topic, which might suggest that he encountered some particularly difficult interactions in this regard. Also, he demonstrated how the "suck it up" response to distress can have undesirable effects on other aspects of one's life. He felt unable to express when he was experiencing emotional distress while in the military. He also made several inferences that he received disciplinary action as a result of his tendency to challenge his chain-of-command when he disagreed with an order. It was suspected that he might have demonstrated a similar coping strategy during the interview. His comments about not being allowed to, "show [his] full emotions" might have consciously and/or unconsciously manifested during the interview.

The interview concluded with Specialist being prompted to identify and examine the various, distinct chapters of his military narrative. He identified multiple chapters with relative ease, though the content and level of detail he provided here was fairly generic and nonspecific to his identities or to his personal, phenomenological

experiences. He described his military career as beginning with a Prelude, which

represented his experiences with recruiters and the Delayed Entry Program (DEP). DEP

is for service members who have enlisted and then are required to wait until space is

available at their basic combat training site. Next, Chapter 1 illustrated his experiences

during basic training. Specialist combined his BCT and AIT experiences within Chapter

1. Chapter 2 described his first deployment to Iraq, which he called Journey to the East.

Chapter 3 denoted his return from combat, training, and readjustment to life stateside.

Specialist attached his second deployment, also to Iraq, to Chapter 4. This chapter

described new regime changes and his experiences in navigating a long-distance

relationship, which he characterized as difficult.

Finally, Specialist used Chapter 5 to denote his discharge and reintegration

experiences. In relation to his reintegration, he communicated that as a veteran, he felt

"discarded" by the civilian community and looked at by them as "trash." He disclosed

that his experiences as a veteran taught him that, "the U.S. military is no place for a Black

man" as there are "other opportunities available" to succeed. Further, he described the

societal stigma placed on veterans:

> We're looked at as trash, and not so much now but, there were times in Vietnam
> when Soldiers were called baby killers, and things like that. When I was in, a lot
> of us were treated that way. I remember one of my battle buddies said he went
> back home, and someone spat at him. A lot of the history from the past is still
> present today. Sometimes, uh, you know, leadership said, "Do this no matter
> what, listen to us." You know, and so you had to kill innocent people sometimes.

His beliefs during the interview were informed by both experience and personal

educative research that he completed after separating from the military. He denied any

experiences of perceived discrimination; however, he titled his military narrative, Don't

do it, Don't do it, presumably due to some of the aforementioned experiences of feeling

discarded as a veteran. It was difficult to fully track his phenomenological experience of race in the military given his inconsistencies.

Specialist's frustration with the societal treatment of veterans was interspersed in his feedback for behavioral health providers. This frustration seemed to be triggered by prior experiences with providers who he felt treated him like collection of symptoms rather than as an individual. He stated, "Mental health needs to understand veterans. Listen. Be empathetic. Work better to find solutions. Don't just cast us to the side." He offered additional feedback for providers working with Black people in particular. He commented:

> Not just for Black veterans, but Black people… just understanding what we go through on a comfortable level and then kind of apply that to being in the military along [with] any sort of discrimination. Understand the Black struggle and understand Black culture, who we are...

Don't do it, Don't do it seemed to be a poignant title for Specialist's story because even though he denied direct encounters with discrimination during his service, much of his dissatisfaction with his experience seemed to be due to how his cultural identities were treated both during and after his military service. Of note, typically, a service member with his same time in service would have been promoted to the next rank of Sergeant; however, he discharged as a Specialist, which may corroborate his acknowledgement of having had personal difficulties with his chain-of-command. This suggests that military cultural competence has merit given that it may help the provider to have further context and serve to que the behavioral health provider for when they should follow-up with additional questions in order to better understand their client's experiences.

Richard: Broken Men

Richard is a 31-year-old, Haitian American, divorced, gay male who was born into a military family; his father served in the Army. He was born in the United States and self-identifies as being within the Black Diaspora. He served active duty in the Army for six years followed by one year in the Army National Guard. His time in service spanned from 2009 to 2016 and included one 12-month deployment in Afghanistan. His highest attained rank during his enlistment was Sergeant (E-5). He now is employed as a Strategy Consultant. He presented as particularly cognizant of his identity development process and various cultural factors, which was consistent with his educational background. He had recently completed his master's degree in Urban Policy and had future intentions of enrolling in a doctoral program in African Studies.

While examining Richard's lived experiences as a "gay, Black man," he highlighted the absence of generational role models for him to help guide him through various stages of life; he had no older gay, Black role models to emulate. He stated, "I don't really know very many other communities that suffered such an extensive loss. My generation has very few elders to look to because most of them have passed away or didn't make it past a certain age." Richard recounted his decision to join the miliatry, which was largely motivated by his upbringing in a single-parent household with his mother as his primary caregiver. However, Richard was also fourth-generation military on his father's side. He acknowledged the following as shaping his decision to serve in the military: "It was a way for me to connect with the lived experience of my father and mother and to look for that sense of male camaraderie that I had missed [during childhood]."

Richard was a natural storyteller, and his effective communication style allowed the interview to progress in such a manner that he addressed many of the topics under investigation without me having to inquiry. He shared the following in regard to military culture and his experience in joining the military:

> I decided to join the Army and I got there and, you know, the military is a fairly homogenous environment, especially in the infantry. Um, you know, a lot of Midwestern White boys, somewhat middle class, but mostly, like, working class. Um, and I will definitely say my first year was a great challenge because I came out of this hyper kind of self-aware, affirming environment at [college]… [I witnessed and experienced] um, inappropriate kind of racial conversations at some times. Um, comments, biases that to me were very blatant, very obvious, but for others, because of their lived experience, they couldn't see that they were racist or that they had racist inclination. And then on top of that coupled with, you know, me having to mask or at least in some way, shape or form protect myself and my queer identity, those things came kind of difficult to manage in some respects.

Richard also acknowledged feeling as if he "had to operate…with a level of double consciousness" during his military service. This, is in reference to DuBois (1903), who described double consciousness as follows:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p. 2).

When I asked about how his identities might have developed throughout his military experience, he shared:

> I think my identity stagnated, right? Like, I don't think that I had room for my sense of self to grow and ultimately, you're assimilating into an environment that is homogenous. The military conforms to a certain identity because they center a certain identity that is the heteronormative, middle-class man.

For Richard, he felt that he did not have the same freedom to grow and explore his identities because the military, to him, had a value system that placed the

heteronormative middle-class male at the forefront; given that he did not fall within the social group, he felt stuck and unable to have many meaningful identity development opportunities. Fortunately, Richard acknowledged having some leaders who "allowed [him] to be [him]self, allowed [him] to be openly expressive," but it was in fact this "bifurcation of identities" that led him to end his seven-year journey with the U.S. Army. His responses during the interview evidenced a personal value-system that emphasized his cultural identities (particularly that of gay and Black). Understandably, there was an internal conflict that occurred because he was navigating an institution that did not necessarily have the same cultural priorities. As Richard continued to examine what his veteran identity meant to him. Mainly, he described feeling an accompanied sense of "invisibility" with his veteran status. He made an astute comparison to previous veteran cohorts commenting that compared to the end of WWII where most people had some— whether it be direct or indirect—connection to military service, "In our generation, it's a very small percentage" of people who understand the veterans' plight. He concluded with the following: "If anything, my veteran identity is another minority status that is coupled with my identity as a Black, gay man that I had to overcome."

Richard also commented on his reintegration experience and the resulting mental health symptoms that followed to include his encounters with both anxiety and depression. Regarding his homecoming experience, he shared, "There's no one telling you how to navigate in these spaces." He also outlined some of his difficulties in locating employment post-service. He noted,

> There was a learning curve for developing my own level of confidence
> about what skills I actually gained from the military. I literally had this
> recruiter, someone referred her to me. I went to her office and they
> basically told me to remove my service from my resume, that many

employers wouldn't find value in it. It [his military service] was seven years of my life, so that was difficult.

Richard and I concluded the interview with a discussion on military culture with him stating, "I think it's just a microcosm of our modern culture. Same class conversations, same racial dialogues, same obvious sexism, homophobia, and identity politics." While speaking, he addressed the generational challenge that Black service members/veterans continue to face within the U.S. military regarding economic advancement. He concluded with,

> I still believe that people who serve the military should be a pathway to the middle class and basically what gets in the way of it being a pathway to the middle class, to me, are inherent [in military structure] and need to be addressed. If the miliatry is not fulfilling that purpose for Black service members, or there are systems in place that are impeding the ability of Black service members to attain middle class status, then the military is not upholding its end of the bargain.

When given the opportunity to communicate the various stages of his service and post-service experiences, Richard countered that he was actually in the process of writing his memoir, titled Broken Men, which was organized and chaptered through the various relationships that he had with male figures throughout his life. For instance, his first stage was called Richard Sr. to denote the role that his father had in guiding his decision to join the Armed Forces in the first place. His narrative also serves as, "an expression of [his] service and [his] coming out story but also as an inspiration of [his] core identity." This discussion led him to share that he had developed PTSD during his service and that continues to struggle with this today in addition to both anxiety and depression as well. He named the current chapter of his military narrative after his nephew, for whom he has served as the primary male role model. No additional chapters were identified as he still was conceptualizing his memoirs at the time of the interview.

Throughout his interview, Richard described a narrative that placed his multiple historically marginalized identities at the forefront of his experience. It was evident that he made meaning of his military and life experiences through the context of his multiple underrepresented identities. Additionally, he was able to find value and strength in his struggles and traumas as he founded the Black Veterans Project, which serves as a transition and adjustment resource service for Black veterans. Below is (a) his feedback for mental health professionals providing care to Black veterans and (b) his general thoughts on the psychological conditioning that service members encounter in the service:

> I think mental health providers need to read, and not just psychology books and all that, but they really need to understand history. They need to understand the cultural affairs. There needs to be someone who is abreast of what the lived experience has been like, historically for veterans, but also even currently for veterans. Um, you know, someone who doesn't have a cultural nuance to them, a cultural kind of fluency to them, they will not be of use to someone who is specifically a Black vet. I wrote this essay about Micah Johnson. But I think in my mind, I was like, I can only think of the psychological harm that must be done and then at the end of the day, it's a psychological conditioning that you have to go through when you join the military, right? They're going to make you, in some respects, they're stripping away your sense of humanity and the ways in which you… you view the enemy, right? The enemy is not a human being with people who loved them or whatever. They're the enemy, period, and your main objective is to destroy the enemy. And I think that's conditioning and we have to admit the fact that people who come back from war are then going to place that same psychological conditioning on people that they view as enemies. And so if they, you know, Micah comes back to his neighborhood and police are killing people in his neighborhood and are not being held accountable, and are an occupying force in the same way that [residents of Afghanistan] felt like you might've been an occupying force in a different land. I don't think it's a psychological leap to assume that perhaps he's going to take the same trainings and use them to meet the same ends and that's what he did. And I definitely don't condone what he did, but I think there's a psychological understanding that needs to happen. I would only want to go see a therapist who could at least lend him his humanity. Right? Um, because I think it's very easy to write people off as monsters, and I think that's part of what's going on.

Richard was deliberate and intentional in his comments, and it was evident, particularly during this portion of the interview, that he was empathetic toward and passionate about the veteran experience. His comments on the psychological conditioning that accompanies military training seemed to hold true for him, also, given that his speech became increasingly fervent.

Jasmine: Underrated

Jasmine is a 34-year-old heterosexual female, married with three children (ages 12- and 10-years-old, and eight months). She served active duty in the Army for five years, which was followed by two years in its National Guard component. Her time in service spanned from 2002 to 2009, reaching the rank of Sergeant (E-5), and she deployed once to Iraq. She currently is employed as a real estate agent. Our interview was rescheduled multiple times as she was in the process of campaigning for state senate. Reportedly, she had made history in her state for this attempt and "surprising" success that she had from her efforts. Her tenacity was unsurprising as the interview progressed; she expressed herself in such a way that no one would be surprised of her achievements.

When asked, Jasmine identified herself as a wife, mother, sister, aunt, advocate, and caregiver. She is a Black veteran who identifies herself through familial and relational terms. She elaborated on her experience of the intersection of her Black, female, and service member identities while also highlighting prevailing stereotypes that limit the female service member experience:

> In the Army, you're either going to be, um, you have probably heard this before, but as a female, you are going to be a bitch or a ho. So, either you're a ho and you're fucking everybody or you're a bitch because you're getting stuff done, but you can't just be a strong leader. As a woman, it has to be because she's bitchy.

Jasmine described feeling a pressure to succeed and to be at "the top of [her BCT

graduating] class," so that she would not be perceived through sexual, derogatory terms.

She graduated from basic training as an Honor Graduate. She expressed, "I wanted to use

those outward indicators of who I was because I didn't want somebody else to define

me." During her basic training, she could recall being told by other male soldiers that

women did not belong in the Army. Jasmine also described the consequences of her

having to navigate her military career with such an intense desire to achieve. She

declared,

> I'm now 34 and my hips and my knees, every damn thing on me hurts and I've
> been in counseling for a couple years because of that and other things from me
> just trying to keep my label, I guess how other people identified me, I wanted to
> keep those intact. Like, I came into contact with a couple people that I thought
> meant me well, and they were not, so you know, I was sexually assaulted, and
> I've been in counseling since '09 dealing with that.

Regarding her military sexual trauma (MST) experience, Jasmine recounted

having to, "push it out of [her] head," because the perpetrator was once her Drill

Sergeant. She shared that she did not file a report of sexual assault because she did not

want to get "recycled." To be recycled means that a service member essentially must

repeat a particular stage of the training cycle such as weapons skills training; ultimately,

this means that the service member spends a longer duration of time in basic training. She

also mentioned that she chose not to say anything at the time of the encounter because of

the military's "mission-first" policy. She felt that filing a report at the time would just

deter from the mission. However, she was not on mission at the time, and still, that

mission-first, notion remained salient for her. Jasmine denounced a military culture

where the victim often is blamed for the occurrence of MST and that their resultant fear

hinders them from speaking out against their perpetrators. She disclosed that she was a

victim of multiple MST experiences during her service, and that it was not until after she

discharged that she felt safe to say something about them. She recounted one particular

occurrence when another female Soldier was sexually assaulted by their

Noncommissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC). Jasmine noted that fellow Soldiers then

would refer to the victim as a "ho" and would make degrading comments such as, "She

knows she wanted it." Thus, Jasmine determined, "I'm not going to put myself through

that," and she purposefully then did not come forward about her own encounters with

MST until after she left the military.

Throughout the interview, Jasmine spoke about her experiences very concretely

and cognitively. Presumably, she had completed a great deal of personal counseling prior

to our conversation, which apparently helped her to speak about her traumatic

experiences without the correlated emotions. In addition to these overarching safety

issues for her, she also described being held to achievement standards beyond those

typically required of her male counterparts. For example, she remembered a series of

encounters where she went to a Promotion Board committee against a male soldier twice:

> Men have a different set of expectations and a different set of challenges
> because people look at me like I'm here to be mediocre. We're all doing
> the same thing. For some reason, it's like anything that I do, they're going
> to look at the negative first, like, "Oh, well, she could have done this."
> And even when I went to the Board, and I won the Board and won the
> Soldier of the Month award, it was like, "Well, you stumbled on this
> question that you should have known," versus when this guy, the White
> guy, when he won, it was like, "Aw man, good job." When I won, it was
> like, "Yeah, you did, you know, you won, but you could have done this
> because…" and I'm like, what the fuck?

Jasmine outlined her military journey through the following stages: (a)

Naivety/Gullibility, (b) Betrayal, (c) Epiphany, (d) Excited, and (e) Love/Phoenix.

Chapter 1 (Naivety/Gullibility) described her experiences in entering the military. She did

not know what to expect, and she was struggling to identify her place in the Army

system. She enlisted when she was 18 years old, and she considered herself fairly "impressionable." Chapter 2, Betrayal, described her process while navigating her two MST experiences. She felt as if she gave herself to an institution that did not protect her, which led her to be increasingly cautious of her encounters within the military. She used Epiphany to identify her Chapter 3 because this is when she "woke up" and realized the depths of Army culture. Meaning, she came to acknowledge it as a patriarchal system that frequently marginalized its female service members. Chapter 4, Excited, captured her experiences in leaving the military and planning for a life post-service. Jasmine's final and present chapter was coined Love/Phoenix. Love/Phoenix described her efforts to give back to the veteran community through participating in various women's veteran groups and simultaneously work through her own trauma- and military-related experiences.

Jasmine's narrative demonstrated the nuanced nature of the Black veteran experience. Her military-related experiences were neither homogenous nor predictable; rather, they were multidimensional. Jasmine's story suggests that military experiences only can be understood within the consideration and context of one's cultural identities. Her military narrative in part was informed by her identities and experiences of MST coupled with a general lack of support by her leadership and absence of justice.

Jaz: Brass Monkey

Jaz is a 41-year-old heterosexual female, married with two children (ages 23 and eight). She served in the U.S. Army reserves from 2000 to 2018, with one 12-month deployment to Kosovo in 2008. She reached the rank of Major (O-4) during her service. An Army Major serves as the primary staff officer for brigade and task force command regarding personnel, logistical and operational missions.

When prompted, Jaz delineated her most salient cultural identities to be as follows: mother, Black woman, and advocate. She conveyed her military narrative through a fairly emotionally detached response style, though many of her responses throughout the interview were quite telling. She began her interview by describing the extent to which her identities shaped her military narrative:

> I kind of feel like those roles and those identities were used to label me in a negative light. Um, I, uh, was a single mother when I joined the military. I was recently divorced when I was in the military, so I've always had my son. Um, but it seemed like whenever I had any issues that would come up, whether that would be emergencies or activities, my status as a mom was used against me. I would also say my gender was used against me when it came down to leadership positions as if to question if I would be tough enough, if I would be able to handle the pressure to… so on and so forth. It felt limiting for me at times when seeking out leadership opportunities or jobs that were generally for men.

While sharing about the impact of her identities, she also made several insightful inferences about the overall culture of the military. She declared,

> That has also been my experience on being Black. I have experienced racism directly and indirectly in the military. People look at the military as a subcategory of society. But, you know, the military is America, so whatever issues and stigmas and stereotypes and, you know, just, the kinds of challenges we have in American society, those ideologies will also carry over into the military. In the military, the uniform doesn't give you a protective cloak from the ills of American society.

Jaz graciously shared of her own lived experiences and specific examples of improper military treatment towards females that she witnessed, and what she felt to be an institution-wide perception that "women shouldn't be in leadership positions." She disclosed that, as a woman in the military, it was never okay to have a bad day. A common response that she heard to such a typical human phenomenon would be, "This is just the type of behavior that will get Soldiers killed." My perception of Jaz was that, at her core, she was a strong, confident individual, and that a significant fear of hers was to

be perceived as a "weak woman" by her male counterparts both within and outside of the military. A portion of her service years occurred during Hurricane Katrina, and unfortunately, her own home was destroyed during this catastrophic natural disaster. She reported being met with zero accommodations at the time by her leadership. Also, she was experiencing chronic body weakness then as well, which she summed up being due to training fatigue resultant from the heat and humidity of the training environment that she was in at the time. Jaz was notified that she was going to deploy to Afghanistan only just a few weeks after Hurricane Katrina had destroyed her home. After minimizing her own somatic symptoms in an effort to maintain a strong appearance, she used some of her downtime to consult with a physician. Two weeks later, she received a diagnosis of head, neck, and throat cancer. She believes that had it not been for her gender, she would have felt safe enough to seek medical treatment far sooner than she actually did.

As Jaz began to map out her military narrative, the extent to which her identities shaped her military experiences was practically undeniable. She disclosed that she joined the military to demonstrate to her son that, "Things like single mothers, things like coming from an underprivileged background or restrictions and stereotypes that society places on you, are not going to stop you from succeeding." Unlike several of the other veterans who were interviewed, Jaz did not come from a military family. Conversely, at the time of her commission (Officer's enlistment), she was criticized by her father who preached that, "Black people didn't belong in the military and shouldn't fight because they didn't even have respect in their own country." Jaz described the nuanced nature of traditional military responses to Black service members' achievements. She declared the following:

A White soldier achieves something and it's, "Oh my God, that's a great achievement." If a Black soldier achieves something, "Oh my God, that's such a great achievement for you as an African American," or, "You're the first Black to achieve this." So, it was kind of placed as little trophies that society saw for them as if they were earning their way or being recognized as a Black person and not for the achievement solely as a soldier or service member.

Jaz provided insight into what I interpreted as being her emotionally detached response style throughout her interview. Ultimately, these acts of discrimination were not perceived as novel events for Jaz; sadly, they were more of an expectation trained from generations of cultural teachings. She reported,

We as Black people have, you know, this is not something that's new to our culture. Whether you're a veteran or not, it's something that has plagued American society since they brought over the first Black person from slavery. You know, we have a different mindset because we have been taught from previous generations, whether from parents or grandparents, what to expect and how to conduct yourself and to know when someone is trying to target you because of your gender or your race, specifically. So for me, it didn't really bother me because um, you know, our life has always kind of been that way. So, we've always been aware… we've always been "woke."

When I encouraged Jaz to identify a title for her military narrative, she immediately delivered Brass Monkey. Her reasoning was, "As an Officer, you wear what they call brass, but even with having that rank and that prestige, people still look at you and see a nigger." Her words were profound and indicated an unfortunate reality suggesting that, regardless of merit, Black service members are only ever truly seen through a distorted, pejorative lens. She proceeded by identifying the following chapters within her narrative: (a) Wow, (b) Acceptance, (c) Normality, (d) Egress, and (e) Living. Wow described her experiences in basic training and her sense of shock that the military operated with the same institutionalized racism as she had seen in the civilian sector of American society. Acceptance described her realization that military culture is not

protected from "the ills of society" and ultimately, it led her to "cover [herself] and

protect [herself] accordingly." Normality was described as follows:

> Normality looks like, "Okay, I know what I'm dealing with." I know what to
> avoid. I'm going to ensure that I build my career the way that I want to build it
> regardless of the things that are surrounding me, trying to keep me from it. So,
> I'm building my base of normality of what I need to do to succeed as a Soldier.

Egress represented Jaz's discharge and transition from the military. She left on

her own terms following a series of prominent health issues. She made the choice to exit

the military and prioritize her physical and mental well-being rather than to place herself

and the Soldiers in her command at an unnecessary risk. Further, she insisted that the

general transitional experience from service member to civilian, "is the one thing that

doesn't gender- or race-discriminate or care about what MOS you had. It's shitty for all

veterans." She elaborated that she felt unprepared to reintegrate back into society and

unacknowledged by society of her service. Lastly, Jaz identified Living as her final and

current stage. Living captures her experiences with letting go and moving on outside of

the military, though she believes that her reintegration into civilianhood will be a lifelong

endeavor.

Jaz offered profound revelations throughout her interview. She freely disclosed

her encounters with racism and gender discrimination during her service. At times, it felt

as if she was somewhat psychologically removed or emotionally disconnected from her

military traumas and experiences in general. Serving as a Major, she indicated that it was,

"not okay for [her] to have a bad day." As a Major, one serves with many eyes looking to

them for leadership, and Jaz described a certain pressure to always be at her best. This

cultural expectation might have manifested itself during the interview given the

socialization that she experienced during her 18 years of service. She offered the

following feedback for mental health professionals working with Black veterans:

> They just need to do their jobs without prejudice or bias. Um, because that's what they're there for. You can't bring in, you know, what they think. I mean, we all have personal biases. We're human. Yes, but when you are a health care professional, and someone's life is depending upon how you treat them, then you have to be adult enough, and put their profession ahead of their individual feelings or biases towards [the client].

John: Chapter Six

John is a 33-year-old single, heterosexual male, born into a military family

(veteran aunts and uncles). He served in the U.S. Army for 12 years (2003 to 2015),

during which time he deployed to Afghanistan for nine months, and ultimately attained

the rank of Captain (O-3). He currently works as a project manager. John had a relatively

uncommon trajectory leading into his military career, which allowed for him to have

unique perspective into the military experience. Instead of joining right after high school,

John entered the military after earning his BA in Philosophy and then spent a couple of

years in the nonprofit and private sectors. Entering the Army with a college degree

allowed him to enter as an Officer in the rank of Second Lieutenant (O-1).

John was calculated and academic in his response style throughout his interview.

When encouraged to identify what identities he held most important to him, he replied

American and male, adding that, "It's not of any sort of sentimental value. If you were to

ask me in terms of the hierarchy of identities that I have, then I would start there." His

identities and desire for "a sense of brotherhood" informed his decision to enter the

military. He reported that during his service, he recognized a nuanced color-blind

mentality among all service members where, "When you're in the military, what you see

is green before anything else. Green being the Army color." He never felt personally targeted by anyone due to his intersecting identities, particularly his Black identity.

John struggled to identify specific stages for his military narrative beyond Recruitment, Selecting an MOS, and Discharge. He described his military identity development process as a steady progression of growth. Further, he noted that he had a positive discharge experience, commenting that, "I came in and accomplished what I intended, and now it's time to start doing something else." After I inquired about his reintegration experience given that the research suggests such a distinct phase as being particularly salient for veterans, he noted, "I think for me, reintegration was more about Step 1 of post-military life rather than the last step of military life." Ultimately, he titled his overall military narrative as Chapter Six, declaring, "One of the overarching things about my military life is that it was a chapter of my life. It wasn't, you know, I didn't view it as a bell curve where when you reach the peak then you're done and you're going downhill. For me, it was like… chapter six."

John was difficult to track at times during his interview presumably due to his philosophical inclinations which led him to frequently intellectualize his responses rather than respond in a more open, less technical manner. His interview was the most concise and brief of all 12 interviews. When I inquired about the emotional impact of his military experiences or the emotional relevance of his identities, he instead tended to intellectualize his responses. Throughout his interview, I began to expect this response pattern from him; however, I did not feel as if he necessarily was being evasive or emotionally avoidant of certain topics. Simply, his military experience apparently did not hold as much emotional significance for him as it did for others. The same could be said

of the salience of his racial identities. He offered the following feedback to treatment

providers working with Black veterans:

> Mhmm, so I would say this actually, I think that for mental health, in general, but this particularly applies to veterans, there's very much a perspective of sickness and cure, and I would say that that's not necessarily the most accurate and/or best way to approach people. Rather, approach people from a veteran point of view.

Simply put, John was affirming the need for a person-first, rather in this case,

veteran-first approach that centers the veteran experience instead of solely targeting

psychopathology.

Sarah: Pride

Sarah is a 36-year-old single, heterosexual female with one 10-year-old child. Her

parents both served a period of time in the Armed Forces as well. She served both as a

Marine (2002 to 2007) and Army Soldier (2007 to 2013), ultimately reaching the rank of

Sergeant (E-5). Also, she completed a 12-month deployment in Iraq and a 13-month

deployment in Afghanistan. Sarah now is employed as a correctional officer at a prison.

She identified Christian woman, mother, and veteran as her most salient identities when

asked.

Sarah's military narrative began with JROTC in high school. Shortly before

graduating from high school, she enlisted through a Marine Corps recruiter. After

completing her service commitment with the Marines in 2007, she then joined the Army

so that she could be stationed closer to her family. Additionally, because she was born

into a military family, she also felt a strong familial connection that motivated her to

serve. Her identities informed many of the decisions that she made throughout her career.

Sarah was confident and assured in her religious and familial identities; unfortunately,

some of these identities of hers were less welcomed by her miliatry peers than were

others. She described some of her fellow service members as, "Jealous, and a lot of people didn't want women over them or commanding." Other than a few experiences of sexism, Sarah had mostly positive comments about her military experience from enlistment through to reintegration. She experienced camaraderie as a process during her deployments, admitting, "Just from being with them for that length of time, more exposure, you learn how to kind of accept one another."

Sarah's transition out of the military was a "great experience." Immediately after discharge, she found employment within the military as a civilian. She did describe the nuanced nature of having to re-socialize within her family upon reintegration. She explained,

> I think I had to remember that [my family] are not my counterparts. They are not the people that I was in the military with. I have to be calm. You have to change what you do. You have to basically slow it down. I had to watch what I said and how I said it. I definitely had to change that. Like certain things I would say in a certain way, that my family would not understand. I really had to watch what I said and just be careful.

Sarah described her military narrative through the following stages: (a) Boot Camp, (b) First Duty Station, (c) Stages of rank, and (d) Discharge. Boot Camp described her initial introduction to first military-specific tasks, and it symbolized the first time that she identified as a U.S. Marine. Her boot camp lasted a duration of 13 weeks. She described the experience as, "A tear-you-down moment, then build-you-up" process. She also reported becoming physically fit and gaining a basic understanding of what it means to be a Marine. Her understanding of being a Marine emphasized the importance of wearing the Marine uniform properly and living the Marine Corps values of courage, honor, and commitment. Interestingly, Sarah described further subphases within her boot camp experience that were characterized by footwear. She expressed the following:

So, phase 1 of boot camp, you wear tennis shoes then you wore boots. Then when you reach the next stage, you were able to blouse your boots. And I think the different stages go with your maturity level. With the different stages, you learn what to do and what to say.

Following Boot Camp, Sarah identified the next stage in her narrative as First Duty Station. This stage described her introduction to her MOS. During this stage, she was tasked with applying all that she learned during her initial entry training to perform her job successfully. Next, Stages of Rank described the various responsibilities that she associated with each subsequent promotion. For instance, a Private First Class (E-3) who is promoted to Specialist (E-4) is given additional responsibilities and leadership opportunities. Fourth, Stages of Rank is largely dependent on a service member's goals. Initially, her goals were to have a career in the military, but physical injuries sustained from her service led that goal to no longer be feasible. Lastly, Discharge described Sarah's exit from military service. She discharged due to medical concerns from physical injuries that she received during her enlistment. She acknowledged not really feeling supported by her leadership when managing her injuries, and she described her discharge as a fairly straightforward process. She demonstrated a tendency on her part to minimize any foreseeable conflict by just looking ahead to the future. She stated that she, "just kept it moving" once she realized it was time for her to terminate her military service.

Sarah was generic in her response style and provided little detail; however, she did speak briefly of the influence that her gender identity had on her military experiences, particularly when she was tasked with commanding other service members. She was fairly nonspecific in her feedback for mental health providers working with Black veterans, sharing only,

Have patience, try to be understanding. I believe that talking to a person versus giving medication helps because I think, medication, unless you really need it, most people shouldn't be on medication. I think that if you sit down and have someone to talk to, to get it off your chest, your heart, you will be fine.

Mary: Thankful

Mary is a 38-year-old, single heterosexual female, born into a military family (veteran father). She served in the U.S. Army from 1998 to 2004, reaching the rank of Sergeant (E-5) and completing a 12-month deployment in Qatar. Mary identified herself as a person of faith, community-oriented, and a family-oriented individual. She was friendly, yet somewhat reluctant to share specifics on presumably emotionally-activating topics. For instance, when I inquired about the intersection of her racial and gender identities and its impact on her service, she expressed the following and declined to elaborate, "I think a lot of that depends on the unit. I was in (suburban city), Oklahoma, and, um, I mean it wasn't, (takes lengthy pause before continuing) I'm sorry, yep, but it could have been, it could have been better. It was challenging and didn't have to be." She made multiple references to "unnecessary bumpy roads" throughout the interview without elaborating. Mary described having been "trained" and prepared by her mother to expect certain "challenging, bumpy roads" during service; however, that training did not seem fully successful in guarding her against particular distressing experiences in the military, which she was avoiding discussion about during the interview. She described several instances of bullying that she reported to command and were not taken seriously. She did refer to one experience where she felt particularly unsafe because another soldier had made physical threats towards her; however, disappointingly, Mary's commanding Sergeant only acknowledged those threats as a joke. Mary believed that her concern would have been validated had she not been a woman or Black.

Mary used the following chapters to describe her military narrative: (a) Recruitment, (b) Basic Training, (c) AIT, (d) Finding Myself Years, (e) Deployment, and (f) RIP. Recruitment, Basic Training, and AIT followed a standard process. She enlisted into the military shortly after graduating from high school. The process was quick, and she was able to sign with the recruiters without incident. Basic Training and AIT lasted roughly 20 weeks, altogether. She described Basic Training as a, "tear-you-down to build-you-up" process. She was unable to eat the foods that she would normally eat, and she was not accustomed to the intense physical training that was required. Finding myself years denoted her experience with, "Finding where I belong in the unit, and just developing as a person." Deployment was "stressful" given that she did not feel a strong connection with her unit, and the isolative nature of deployment afforded her minimal communication with her family. She would not elaborate on the moments when she felt most inclined to reach out to her family. RIP described her discharge and transition experience, which she noted was smooth given that she also had secured employment prior to exiting. Mary currently supports service members and veterans who are struggling to secure employment post-discharge.

Finally, Mary offered the following for behavioral health providers working with Black veterans:

> I think they really need to know some of the things that go on culturally… one example would be… I've done a program, a mental health program for women veterans, and a woman was explaining her experience. She was saying that her mom was yelling, calling her a red SOB. And I was surprised that the White therapist knew what she meant by saying red. I think just that overall, I'm not saying you have to hang in it, but definitely study it, and there's certain things that you'll find. If you're not around and you're not there, you're unaware, and how can [the therapist] speak to that? A lot of issues are specific to cultures. So, it's important to study these cultures to at least see common trends.

Interestingly, Mary began the interview with arguably the most emotional activation among all of the veterans who I interviewed. Seemingly innocuous questions about her service (e.g., "How would you describe your deployment?") led her to become deflective, often redirecting the conversation or simply minimizing the impact of her less optimal experiences. She took frequent pauses when prompted to elaborate on specific aspects of her military narrative. This interview took place over the phone, and I imagine that she might have been more forthcoming had the interview taken place in person. From my view, Mary responded to distressing content similarly to therapy clients who have experienced trauma. For example, when asked about the impact of her racial and gender identities on her military narrative, she was nonspecific or would mention how she saw those factors show up in other Soldiers' experiences. She would not elaborate about what she meant when she said that her mother prepared her to encounter "challenging, bumpy roads." Though she did not provide further detail regarding the phenomenon under investigation, she did become more expressive over time as the interview continued; however, her expressiveness was more related to inconsequential conversation rather than the phenomenon under investigation. With more time, I think that Mary could have gotten to a point where she felt safe enough to reflect more about such personally activating topics.

Maxwell: Second Chance

Maxwell is a 41-year-old married, heterosexual male with three children (ages 11, eight, and one) who now works as a social worker for the VA. He served in the U.S. Army from 2003 to 2008, completing a 10-month deployment in Iraq and attaining the rank of Sergeant (E-5). He asserted that his most salient identities were as a veteran, an

African American male, and a husband. He reported that his veteran status was his most

important identity, as he could "use it as a form of currency." I was taken aback by this

comment initially; however, he quickly elaborated on what he meant here by asserting,

> Just being an African American in America, and just understanding maybe the
> thought process of how America is. I kind of use it as leverage. I went to college.
> I graduated from college, but I didn't have enough credentials to really assimilate
> into American society. And so, I viewed myself at that point as, "Here I am, a
> college-educated African American in America." So, I basically figured I needed
> to pick up the identity of a veteran, and I will let you know this: Americans are
> just more open to that, the idea of a veteran.

Maxwell was not using his veteran identity to deceive others; instead, he believed

that the military would offer the only opportunity for him to be viewed positively in

America. Maxwell's Black identity thus was a direct correlate to his decision to serve in

the military. Meaning, he elected to serve because he thought that his veteran status

would almost overshadow his Black identity when he presented for job interviews,

suggesting the perception that veteran status is more valued by American society than is

one's Blackness. He recalled the following in regard to his decision to enlist:

> I viewed America really through a very racist lens. Being an African American, I
> just saw that that's what makes my transition into the workforce more difficult
> because I am a college-educated African American. So, you know, in a sense,
> having the identity of being a veteran was maybe somewhat more disarming. I
> guess at this point, I'm not viewed as a threat, but as somewhat of… maybe I'm
> even a little bit more American because I have served.

Further, Maxwell's decision to enlist also was motivated by his being born into a

military family; his father and uncle both served in the Army. Maxwell's own journey

into the Army began shortly after he graduated from college. He was struggling to secure

employment that met his financial goals, and the military served as a function for raising

both his social financial statuses. During his initial entry training, he noted shock in that

his lens of a racist America somewhat faded for him. He stated, "Basically it fades

because it goes from being about me and the people who look like me to, we're a unit and we have things to get done as a common goal." He described a pattern of color-blindness that he perceived to be pervasive within the service, commenting, "You saw green; you didn't necessarily see the skin color."

Maxwell also spoke at length about the culture of the post-9/11 military, with most of which being centered on violence. He could offer a special perspective given that he joined at a precipice during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He noted that he now views the world as, "A much more volatile place." He spent a significant portion of his deployment working guard duty and searching the perimeter for possible explosives. He and his unit worked with third-country nationals, and he was often tasked with ensuring that they were not planting improvised explosive devices (IEDs). This experience led him to be all the more cautious and hypervigilant, even when back in the U.S. He acknowledged sometimes feeling uneasy and "on edge" even when in seemingly innocuous situations such as grocery shopping.

Maxwell briefly commented on his discharge and reintegration experiences, disclosing that he had reestablished employment as a civilian within one month of his discharge from the Army. He shared that his most challenging experiences throughout his reintegration was in interacting with civilians who did not maintain the same "military bearings" or standards. He noted that civilians did not have the same degree of motivation and work ethic that he had grown accustomed to while in the military. He described civilians as lazy, and that he could not fathom why they would choose to arrive late to work or not show up at all. When I inquired as to whether his time in the service

met his objective of being considered an equal through the lens of White America, he stated, "I wouldn't go that far, but maybe it got me a little closer."

Maxwell categorized his military narrative through the following chapters: (a) This is My Reality, (b) Deconstruction/Reconstruction, (c) Building, (d) Realization, (e) Testing, and (f) Assimilation. This is My Reality described Maxwell's acknowledgment of his new norm as an Army Soldier. Some doubt and confusion regarding his decision to join also characterized this stage for him. Deconstruction/Reconstruction described his experience of basic training and AIT. He felt as through his Drill Sergeants were tasked with deconstructing his initial sense of identity as an individual in order to reconstruct a more "useful" warrior identity. Building described his increase in confidence and skills as he was able to demonstrate mastery over various technologies and military tasks. Realization represented his acknowledgement of a new normal as he had become a father and had served in combat. More specifically, he realized at the time that he would have to adjust how he negotiated his work and family responsibilities. He acknowledged struggling to leave his "military persona" in the field instead of bringing it home to his family. Testing was when Maxwell assessed that he had accomplished his military goals, and thus he felt ready to exit military culture and to use his newly attained skills in the civilian world. Assimilation captured his reintegration experience, which he described as positive, primarily because he felt nearer to his goal of being on an equal playing field with White America.

Finally, Maxwell titled his entire narrative as Second Chance, as the military afforded him the chance to be on a "closer" to equal playing field with White America. To understand Maxwell's military narrative more fully, first it was important to have

some familiarity with the historical context of race relations in the United States. For him, the military was his chance to "have a seat at the table" with the rest of White America; his economic options were limited, in his mind, prior to joining the military.

I ended Maxwell's interview by asking him what mental health providers need to know in order to be more helpful to him and other Black post-9/11 veterans. He responded,

> I think what they probably need to know is that the Black vet experience is very unique. I've heard some stories that definitely differ from my experience. Yeah, it did extremely from my experience, um, to where, you know, I would say, like, I said the racist lens faded some, but for some other African American veterans, they still experience the difficulty of the racism.

Cross-Case Analysis

Following the within-case analysis, participants' transcripts were analyzed again through paradigmatic thinking in order to describe emerging themes of their narratives as identified from the content of the interviews across the cases. To facilitate this process, I used NVIVO 12® analysis software (QSR International, NVIVO, 2018). Transcript texts were imported into the NVIVO® software platform and the data then were organized and examined by me. Codes and categories were created to identify other transcript data that represented an identified theme. Six common, discernable themes about these Black post-9/11 veterans' narratives emerged through the cross-case analysis process. The specific theme names were chosen in an effort to provide themes that captured these veterans' narratives in a manner that would be digestible for behavioral health providers.

Several of these themes also were relevant in various ways to the existing literature about military culture and Black identity. The themes that emerged here provide insight into (a) the nuanced nature of serving in the post-9/11 U.S. military while Black,

(b) existing military structures that continue to marginalize Black service members with intersecting underprivileged gender and/or sexual orientation identities, (c) the military life cycle, and (d) treatment considerations for behavioral health providers working with post-9/11 Black service members and veterans.

Research Question One asked, "What narratives do post-9/11 era veterans who identify within the Black Diaspora produce about their service and post-service experiences?" Below, are the four themes that emerged in response:

- Keep it pushing/suck it up

- Family orientation/communalism: "I'm sticking with the community"

- Seeing green/color-blindness

- No protective cloak/microcosm of American society

Research Question Two asked, "What is the process of military veteran identity development from entrance to separation for post-9/11 era Black veterans?" In response, their military narrative was described as a chapter book with the following chapters:

- Recruitment

- Initial entry training

- First duty station and beyond

- Discharge/reintegration

Research Question Three asked, "What are the implications for counseling psychologists, and more specifically, what do these behavioral health providers need to understand about post-9/11 Black veterans to provide more holistic, effective treatment services?" The theme that emerged in response was titled,

- Understanding blackness requires a cultural fluency

Research Questions

    Q1   What narratives do post-9/11 era veterans who identify within the Black diaspora produce about their service and post-service experiences?

Theme 1: Keep it pushing/suck it up. Though several of these veterans made references/inferences to this emerging theme, the theme may relate more to their general patterned response to distressing and potentially activating material during their interviews rather than to the explicit information that they provided. For example, many of these veterans were very concise and succinct in their response style. Although most reported having a positive military experience overall, several of the veterans alluded to and identified having several individual negative military experiences due to encounters ranging from MST to racial and gender discrimination. Few were able or willing to divulge specific details about their respective circumstances that could have helped to better illustrate phenomena such as military discrimination. For instance, Brenda asserted, "It's all a blur," when I made inquiries into her disclosure of gender discrimination while she was serving. Mary also contributed the following ambiguous statement, "I think a lot of that depends on the unit. I was in [suburban city], Oklahoma, and… um… I mean, it wasn't… [takes lengthy pause before continuing] I'm sorry, yep, it could have been, it could have been better. It was challenging and didn't have to be." Subsequently, she declined to elaborate further when I asked about the influence of her female identity on her experiences in the military. She made similar pauses throughout her interview to suggest to me that maybe she had experienced an emotionally traumatic event during her military career; however, she never identified having undergone any specific trauma.

When a participant would identify having experienced a negative event in the military, they tended to speak cognitively and concretely without acknowledging the associated emotional component or how they generally felt about it. John presented as purely academic and intellectualizing in his disclosure of his important identities and his overall military experience in general. He admitted that his salient identities were, "Not of any sort of sentimental value." Further, when encouraged to speak openly about his identities and general military-related experiences, he appeared to be very selective of which questions he answered and what answers he provided to them. Relatedly, Jaz described having to "cover (her)self" from being perceived by her peers and leadership through a negative lens given that she had rose to the rank of field grade Officer (O-4 to O-6), and thus, she felt she had to be mindful of how she expressed herself so to maintain an appearance of professionalism. In addition, Jasmine disclosed having experienced multiple instances of MST, though she then was unwilling to offer any details surrounding these multiple assaults when asked about them. This felt understandable to me given the emotionally activating and distressing nature of MST; however, her limited willingness to disclose many specifics then seemed to become a pattern for her throughout the interview, not just related to the topic of MST.

This theme also highlights the tendency for many of the participants to speak to the facts of a difficult event while perhaps not conveying their emotional experiences about the same event. More specifically, several of the veterans were eager to disclose about specific lived examples of discrimination that they encountered while in the military; however, they were ostensibly less forthcoming when asked to reflect on their more internal, emotional experiences of these events. Keep it Pushing/Suck it Up

appeared to be a psychological coping strategy that they used for processing the

potentially highly distressful experiences they had such as discrimination and MST so

that they instead could continue to productively engage in a task (e.g., military and family

duties). Further, this behavioral pattern seemed to be effective for several of these

veterans, at least in the short term; however, these same veterans also seemed to endorse

significant psychological symptoms upon discharge such as anxiety and/or depression.

Theme 2: Family orientation/communalism: "I'm sticking with the

community." In an effort to allow for varied and individualized responses yet while still

centering the focus of our discussion on identity, my typical sequence of events across

the interviews was to begin with an open dialogue about the participants' most salient,

valued cultural identities. Each participant was verbally provided with the following

prompt, which I developed based on the literature in order to help them conceptualize

how they felt about their identities: "The current literature defines identity as that which

explains who a person is. Identity can be understood as a social category distinguished by

specific traits or attributes. Tell me about the identities that you hold that are important to

you."

Many of the veterans described having a sense of self that was irrevocably linked

to their various familial attachments, whether that be as a parent, spouse, offspring,

and/or sibling. Most of these veterans identified themselves as who they were in relation

to others rather than solely as who they were as individuals. In addition, seven of the

participants were born into families where either one or both biological parents had

served in the Armed Forces themselves. Given that many participants had parents in the

service during their own formative years, another family-oriented identity emerged, that

of a dependent. Dependent is a term used for any spouse or child (26 years old and under) of an active-duty service member or retiree.

Further, most participants described that many of their military service and discharge decisions had been driven significantly by consideration of their families. Interestingly, the impetus that set these veterans on the path of service frequently was the same force that indicated for them when it was time to hang up their uniform and begin the reintegration process back to civilian life. For example, many of the participants asserted that they entered the military (a) to provide for their family and/or family-of-origin, and (b) to honor their own family's military legacy. Also, the participants consistently listed a desire for increased familial closeness as a primary reason for ending their military service. Surprisingly, given the nature of the interviews, I expected the participants' Black identities to emerge as most salient; however, it initially was only identified by six of the 12 participants even though this study's advertisement for recruitment explicitly stated its primary intent to be an investigation of racial identity.

Communally-oriented individuals have personal identity and goal systems that are inextricably linked to the identity and goals of the community. Many of these veterans also identified having roles such as "helper" and "advocate" as those which were core to their own sense of self. Mary was one such veteran, and eventually this "helper" identity led her to eventually establish her own advocacy organization for veterans seeking employment post-discharge. Richard was another veteran who identified himself as an advocate. This identity led him to develop the Black Veterans Initiative, which investigates the multifaceted nature of Black military identity and, ultimately, operates to challenge the longstanding poor treatment of Blacks within the Armed Forces. Others,

such as Jaz, Derek, Ashton, Adaline, and Maxwell took jobs as social workers, advocates, counselors and other similar roles post-discharge.

The salience of these participants' family- and communally-oriented value systems remained largely stable throughout their service and post-service experiences. However, is it useful to consider how these value systems may have manifested for these veterans depending on a variety of contextual factors. First, operating as service members did appear to influence their values. Military service itself did not appear to change their value systems, but rather it did seem to influence how their value systems presented. For instance, military service does not allow for the same degree of access to one's family as the civilian sector might afford. However, the value remains, and the service member is left with needing to negotiate how that need now will be met given the alternating environment. As a result, veterans would describe building lifelong, seemingly familial, relationships with their battle buddies. This process proved to be easier for some participants (e.g., John, Brenda, and Ashton) and more difficult for others (e.g., Derek, Mary, and Richard). The interviews indicated a separation of experience that seemed to be influenced by one's gender. Those participants with intersecting historically marginalized gender and sexuality identities seemed to describe considerable difficulty in establishing strong bongs with their male and heterosexual counterparts, who have historically, and continue to, dominate the Armed Forces. Moreover, the male participants tended to incorporate more experiences of camaraderie into their military narratives than did the female participants. For many of these males, their battle buddies or their unit became their "extended" family. This was particularly evident when participants referred to their deployment experiences.

This communally-oriented value system also presented differently during participants' service. Several participants recounted having to sometimes neglect their own personal needs regarding their health and safety in an effort to complete their warrior tasks to their chain-of-command's approval. This naturally created some internal psychological dissonance for those who value advocacy; however, they still were able and willing to be "a part of the team" and to support their battle buddies to the greatest extent possible. Derek noted that his military service heightened his value for his own family as his deployment experiences made him that much more appreciative of his loved ones. Also, camaraderie appeared to serve as a significant protective factor for getting some of these veterans through basic training and deployment. Upon discharge, that desire for camaraderie remained just as salient to them, thus resulting in a heightened value for family and a general connectedness with others. The same could be said for communalism given that many of the participants now either self-identified as advocates and/or are employed in positions that prioritize advocacy work such as with the VA. While in the military, these veterans, particularly the female participants, described not having the same autonomy to speak out against such social atrocities as MST out of fear of reprimand from a superior or harsh judgement from other service members. But now, they assist others with utilizing resources within the community, such as, Derek and Maxwell who support veterans who traverse the VA health system, and Jaz who has developed supportive programs to elevate Black veteran success.

Theme 3: Seeing green/color-blindness. Many of the participants described feeling a perceived sense of color-blindness that occurred during the military cycle. Several shared that they felt that their racial identity actually did not have an impact on

their military experiences. Or if it did, the impact of race tended to subside for them following initial entry training or deployment. Both are components of military service where service members are tasked with spending significant amounts of time together in order to attain a common goal. While some described the military culture as similar to American society with the corresponding systemic marginalization, a common response among multiple participants was that "green" was the only color that mattered in the active-duty environment. Green represents the color of the Army uniform, and 11 of the 12 participants were Army veterans. For example, John described never seeing his Black identity as creating any challenges for him while on active duty. He insisted, "When you're in the military, what you see is green before anything else. Green being the Army color." Maxwell noted that he was shocked to find that his belief of a racist America had somewhat faded during his time in basic combat training. He added, "Basically, it fades because it goes from being about me and the people who look like me to we're a unit and we have things to get done as a common goal. You saw green; you didn't necessarily see the color." This similar sentiment also was shared by Ashton as well.

The theme, Seeing green/color blindness, appeared to be a functional strategy as the participants who experienced it described the camaraderie that they encountered as a result. It seemed to be a notion that was instilled in them at a very early stage in the military narrative. A few veterans commented on the socialization that is inherent in Basic Training, and that for them this theme seemed to accompany that process. From the participants' responses, this did not seem to be a process that was explicitly taught to them; rather, it was the product of implicit learning and military socialization.

Interestingly, this theme presented as fairly nuanced, as none of the six female participants endorsed this "seeing green" phenomenon. It appeared that along with being Black, the intersection of other historically marginalized identities such as being female and/or gay served as a barrier to such a cultural privilege. Presumably, post-9/11 Black veterans with multiple historically marginalized identities may have had a much more difficult time being welcomed as, "a part of the team." Instead, those participants with multiple historically marginalized identities were more likely to describe the military as being more reflective of the greater U.S. society in terms of systemic racism, sexism, and a general cultural ignorance. Examples of this phenomenon are provided in the following section.

Theme 4: No protective cloak/microcosm of American society. The societal trends that affect the U.S. often can be seen in the military as well. Despite numerous differences, including those mentioned in the above theme, in many ways the U.S. military functions as a microcosm of our nation; it is comprised of various cultural norms, values, and subgroups, and it operates from a sociopolitical landscape quite similar to the rest of the U.S. For instance, discrimination, sexual assault, and psychological dysfunction remain prominent phenomena within the military, with multiple policies being put in place to address them. As I tracked the trajectories of the Black post-9/11 veterans who agreed to participate in this study, it became evident that many of them simply replaced one culture of oppression and degradation (i.e., the U.S. civilian culture) with another more structured, patriarchal system (i.e., the U.S. military). Interestingly, the veterans who endorsed this theme did not acknowledge being surprised by what they encountered during their military service. Instead, some described being

prepared for these realities by their parents who also had served in the military as well. Individuals who identify within the Black Diaspora often are on the receiving end of such injustice, regardless of whether they are in uniform or have separated from service.

Moreover, many veterans described the military as being reflective of the greater society in regard to its demographics, beliefs, and value systems as well. Specialist shared, "There's a lot of misogyny and patriarchy [in the military]. You have a toxic patriarchy, and a toxic masculinity." Richard, who identified as a gay Black man, observed the following about the culture of the military: "I think it's just a microcosm of our modern culture. Same class conversations, same racial dialogues, same obvious sexism, homophobia, and identity politics." He further described the impact of such a culture on his own development while in the service:

> I will definitely say my first year was a great challenge because I came out of this hyper kind of self-aware, affirming environment at (historically Black college). (I witnessed and experienced), just like, you know, inappropriate kind of racial conversations at some times. Um, comments, biases that to me were very blatant, very obvious, but for others, because of their lived experience, they couldn't see that they were racist or that they had racist inclination. And then on top of that, coupled with, me having to mask or at least in some way, shape or form protect myself and my queer identity, those things became kind of difficult to manage in some respects.

Jaz, a Black woman, provided a direct challenge to the color-blindness mentality in stating,

> In the military, um, people look at the military as a subcategory of society. But you know, the military is America, so whatever issues and stigmas and stereotypes and, you know, just the kinds of challenges we have in American society, those ideologies will also carry over into the military.

Moreover, Jaz insightfully determined that, in the military, "The uniform doesn't give you a protective cloak for the ills of society." This appeared to be true even among participants who did not explicitly endorse this theme. For instance, Jasmine described

not feeling able to inform her leadership of her encounters with MST out of fear of judgment and blaming, both of which are sadly typical societal responses to persons reporting having been sexually assaulted within the civilian sector as well. Further, this theme also seemed to be driven by each particular veteran's connection to their various cultural identities. Those participants who seemed to place greater salience on their own racial, gender, and/or sexual orientation identities were more likely than others to express discontent with how they were treated while in the military. By contrast, those participants who did not acknowledge having as much value for their above identities were more likely to report the theme of Seeing green/color-blindness.

Q2   What is the process of military veteran identity development from entrance to separation for post-9/11 era Black veterans?

Theme 1: The military narrative as a chapter book. Separate from the aforementioned themes that were derived from Research Question One, this theme addresses Research Question Two, which asked veterans, "What is the process of military veteran identity development from entrance to separation for post-9/11 era Black veterans?" Time captures another theme that emerged from this study. Each participant was encouraged to answer the following prompt after they finished sharing of their respective overall military/veteran life processes: "If you could illustrate your military/veteran story within a chapter book, how would you name and describe those chapters?" The following chapters emerged in response: Chapter 1: Recruitment; Chapter 2: Initial entry training; Chapter 3: First duty station and beyond; and Chapter 4: Discharge/reintegration. Though the participants' respective responses about their own veteran development process were unique to each individual veteran, the general structure had overarching similarities. The information provided by the participants was

broadly applicable, yet each veteran made meaning of their experiences in different ways. Below are descriptions of each chapter that emerged across the interviews.

Chapter 1: Recruitment. Recruitment denotes the process through which the participants worked with military recruiters to join the Armed Forces. This stage can occur at various developmental stages in an individual's life. The circumstances surrounding the recruit seem to greatly dictate the recruitment process. Many of these veterans had their first interaction with recruitment during their Junior or Senior year of high school. Those participants who instead entered the military after college naturally were exposed to the recruitment process a bit later on. Recruitment usually is facilitated by a noncommissioned Officer (commonly referred to as NCO; ranks E-4 through E-9), and it is a fairly standard process across the different military branches. The process does look differently for recruits who enlist rather than those who have the opportunity to commission. Recruitment tasks generally include signing copious amounts of paperwork, completing a thorough health assessment, taking a standardized exam, and working directly with an active-duty service member whose professional competence can vary given their diverse military experiences and backgrounds.

The duration of this chapter depends on multiple considerations (e.g., recruit's physical fitness, intended military specialty, service needs, etc.). Factors that motivated these participants to enlist in their respective service branches includes (a) honoring a military family legacy, (b) the promise of educational benefits, and (c) personal development. For example, nine of the 12 participants were born into military families. All of the participants had attained at least their bachelor's degree at the time of their interview. Adaline was one of several participants who acknowledged that they enlisted

in their respective service branch to provide themselves with structure and disciple. Uniquely, Jaz described a negative reaction by family, during her recruitment experience, as her father could not understand why a Black person would willfully elect to join the U.S. military given the historic maltreatment of Black civilians, servicemembers, and veterans. Regarding the affective correlates of this chapter, the participants acknowledged experiencing multiple emotions during this segment of their military narrative, such as, confusion, regret, and excitement.

Chapter 2: Initial entry training. This chapter describes roughly the first six months of the participants' military service. BCT and AIT are meant (a) to provide newly initiated service members with introductory-level knowledge on military and branch-specific culture, (b) to instill in them a military ethos, (c) to prepare them for physical and task demands, and (d) to train them in job-relevant skills. This is when the recruit first can identify as a service member as it is the initial task that all newly conscripted service members must complete before they can proceed to perform the job for which they joined the military. This chapter was reported by each of the participants. Service members in this chapter may report experiencing confusion, anxiety, and loneliness as well as excitement and camaraderie. Generally, this chapter will include basic combat training (BCT) and some degree of job-specific training. The job-specific training usually occurs during Advanced Individual Training (AIT). BCT generally lasts for approximately 12 weeks while AIT lasts for roughly 10 weeks. Duration is a bit more standardized but can vary depending on how the service member performs the various related tasks. Derek acknowledged developing a great deal of maturity during this stage. He described having to grow up much faster than his peers, who, at the time were still living with their parents

or beginning their first year of college. He was being trained to see and do things far beyond what was expected of his same-aged peers. Mary, Maxwell, Sarah, and Derek all described their basic training experiences as a "tear you down, then build you up" process. Specialist's first memory of BCT and AIT regarded the restrictions on contraband. He noted that he was denied basic comforts such as "a cell phone, cookies, or cake." He also compared his initial entry training to "drinking from a water hose," and this sentiment was particularly true for the participants who joined the military immediately after high school. This notion speaks, generally, to the large amount of information that new recruits are expected to retain within a short period of time.

Brenda shared that basic training was her first personal encounter with sexism in the military. She shared of the following interaction with a male Soldier:

> When I was in basic training, there was a guy, and he straight up told me, you know, it was another Black man. He was like, "I don't like the fact that they're women in the Army." But I was like, "What?" And I was 18. I had pretty much just turned 18 at that time. I remember him; I remember his last name was [pseudonym]. He was real tall. I remember him, and he was 29, and I'm just, like, "What?" He said, "I just don't think women should be in the Army." I forget the reason that he gave, but I just assumed it was some sexist bullshit or whatever. Because I was only 18, the fact that I still remember it as clearly as I do now, it obviously played some type of part.

Adaline revealed that her most challenging task during her entry training was learning how to function day-to-day without the comfort and accessibility of her family. She described calling her mother for the first two weeks of basic training. She acknowledged feeling some regret from leaving home, but ultimately, she stated that "[she] got [her] strength and stuck with it." The process of BCT could be divided into at least two common experiences: (a) that of the enlistee and (b) that of the Officer. Four of the 12 participants served as Officers, with John (an O-3) and Jaz (an O-4) making a

distinction, noting that their training placed a large focus on leadership. Regardless of one's rank during service, however, frequent and intense physical activity was ubiquitous across each participant's narrative.

Chapter 3: First duty station and beyond. This chapter captures the participants' military service experiences, following initial entry training, and prior to discharge. This chapter was identified by most of these veterans; however, this was where the participants' military narratives began to diverge given that what proceeds depends greatly on each service member's MOS, goals, and respective unit characteristics/deployment tempo. Upon arriving at one's first duty station, a service member is given their initial opportunity to perform their MOS responsibilities. A service member is typically assigned to a duty station for roughly three years. Regarding the progression of this stage, Derek stated, "It's all growth. It's whatever you want to make out of it. You think about where you want to go in the military. And what kind of advantages do you want to have from the military." Similarly, Sarah noted that the various chapters that follow a service member's first duty station were largely dependent on the soldier's "promotion potential." Adaline was paired with an Explosives Ordinance Disposal (EOD) unit for her first duty station, and she found it to be quite challenging because she was the only Black and/or female-identified person in the unit; she also outranked all of her unit members, all of which led her to feel like an outsider for the first six months.

First deployments tended to take place during this stage. Specialist deployed one month after reaching his first duty station. He stated that he was not afraid, and that it was the adjustment period once he returned from deployment that actually created more

difficulty for him. He described having to relearn how to live in garrison, to prepare for redeployment, to adjust to new regime changes, and to balance all of that with having a long-term romantic relationship.

Specialist was not the only participant to affirm some of the challenges of military service. Jaz described her experience as follows:

> You don't really know what you're getting into. And so, you adapt and overcome. You are continuously as you progress in the military. It's all will; you continue to adapt and overcome because you're getting, you know, more responsibility placed on you. You're having, you know, um, different cultures and climates and situations placed on you. So, it's a continual perpetual storming and informing process where you are adapting and overcoming throughout your military career.

Participants' experiences of their first duty station tended to be both challenging and enlightening. Ashton shared the following of his experience following his first duty assignment:

> It really taught me how to be more responsible because you have people who look up to you. You have people who answer to you, people you supervise. You're in charge of millions of dollars worth of equipment. High visibility. You're working for generals and whatnot. All that training really challenged me to grow up and become a great planner.

Chapter 4: Discharge/reintegration. Most of these participants described successful and straightforward end-to-service experiences. Presumably, this could have been because many of them joined either the reserves or the Army National Guard prior to full discharge. Ashton reported the following of his discharge experience, "I joined the reserves, so it was like I could still have one foot in the door without feeling out completely." Also, many of the veterans reported that they had secured employment prior to discharge, which allowed them one less worry post-discharge.

Further, the military identity was something that remained for most of the participants even well after discharge. Derek described it as such, "Yeah, I mean, it's

always a part of you, even after you leave, it's never really gone." Maxwell endorsed a

successful reintegration experience, stating that he had garnered employment just one

month after separating from service; he said that his employer hired him solely on the

basis of his veteran status. Conversely, Adaline's discharge experience was fraught with

certain challenges given that her unit commander initially would not accept her

notification to end her service, despite her contract approaching its end. She explained

that she had filed a congressional complaint in her respective state, and it was not until

months later when a high-ranking Officer received her paperwork that she was allowed to

officially separate from the Army.

Despite Adaline's personal challenges with this process, it would seem that

discharge, and reintegration in general, are commonly arduous. Jaz provided her own

interpretation of the reintegration process. She stated,

> I will tell you… the military transition is the one thing that doesn't gender or race-discriminate or care about what MOS you had. Its shitty for all veterans [laughs]. Being a soldier for 17 years, almost 18 years, there's nothing that sitting in a class is going to do to prepare me for American society. The military spent 17 years preparing me up to be a Major. Its misleading and unrealistic to think that one course or even the six months you're working to transition out of the military is going to prepare you for everything to be expected. But it's not easy if you're a man or a White man or anything like that. It's equally disheartening and a struggle for veterans across the board.

Mary acknowledged having a successful personal reintegration experience, and

she utilized transition assistance resources prior to her separation. However, she did

witness others struggle with their transition, and she saw a need for outgoing service

members to have additional support. She stated the following:

> I would say as it relates to the military, I mean I got out and that's it. However, years after, I continued to see how people struggle and struggle. They're not going through the military career-focused, so they can stumble. So, I wanted to help facilitate ways that people could be a

connector for some of the corporate jobs and help them with their job skills. Those were some of the things that I identified when I went through the Transition Assistance Program class, and then too just being in conversation and talking to veterans transitioning from the military. So, for me, the military part ended back in 2004; however, I look at it now as wanting to make that transition smooth for other veterans and transitioning military people.

Also, Richard described continuing to experience significant difficulty with reintegration. He noted that he suffers from anxiety and depression, and he feels invisible and unacknowledged by the civilian community. He commented of a potential generational difference. Regarding his reintegration, he stated,

I think the first thing that comes to mind is that, it is a level of invisibility that, um, that goes along with that [veteran] identity because we're such a small population relative to the general population. And that's also a generational difference. You know, at the end of World War II where you had like, you know, 60% of men of a particular age, were in service in some respects. And in our generation, it's a very small percentage. Um, and so in some respect you feel invisible, you feel unacknowledged.

Q3   What are the implications for counseling psychologists, and more specifically, what do these behavioral health providers need to understand about post-9/11 Black veterans to provide more holistic, effective treatment services?

Theme 1: Understanding blackness requires a cultural fluency. At the conclusion of each interview, I asked the participants what they thought a counseling psychologist or other behavioral health provider might need to know to better support them and other post 9/11 Black veterans. These participants were more than willing to engage in this discussion and to provide feedback for current and future behavioral health providers. Many of the veterans echoed similar responses and adamantly stated that Blackness is "unique and dynamic." For instance, Richard articulated that what mental health providers need is a certain degree of "cultural fluency." He stated,

> I think mental health providers need to read, and not just psychology books and all that, but they really need to understand history. They need to understand the cultural affairs. There needs to be someone who is abreast of what the lived experience has been like, historically for veterans, but also even currently for veterans. Um, you know, someone who doesn't have a cultural nuance to them, a cultural kind of fluency to them, they will not be of use to someone who is specifically a Black vet.

Specialist and Derek wanted mental health providers who work with Black veterans to "Understand the Black struggle and Black culture," while also appreciating the cultural dimensionality to Blackness. Ashton too hoped that providers would develop more of an awareness and appreciation of the unseen pressures and expectations that are placed on Blacks, both civilians and veterans. Apparently, understanding Blackness necessitates a more thorough approach than a single cross-cultural interaction. To understand the Black veteran experience is to comprehend the cultural nuances of Blackness and going beyond one's own personal biases or societal stereotypes. Case in point, Jaz described a gradual professional development process through which the mental health providers should assess their personal biases towards persons within the Black Diaspora and work to correct them.

Several of the other participants (e.g., John and Sarah) answered the question more broadly, in that they explained what they thought counseling psychologists needed to know to be more helpful to veterans in general. John acknowledged what he felt to be a culture of "sickness and cure," and rather than treating an illness, mental health providers first should attempt to better understand the person; he, for one, would appreciate more of a person-first approach. Similarly, Sarah described a greater general need for behavioral health providers to demonstrate patience and empathy towards their clients as they may be reluctant to divulge of their distress and suffering.

Lastly, despite what I perceived to be emotional resistance and limited self-disclosure, most of the veterans thanked me for interviewing them, with a few noting that it was helpful for them to think about their experiences once again and to further reflect on forgotten memories. Maxwell reiterated, "It really reminded me of all that happened and the good times that I hadn't really thought about." Specialist too shared that, "The questions made [him] think" about his identities, and he appreciated the opportunity to participate in the research study.

Conclusion

This chapter first examined the narratives of each single participant. Demographic/military history questionnaires and observational notes were examined to provide context to the stories told in each participant's interview transcript to establish a detailed profile for each participant. Then the chapter provided both a within-case and cross-case analysis of the participants' data.

A number of common themes about post-9/11 Black veterans' military experiences and intersecting identities emerged and were identified in the process of analyzing the participants' transcripts, demographic information, and observational notes made at the time of the interviews. Below summarizes the emerging themes as they relate to the research questions.

Research Question One asked, "What narratives do post-9/11 era veterans who identify within the Black Diaspora produce about their service and post-service experiences?" The following four themes emerged: Keep it pushing/suck it up, Family orientation/communalism: "I'm sticking with the community", Seeing green/color-blindness, and No protective cloak/microcosm of American society. First was Keep it

pushing/suck it up, which represented the participants' general approach of avoiding distressing feelings and experiences. Second was Family orientation/communalism: "I'm sticking with the community", which captured the participants' collectivistic value system. Third, Seeing green/color-blindness, examined the meaning of the Armed Services' uniform and how it can create a sense of togetherness. Fourth, No protective cloak/microcosm of American society, described the cultural parallels (e.g., systemic marginalization) among military and U.S. civilian cultures.

Research Question Two asked, "What is the process of military veteran identity development from entrance to separation for post-9/11 era Black veterans?" In response, their military narrative was described as a chapter book with the following chapters: Recruitment, Initial entry training, First duty station and beyond, and Discharge/reintegration. Recruitment described the participants' experiences with military recruiters. Initial entry training represents the first roughly six months of the veterans' military service where they began to internalize military doctrine and values. First duty station and beyond illustrated the veterans' experiences navigating the military system, completing their first deployment, and adjusting to military life. Discharge/reintegration described the participants' experiences both in leaving the military and adjusting to reintegration as a civilian.

Research Question Three asked, "What are the implications for counseling psychologists, and more specifically, what do these behavioral health providers need to understand about post-9/11 Black veterans to provide more holistic, effective treatment services?" The theme that emerged in response was titled, Understanding blackness requires a cultural fluency. This theme organized the feedback from the veterans and

resulted in helpful practical implications for more effectively working with Black veterans.

These themes were presented and described in the cross-case analysis section. Efforts to enhance trustworthiness in the analysis process, such as the use of member checks and consensual validation by a fellow counseling psychology doctoral student trained in qualitative methodology, were described. It is hoped that the within-case and cross-case analyses presented in this chapter provide a foundation for answering the research questions that guided the analysis—specifically, an understanding of the kinds of narratives created by post-9/11 Black veterans, the impact of their intersecting marginalized identities, and the implications for behavioral health provider who might work with post-9/11 Black veterans. Next, Chapter V will examine the research and clinical implications of the data, limitations and future directions of the study, and end with my personal reflection of how I changed along the research process.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented a within-case analysis of the participants'

transcripts and a cross-case analysis of common themes that emerged regarding these

post-9/11 Black veterans' military narratives and their phenomenological experiences of

military identity development. The results in this study were provided through a rigorous

analysis of the data from participants' transcripts and military life/demographic

questionnaire. Various methods also were implemented to enhance trustworthiness

including member checks and peer debriefing (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Following Patton (2002), my qualitative analysis began with a within-case analysis that

examined each individual participant's narrative and its context. Demographic

questionnaire and field notes were inspected to provide context to the stories told by each

veteran in order to create a detailed portrait of each participant's military identity

development experiences.

Further, common themes that emerged from the participants' stories via cross-

case analysis (Polkinghorne, 1998) were described. The emergent themes were

investigated as they related to the research questions. Research Question One asked,

"What narratives do post-9/11 era veterans who identify within the Black Diaspora

produce about their service and post-service experiences?" The following four themes

emerged: Keep it pushing/suck it up, Family orientation/communalism: "I'm sticking

with the community," Seeing green/color-blindness, and No protective cloak/microcosm of American society. Research Question Two asked, "What is the process of military veteran identity development from entrance to separation for post-9/11 era Black veterans?" In response, participants' military narratives were described as a chapter book with the following chapters: Recruitment, Initial entry training, First duty station and beyond, and Discharge/reintegration. Research Question Three asked, "What are the implications for counseling psychologists, and more specifically, what do these behavioral health providers need to understand about post-9/11 Black veterans to provide more holistic, effective treatment services?" The theme that emerged in response was titled, Understanding blackness requires a cultural fluency.

Keep it pushing/suck it up could be understood both as a process-oriented theme and protective strategy that the participants used to process distressing content. This theme describes the guarded nature in which the post-9/11 Black veterans spoke about their military narratives and phenomenological experience of military identity development. More specifically, the participants demonstrated an inclination towards emotional restraint and limited self-disclosure when answering more emotionally activating questions specific to deployment and the impact of systemic discrimination within the military. Family orientation/communalism: "I'm sticking with the community" describes many of the common identities and value systems that emerged across these participants' interviews. These veterans consistently expressed their valued identities in relation to their familial attachments and community affiliations. Further, Seeing green/color-blindness demonstrates a phenomenon whereby, primarily, male-identified participants described their racial identity as having little salience in their military/veteran

experiences due a deindividuation process that occurred from wearing their respective

military uniform. No protective cloak/microcosm of American society denotes a

dichotomy to the aforementioned theme; here, participants who held multiple

marginalized identities (e.g., Black, female, gay) reported being vulnerable to the same

discrimination demonstrated in the larger U.S. These inherently dichotomous themes

demonstrated the lens through which many of the participants analyzed and made

meaning of their military narratives. The military narrative as a chapter book represented

an initial attempt to begin mapping out the most impactful, essential chapters of the

military life cycle for Black veterans. Four chapters emerged: Recruitment, Initial entry

training, First duty station, and Discharge/reintegration. Lastly, Understanding blackness

requires a cultural fluency describes these participants' feedback regarding the need for

counseling psychologists and other mental health providers who work with Black vets to

develop a larger understanding of the multidimensionality of Blackness.

These themes were presented in the cross-case analysis section of Chapter IV.

Consistent with Clandinin and Connelly (2006), both my (as the researcher) and the

participants' reflections on the research process also were presented. This study provided

me with a deeper understanding of the narratives that post-9/11 Black veterans construct

about their military and post-service experiences. Their experiences in service continue to

shape how they navigate the world intrapersonally, interpersonally, and professionally.

The analysis also provided meaningful information with implications for counseling

psychologists who are tasked with ameliorating the general health needs of post-9/11

veterans who identify within the Black diaspora. Ideally, this analysis will grant

behavioral health providers with a more accurate understanding of the Black veteran

experience so that they may better enter the phenomenological world of post-9/11 Black veterans and help to confront their unique challenges more efficiently.

In this chapter, the research questions and the purpose of the study are reviewed, and the findings are summarized and organized. Ways that the themes emerged and were reflected in the current literature also are discussed. The research and clinical implications of the study for counseling psychologists and other mental health providers then are presented. Limitations of the study then are discussed and are followed by recommendations for future research directions. Lastly, a final reflection on how this research process has changed me as a researcher, clinician, and service member then is presented.

Purpose of the Study

In 2006, the American Psychological Association (APA) was tasked with addressing the growing concerns regarding the psychological strains experienced by post-9/11 service members. In response, the APA (2007) created the Task Force on Military Deployment Services for Youth, Families, and Service Members in order to better identify the behavioral health needs of service members and veterans, to develop strategies for collaborating with military service organizations, and to outline military behavioral health resources accessible through the APA. Findings from the Task Force concluded that the field of psychology is not adequately meeting the needs of military personnel and their families. More than a decade later, the research examining military culture and the mental health needs of post-9/11 veterans remains limited; research addressing post-9/11 veterans who identify within historically marginalized groups is even more absent from the literature base.

Black veterans are a particularly vulnerable subgroup (a) as they are the largest historically marginalized ethnic group within the military, (b) as they experience homelessness at significantly disproportionate rates (Edens et al., 2011), (c) as they experience greater rates of injustice within the military justice system (Christensen & Tsilker, 2017), and (d) as they report higher rates of behavioral health needs and psychological trauma (Kulka et al., 1990). Black veterans are rarely acknowledged or recognized with the same level of respect as their veteran peers, and their military service and experiences essentially are dismissed.

The purpose of this qualitative analysis was to examine the phenomenological experience of military identity development among post-9/11 Black veterans. Given that current research (Kime, 2014) suggests that behavioral health providers lack the sufficient training necessary to meet the unique clinical needs of post-9/11 Black veterans, this study aimed to examine military culture and experience in the context of intersecting cultural identities among this group so as to more effectively frame the services offered by counseling psychologists in working with Black military veterans and service members.

The following research questions guided inquiry in this study:

Q1   What narratives do post-9/11 era veterans who identify within the Black diaspora produce about their service and post-service experiences?

Q2   What is the process of military veteran identity development from entrance to separation for post-9/11 era Black veterans?

Q3   What are the implications for counseling psychologists, and more specifically, what do these behavioral health providers need to understand about post-9/11 Black veterans to provide more holistic, effective treatment services?

**Summary of Findings and Relationship
with Extant Literature**

The rigorous within-case and cross-case analysis of the data from the interview

transcripts, military/demographic questionnaires, and my field notes revealed multiple

emerging themes; all of which are organized and described below in terms of how they

answered the research questions and their relationship with the existing literature base.

Ideally, these themes will support behavioral health providers in more fully

understanding the phenomenological worlds of post-9/11 Black veterans so that they may

more effectively address their behavioral health concerns. Each theme—excluding Keep

it pushing/suck it up—is presented in terms of how it answered at least one or more of the

research questions as well as how the theme appeared to correspond with the current

literature. Keep it pushing/suck it up is examined separately as it offers context and a

helpful lens through which to better understand the remaining themes.

Keep It Pushing/Suck It Up

The majority of the participants seemed to describe a military narrative and

identity development process that was limited in detail and that excluded emotional

content. These veterans approached the interviews in a seemingly protective and cautious

manner evidenced by them providing general (few-words), intellectualized responses. It

was suspected that the lack of detail provided among their responses could have been due

to an inherent limitation of the study resulting from a recruitment bias that is explored

later. Also, the nature of military narratives can be traumatic for some and thus, the

participants' reluctance to disclose of their experiences would be understandable when

this is the case. Some of the stories that these veterans shared often included examples of

how they were routinely tasked with addressing conflict or significant acts of

discrimination while maintaining a degree of emotional control so as to not be associated with some negative stereotype. If so, this response style would be consistent with the literature base. Wilkins (2012) found that Black males often employ emotional restraint as a method for maintaining their identity and ultimately, how they are perceived by others. Further, even when participants described a distressing event (e.g., military sexual trauma, racism, sexism), such events often were talked about in a fairly detached manner. Shields (2008) proposed the existence of a cultural paradox where emotional expression is a gendered and racially-based phenomenon. There is a societal and cultural perception that emotional expression in persons within the Black Diaspora is an indicator of their having a lack of control (Wilkins, 2012). Meaning, Black persons often must internally negotiate when it is appropriate or safe to express a fuller range of emotions because such expression may unfairly attach them to a false stereotype (e.g., "the angry Black woman" or "the scary Black man"). Relatedly, Black masculinity also might have influenced the ways in which the male participants elected to speak more reservedly about their military and veteran experiences as there is a socialization process that occurs during early development in which Black males are taught not to express their more vulnerable emotions (Wilkins, 2012). Further, this theme also may be emblematic of how some of the participants psychologically survived their service and post-service experiences. Given that the interviews could have brought the participants into contact with potentially traumatic service-related memories, it could make sense that this avoidance strategy also might have been used to survive these interviews. Counseling psychologists should take this into consideration when trying to access these privileged narratives. In order to

thoughtfully and effectively confront such reluctance to vulnerability, these providers need to have an understanding of its adaptive function.

Many of these veterans often responded in generic and non-specific ways to several of the interview questions (e.g., "It was rough" and "stressful"). This may have been demonstrative of their need to remain emotionally regulated by avoiding distressing memories. Without additional data, it is difficult to accurately assess which factors fully accounted for the nature of, and variance among, the veterans' responses. Mentioned previously, Black masculinity is commonly associated with reserved vulnerability. Additionally, military culture is not a system that places a particularly high value on emotional expression; as such, the veteran identity also might have served as a barrier to increased emotional willingness during the interviews. This is worth acknowledging for behavioral health providers as it also may provide inferences to how these clients might report or not report their experience of their presenting mental health symptoms. Also, in relation to this general response style, roughly half of the participants made verbal assumptions that I knew some of their references perhaps because of our shared cultural identities (e.g., military and ethnicity), which might have been another reason why some participants neglected to initially provide much depth in their responses. Counseling psychologists—particularly those with more shared identities with their veteran clients— should be cautious in allowing for recurrent overidentification as important aspects of the client's story may be missed.

**Family Orientation/Communalism:
"I'm Sticking with the
Community"**

Each of these participants described themselves through terms that irrevocably

were linked to their interpersonal relationships and community affiliations. The stories

that were shared routinely began with the participants describing their most core

identities to commonly include mother, father, husband, wife, and advocate.

Communalism describes the second most common category of identities that emerged

throughout the interviews. This is also consistent with the extant literature as

communalism is believed to be an essential relational motif in Black culture. Boykin,

Jagers, Ellison, and Albury (1997) described communalism as occurring when

"individuals view themselves as being inextricably linked with others in their social

milieu" (p. 410). I believe that it also is worthwhile to mention how this theme was

demonstrated during the research process, even outside of the veterans' interviews. Very

briefly, as I (a newly minted Captain in the U.S. Army) was taking my lunch break at a

military hospital—within a span of 10 minutes—I had four older Black male veterans

either approach or acknowledge me simply because I was a fellow service member. The

first veteran approached me both to shake my hand and to acknowledge my Officer rank,

stating, "Congratulations Sir, you know, that [a Black man achieving the rank of CPT]

didn't happen during my time." The following two veterans offered me a salute and

affirming head nod, respectively, with the third simply saying, "Congratulations." I

believe this to be reflective of the salience of community that is held among Black

veterans.

Surprisingly, these more collectivist identities were much more commonly expressed than were racial and gender identifiers, which is inconsistent with the prevailing literature. Across the interviews, there were varying degrees of racial-group identification between the participants. Obviously, each participant met inclusion criteria and thus also identified as Black; interestingly, only a few of the participants acknowledged their racial identity when describing which of their identities they found to be most salient and meaningful to them. Now, this lack of mention could relate to the aforementioned theme and psychological survival hypothesis, meaning that the under-emphasis of one's Blackness might serve to protect individuals from the impact of potential discrimination. Consistent with the literature, those participants who had disclosed of experiencing considerable interpersonal conflict (e.g., racism, sexism) while in the military were the same veterans to describe their racial and gender identities as being particularly salient to them. Discriminatory experiences can be predictive of African Americans' racial-group salience to them (Thompson & Neville, 1999). I believe that we can confidently affirm the accuracy of Thompson and Neville's finding given that it still holds true given the results of this study. It might be that this racial- (or gender-group) salience leads Black-identifying persons to be more aware of possible societal transgressions.

The results of the study also were consistent with the literature in affirming the pivotal role of family in the lives of Black-identifying persons (McCallum, 2015). As these participants recalled their initial decisions to serve in the Armed Forces, many demonstrated motivations that largely were driven by their familial attachments. Instead of joining the service primarily to fulfill an intrinsic need of their own, the majority of the

veterans described motives to include honoring a military family legacy, providing financial security for their family, and demonstrating to their children that society cannot limit one's possibilities. Similarly, their interpersonal attachments also were a primary reason for why many of these veteran participants elected to terminate their military service. Meaning, many of the participants explained that they terminated their military service in order to strengthen existing interpersonal bonds, to create new familial bonds, and/or to support their spouse's careers. Many of them also described their military experiences as so impactful that it led them to serve as veterans' advocates post-discharge, and a few even established their own veterans' services organizations in an effort to ameliorate the discomfort that many veterans characterize as being typical of the homecoming experience.

What we see most ostensibly from these data is that this ubiquitous value of family and communalism served as a primary impetus for why many of the participants elected to begin their military narrative. At the beginning of their military veteran identity development, family seemed to be one of the few access points that these veterans had into their experience of identity (or "Who am I?"). As they progressed through their development, their identities began to take new shape, and the military organization seemed to become their new versions of family and community. As the majority of these participants endorsed some sort of strong familial value prior to entering the military, it seems only natural that they would take steps to actualize that need even in the military system; context changed, but the underlying value remained the same. This value of family and community appeared to allow these veterans the opportunity to progress in their development, all the while feeling generally supported.

Perhaps the most important implication for counseling psychologists to take away from this theme is that post-9/11 Black veterans are interpersonal beings that may not respond well to the more traditional, individually oriented intervention methods. Post-9/11 Black veterans see themselves as they relate to those in their social network, particularly family members. Thus, counseling psychologists and behavioral health providers may benefit from identifying ways in which the family system can be more routinely integrated within the treatment process whether that be through regular family consultation sessions, shared goal setting, more systemic approaches, or the like. Relatedly, a group therapy format may help to support Black veterans in normalizing their cultural and military-related experiences.

Generally speaking, there exists a reluctance within the Black community to engage in behavioral health services for a variety of reasons (National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2015). Behavioral health providers should seek to incorporate familial and communal values when addressing the psychological wellness of post-9/11 Black veterans. This has implications for counseling psychologists who are having difficulty in building rapport and a strong therapeutic alliance with Black veterans, which research suggests is the most relevant factor for treatment effectiveness (Horvath & Luborsky, 1993). Ongoing engagement in values-oriented action is considered crucial for achieving a rich and meaningful life (Hayes et al., 2004). These values may be indicative of the degree and relevance of camaraderie that service members and veterans have with their battle buddies, which may make discharge all the more difficult given the strength of the relationships that were built in service following the horrors of 9/11. This suggests an implication for counseling psychologists that modes of intervention such as group

treatment, which connects veteran clients with other veterans who may have similar difficulties, might be more effective at times in accessing their phenomenological experiences. The group process also may be more advantageous for normalizing military traumas (e.g., Sloan, Beck, & Sawyer, 2017) and for aiding members in developing a social network (APA, 2020). Moreover, the APA (2020) highlights the potential for the group therapy process to facilitate one's awareness of various diversity factors; thus, this modality may be just as useful for the mental health provider who seeks to expand their own multicultural counseling competency.

Seeing Green/Color-Blindness

The theme of Seeing Green/Color-Blindness represents a dichotomy that emerged between participants who identified more consistently with the military's masculine tradition; and those who held multiple historically marginalized identities. In general, most of the stories told by the heterosexual Black male participants were absent of a racial/ethnic influence on their service and post-service experiences. This group of participants described a consistent notion of "seeing green" when I made inquiries into the relationship between their racial identity and military experiences. "Seeing green" denotes the color of the Army uniform. The majority of the participants had served in the Army, so it would be interesting to examine how this concept shows up among those who enlisted in other branches of service. Moreover, this concept goes beyond simply seeing the color of one's uniform. It presumes that a certain degree of color-blindness occurs among, or rather is afforded to, certain subgroups within the service. For this subgroup of participants, the uniform was perceived to have served as a sort of cloak against racial discrimination. The participants within this subgroup who initially did feel that their

racial identity played a role in their experiences noted that the uniform tended to play a larger role than did race over time. As these service members progressed through the training and military cycle, they tended to adopt a singular mission that predominated racial identity.

These participants' transcripts would suggest that military identity development begins during basic training when the service member first is tasked with learning how to wear the uniform. The uniform is symbolic of a shared values system and a collective sense of purpose and meaning. Seeing Green suggests that for some during the military life cycle, certain identities are magnified (e.g., that of the Soldier, Airman, etc.) while other identities become less salient.

Primarily, counseling psychologists and other behavioral health providers working with post-9/11 Black veterans should acknowledge the dynamic nature of identity. Moreover, identity is a fluid construct, and the salience of a given identity is largely dependent on contextual and environmental factors. Research has established a clear link between social context and subjective definitions of the self (Deaux & Martin, 2003). Burke and Franzoi (1998) found that social context influences how individuals select specific types of identities in a situation, which then influences one's behavior. Accepting the fluidity of who a person is and how they self-identify will offer these behavioral health providers with greater access into the Black veteran's subjective world and this allow for a more secure therapeutic alliance to develop.

Behavioral health providers should be cautious in assuming that their Black veteran clients have experienced direct racism simply because of their historically marginalized identities; however, the absence of experiences of discrimination does not

also mean that one's identities did not have an influence. Also, some Black veterans may

have a tendency to discount their experiences of racial discrimination in an effort to not

discredit the traumatic histories of their ancestors. However, this is not mutually

exclusive; racism occurred then, and it remains within today's military and civilian

societies. Counseling psychologists should be cautious of simply accepting this approach

to experiences of cultural discrimination as it most certainly is highly nuanced.

**No Protective Cloak/Microcosm
of American Society**

In some ways, this theme directly challenges the notion of Seeing Green.

Participants who instead endorsed multiple historically marginalized identities (e.g.,

LGBTQ, woman) in addition to being Black commonly expressed that the military

culture was a "microcosm of America," meaning that it perpetuates many of the same

social failings as does the larger U.S. civilian community (e.g., sexism, racism,

homophobia). Regarding the post-9/11 culture, Richard stated, "I think it's just a

microcosm of our modern culture. Same class conversations, same racial dialogues, same

obvious sexism, homophobia, and identity politics." Specialist drew parallels between the

military and the U.S.'s cultures in commenting, "There's a lot of misogyny and

patriarchy. You have a toxic patriarchy, and a toxic masculinity." Jaz, who identifies as a

Black woman, described it best in her statement:

> In the military, um, people look at the military as a subcategory of society. But
> you know, the military is America, so whatever issues and stigmas and
> stereotypes and um, you know, just, uh, the kinds of challenges we have in
> American society, those ideologies will also carry over into the military. In the
> military, the uniform doesn't give you a protective cloak from the ills of
> American society.

The theme, Microcosm of American society, describes the sociocultural climate of the post-9/11 military. The veterans who endorsed this theme were most likely to offer a narrative that included recurrent episodes of trauma and discrimination while enlisted. For instance, Jaz recounted during her service being somewhat surprised by the parallels between military and civilian cultures, feeling at times that her gender was used to infer inferior ability. Jasmine, also a Black woman, described being denied career advancement despite clear merit simply due to her gender. These veterans further reported that they were not necessarily surprised to encounter such realities within the military as they had prior academic/personal knowledge that made them more aware of cultural nuances or because they had been mentally prepared by family members who previously were in the service themselves. Further, Richard recounted having to operate with a sense of "double consciousness" during his service. By this, he meant that he had to simultaneously function with a knowledge and appreciation for his own historically marginalized identities (e.g., Blackness and LGBTQ) while also valuing his service member identity, an identity that historically has dismissed his aforementioned other, more underrepresented, identities. This supports W. E. B. DuBois' (1903) claim that being a minority in America engenders an internal warring conflict that can result in a fractured sense of self, as was discussed earlier in Chapter II. This theme suggests that the systems of discrimination that disenfranchise historically marginalized groups in the civilian sector perpetuate and remain ubiquitous throughout the military. More importantly, military subgroups with intersecting, marginalized identities may be more susceptible to experiencing persecution than are those with none or one marginalized identity. I hypothesize that the participants with other historically marginalized identities

(e.g., LGBTQ, woman) in addition to being Black were more likely to endorse experiences of discrimination while in service because they held multiple identities that directly challenged the traditional, Eurocentric, masculine values of the military organization. Naturally, a system built on patriarchal, Eurocentric ideals would struggle to integrate persons with increasingly diverse backgrounds; however, the data also may suggest that progress in this regard has been made within the military with Black male participants reporting more inclusive military experiences. Moreover, it might be that patriarchy and masculinity are more central to military culture; this could be why participants who identified as sexual and gender minorities more frequently acknowledged personal experiences of prejudice while in the military.

Counseling psychologists who work with post-9/11 Black veterans should be aware of the dynamic nature of these veterans' military experiences as this population has important nuances that are relevant for understanding their phenomenological worlds. Similar to the veteran community, Black veterans are highly diverse and cannot be understood or treated with a broad, general stroke. An important implication here is that it is essential that such providers work to identify their biases and assumptions both about military culture and about the Black veteran community. Further, they must consider the impact that the intersection of Black identity and military service may have had when a post-9/11 Black veteran presents to them for psychological services. The research consistently supports the notion that there is a multidimensional quality to identity that cannot be captured by looking at identity singularly (Crenshaw, 1991). There is a strong need for counseling psychologists—and other behavioral health providers—to (a) have an increasing awareness of systemic oppression, and (b) understand the increased risk that

Black veterans with intersecting marginalized identities have of experiencing systemic prejudice.

The Military Narrative as a Chapter Book

The stories that post-9/11 Black veterans told about their service and post-service experiences are most accurately understood on an individual basis. Given the diversity of the participants, each transcript offered a unique vantage point into the military life cycle. However, there also were a few chapters of the cycle that seemed to be ubiquitous across the participants' narratives. For instance, each participant reported and affirmed the significance of the following stages in sequential order: Recruitment, Initial entry training, First duty station, and Discharge/reintegration. These chapters were described in detail in Chapter IV.

This theme was more categorial and descriptive rather than explanatory of the military identity development process. Identity development in the military follows a clear trajectory, and each individual stage—from Recruitment to Discharge/reintegration—presumably requires a distinct set of tasks to be completed. One such intrapersonal task that was discussed by several of the participants was in learning how to negotiate personal and professional responsibilities when one's identities may conflict. For instance, Jaz described frequently having to negotiate between adequately addressing her health needs and completing her duties as an Army Officer. The process of Black military veteran identity development is one of persistent, calculated intrapsychic negotiations. As service members approach the end of their military career, they must start thinking about how they may reintegrate those pieces of themselves that they might have suppressed while in the service.

Privileging the entire military life cycle is important in order for counseling psychologists and other behavioral health providers to recognize the impact of the entire military experience because the majority of the existing research on the military narrative, thus far, has focused solely on the reintegration (or homecoming) stage of the military cycle. This qualitative study represents the first empirical attempt to delineate the various stage components of the overall military life cycle as they relate to identity. These findings provide more than just a single snapshot of one component of the veteran experience (e.g., homecoming). Instead, they present a far more complete picture of post-9/11 Black veterans' phenomenological experiences throughout the military service and veteran narrative, which would be a crucial component to further strengthen the cultural competence of behavioral health providers who work with racially diverse veterans.

The military is a complex cultural organization that employs a language system that is wholly unique to its organization. Thus, it also is highly important for counseling psychologists to be cognizant of the various components of military life as more post-9/11 Black veterans seek behavioral health services. This prior knowledge will afford providers greater success in establishing safer and more, effective therapeutic relationships with a subgroup of veterans that tend to be understandably cautious of medical/mental health professionals. The circumstances surrounding one's military entrance and discharge experiences are evidently important. Providers who work with Black veterans should set time aside during the initial intake session—with opportunities for further investigation in subsequent sessions—to map out their client's military story because it can influence how and why a client presents in therapy.

**Understanding Blackness Requires
a Cultural Fluency**

This theme was examined in detail in Chapter IV. This finding emerged after I
assessed participants' responses to my inquiry into what they thought that counseling
psychologists needed to know to be of more use to Black veterans. Although this theme
was derived from Research Question Three, it truly is more of a byproduct of each of the
aforementioned themes. What is meant be this is that this study's collective results appear
to affirm the accuracy of this emergent finding as well as and support the necessity for
more culturally sensitive and culturally competent approaches to working with Black
veterans. This finding perhaps is best illustrated by Richard, who articulated that what
providers need to effectively work with Black veterans is "cultural fluency." He stated,

> I think mental health providers need to read, and not just psychology books and
> all that, but they really need to understand history. They need to understand the
> cultural affairs. There needs to be someone who is abreast of what the lived
> experience has been like, historically for veterans, but also even currently for
> veterans. Um, you know, someone who doesn't have a cultural nuance to them, a
> cultural kind of fluency to them, they will not be of use to someone who is
> specifically a Black vet.

Richard's assertion here validated the need for mental health providers to develop an
understanding of the sociohistorical context that shapes the lived experiences of Black
service members and veterans, which ultimately is the premise of this study.
Recommendations for doing so could include immersing oneself in the historical
literature, watching relevant filmography, and conversing with older generation (pre-
9/11) Black veterans.

Furthermore, these veterans consistently affirmed a systemic need for behavioral
health providers to develop military cultural competency that acknowledges and
appreciates (a) the Black plight, (b) military culture, and (c) the Black

servicemember/veteran experience. There was a strong recognition, across the majority of the participants' interviews, of the disservice that can occur when mental health providers treat Black veterans without first incorporating the veterans' salient cultural identities into their treatment approaches. This notion is consistent with existing literature and our profession's current multicultural counseling competency guidelines, all of which highlight the importance of attending to such identity-related issues (APA, 2020; Sue, Arrendo, & McDavis, 1992) as these issues can deeply impact the therapeutic relationship and thus treatment outcomes. Current research suggests that when relevant identity features go ignored by providers, clients are significantly less responsive to treatment services; there is a vast need for increasingly culturally sensitive mental health interventions.

Research and Clinical Implications

The current paradigm for veterans' research focuses on reintegration—or homecoming—experiences with little attention given to the experiences of that veteran while a service member. One aspect of this study focused on the entirety of the Black servicemember/veteran experience as it naturally influences how the Black veteran both navigates and experiences homecoming. The importance for clinicians to better understand both military and veteran culture has been strongly emphasized in the literature (Danish & Antonides, 2013). Participants spoke at varying degrees of the servicemember/veteran narrative and, due to the diversity of the sample, they reported a wide range of experiences regarding identity, military culture, and systemic discrimination. The findings of this study recommend an active, process-oriented approach to providers seeking to increase their military cultural competence.

The narrative chapters identified by the veterans in this study (Recruitment, Initial entry training, First duty station, and Discharge/reintegration) appear to provide an initial framework for future studies of the Black veteran identity. Each chapter involves distinct tasks and intrapsychic negotiations to be made before the Black service member or veteran can proceed onto the next stage. This initial framework may be employed in additional qualitative designs in order to investigate the specific requirements that are involved for Black servicemembers/veterans in each chapter. It is important to remember that these requirements would go beyond actionable tasks and should include any relevant intrapsychic and/or cognitive processes as well. Then, subsequent findings can be used to develop quantitative measures that assess mental health providers' military cultural competency regarding Black veterans, specifically. To date, there is no single measure available for capturing clinicians' military cultural competence. Further, this could lead to outcome research that examines the effectiveness of employing a more culturally informed approach in therapy with veterans, particularly post-9/11 Black veterans who frequently present with increased psychosocial stressors and symptomatology.

These findings also suggest a necessity for coherence in post-9/11 Black veterans' life narratives—integrating service member and veteran experiences into a singular rather than disconnected narrative—to more holistically understand the veteran experience. Results of this study suggested a need for more research into the importance of a coherent narrative; also, new quantitative methodologies that examine coherence more broadly across the life narratives of veterans could be useful. One theme in particular—Suck it up/keep it pushing—has implications for what strategies that researchers may want to

employ to help their participants to feel safer in more openly expressing such highly emotional content. First, researchers may benefit from meeting with their participants multiple times so as to better establish a more trusting relationship that encourages self-disclosure. Second, as all of these interviews occurred over the telephone without any visual cues, future research with similar participant groups may benefit from incorporating a visual communication component (e.g., Skype, in-person, etc.). For counseling psychologists, these visual cues have a strong relevance in terms of therapy.

I would be remiss to not mention our current COVID-19 pandemic and how it has drastically restructured the delivery of psychotherapy and behavioral health services at present, resulting in practically all such services being conducted virtually and/or telephonically. Providers must consider how these kinds of social crises might impact their patients' psychological wellness, particularly for those who naturally may struggle with emotional vulnerability even under typical conditions (e.g., face-to-face). To this, I urge providers to remain flexible, reflexive, and intentional when providing care. This may mean that there is not always identical effectiveness when choosing between direct (e.g., in-person) and indirect (e.g., telehealth) modes of treatment. More specifically, it may take multiple telehealth appointments to build a similar degree of rapport as could be obtained in a single in-person session. In addition to better understanding and managing the Black veterans' sense that their experiences will not be understood, are unacceptable, or set them apart, not to mention the therapists' own biases and counter transference, the importance of multicultural competency in working with Black veterans (making it clear to them that their entire story is welcome in the therapy room) is beyond paramount. This simply cannot be overstated.

Two themes in particular—Seeing green/color-blindness and No protective cloak/microcosm of American society—each suggest implications for researchers to take a more focused look at the impacts that marginalized intersecting identities may have on military service/veteran experiences. The results of this study strongly reaffirmed the dynamic, nuanced nature of identity as it relates to experiences of systemic discrimination. Relatedly, the findings also reaffirm the need to address an existing gap in the literature regarding Black women in the military as their experiences were particularly linked with their racial and gender identities. I urge identity- and diversity-minded researchers to conduct studies that might help to parse out the role of Black women veterans' intersecting marginalized identities on their service- and health-related experiences. Furthermore, this study wholly asserted that counseling psychologists, because of their primary emphases on cultural diversity and identity, are uniquely positioned to better understand the needs of Black veterans. Let this be a call to our profession.

Moreover, though these veterans appeared to adopt a more emotionally restricted response style, the qualitative phenomenological approach applied here appeared to be a highly effective method for communicating with these veterans as it focused on eliciting their stories and allowed space for the participants to share their narratives rather than asking for more structured responses. The majority of the participants actually expressed their gratitude for being given the opportunity to tell these stories even those who nevertheless appeared reticent to fully engage. Many shared their appreciation for having had the opportunity to remember various components of their military narratives that they had previously forgotten. Therefore, one final research implication from this study

suggests that qualitative phenomenological methodology is in fact a highly effective approach to research inquiry with the Black veteran population in particular. The phenomenological method is consistent with the profession of counseling psychology as narratives are integral to psychotherapy, and such a style is more inclusive of participants' experiences. Taking a broader and more inclusive approach to our participants' experiences might allow even more innovative approaches to the research and treatment of veterans that are also more culturally appropriate for Black veteran populations.

Limitations of the Study

Given that I utilized a phenomenological qualitative design as the framework for this study, it first is important to highlight the limitations inherent in qualitative inquiry. Because it is concerned with subjective interpretations of experience rather than objective reality, there are inherent limitations in the interpretations that are formed. Given that the goal of qualitative analysis is to understand the context of particular cases and their unique contexts (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009), generalizations cannot be made to either the larger post-9/11 veteran or Black veteran populations. Further, the methodology selected for this study was representative of my own worldview, albeit one influenced by the existing literature, my experiences as a Black male service member, and my previous clinical work with veterans. To help mediate this limitation, I utilized a concept known as bridling in every stage of the research to mitigate the potentially deleterious effect of pre-understandings that may taint the research process (Ellett, 2011). Bridling is "the restraining of one's pre-understanding in the form of personal beliefs, theories, and other assumptions that otherwise would mislead the understanding of

meaning and thus limit the research options" (Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nystrom, 2008, p. 129). Additionally, these participants each brought unique experiences and perspectives to the study, which meant that they might have understood the interview questions differently from one another (as well as differently than I did).

Other limitations pertain to the diversity of the sample of veterans who were interviewed. The post-9/11 Black veteran population is heterogeneous in nature, and some of the emerging themes seemed indicative of at least two distinct subgroups (i.e., Black heterosexual males and Black veterans with multiple historically marginalized identities) within the sample. Thus, researchers involved in future investigations of veteran identity might benefit from separating out military subgroups with distinct cultural experiences (e.g., Black women veterans and LGBTQ veterans) The narratives presented by these participants with multiple historically marginalized identities more often included experiences of trauma, discrimination, and role negotiation than did the narratives of those with one marginalized identity.

Moreover, given that a primary focus of the study was the examination of the identity development process throughout the military life cycle, one limitation was that the participants had a range of military experiences. Some began their service immediately after high school while others entered the military after college. These moments in time represent vastly different adult life stages. Further, some of the veterans served as Officers while others were Enlisted. The responsibilities of these two groups are quantifiably and categorically different. Also, several of the veterans shared that they completed their service following at least one or more years in the reserves. Each of these differences results in a unique array of experiences and perspectives. Future studies may

want to establish more exclusive recruitment criteria (e.g., prior enlisted, strictly active-duty.

Another limitation pertains to a potential selection bias that might have resulted in a participant sample that was relatively well-adjusted rather than emotionally restricted and even more reluctant to self-disclose. Black veterans who volunteered to participate in the study may have constituted a unique subgroup that was qualitatively different from those who chose to not participate. It could be that Black veterans who chose to participate in the study had greater motivation to share of their experiences because they were more psychologically and socially adjusted or simply less avoidant. Second, given the often-traumatic nature of veterans' military experiences, it could be that those who did not decide to participate may have had more severe military narratives; thus, persons with particular traits and experiences might not be represented while others may be over-represented. In an effort to recruit a diverse sample of post-9/11 Black veterans, word-of-mouth, snowball sampling, and various social media outlets were used to advertise the study (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn). Half of the participants were recruited from LinkedIn, and it might be that veterans who utilize professional networking mediums such as LinkedIn are more likely to endorse positive adjustment and maintain more overall satisfying service and post-service experiences. The remaining six participants were recruited through snowball sampling, with several currently working within the Department of Veterans Affairs. This sample of veterans also might have been a particularly well-adjusted group compared to the general Black veteran population given the source of recruitment. Given such a selection bias—no matter how small—a meaningful subset of Black veterans may not have had the opportunity to have their

voices heard through this platform. Relatedly, this sample had experienced fewer deployments on average than what would be expected given the increased deployment tempo and challenges inherent to post-9/11 conflicts. For this group, the highest number of deployments for any single participant was two (n = 3). Similarly, only three veterans had been deployed to a combat zone, which also may be suggestive of a lack of representativeness with the selected sample. To maximize sample diversity, future studies should target multiple sources for participant recruitment (e.g., VA hospitals, Vet Clinics, social media, newspaper advertisements).

This sample also did not reflect all of the different branches of the U.S. military as none of the participants had served in the Navy. The vast majority of participants served in the active-duty component of the U.S. Army. The experiences of Black veterans in the Navy could be qualitatively different from those in this sample. As such, recruiting participants through branch-specific support groups might be an effective method for more diverse sampling in future research investigations of Black veteran identity and related military/veteran narratives.

Future Directions for Counseling Psychology

The purpose of this study was to examine the phenomenological experience of veteran identity development in post-9/11 veterans who identify within the Black Diaspora. Given that current research suggests that behavioral health providers lack the sufficient training necessary to meet the unique clinical needs of post-9/11 Black veterans, this study aimed to examine Black military culture and experience in the context of intersecting cultural identities so as to more effectively frame the services offered by counseling psychologists working with Black military veterans and service

members. More specifically, this study strengthens the existing empirical framework for addressing the behavioral health needs of post-9/11 Black veterans by integrating identity more so into the discussion.

A number of implications for counseling psychologists emerged as a result of this study. At the end of these participants' interviews, these veterans were offered the opportunity to reflect on their prior experiences with mental health providers, if any, and to discuss what they thought that counseling psychologists needed to know or do in order to work more effectively with post-9/11 Black veterans. The consensual feedback for these providers was to, "go beyond the symptoms," and instead privilege the sociohistorical and identity-specific factors. These veterans recommended that counseling psychologists increase their familiarization with Black history and culture through readings and various media. For example, Ashton stated, "We have pressures that are not seen from just the general eye," suggesting that access to their phenomenological world is privileged and should be treated appropriately. Jaz encouraged mental health providers to more thoroughly examine their own personal biases regarding race, gender, and sexual orientation, which are inherent in all of us, and to further reflect on how such biases may interfere with treatment. Jasmine noted that such biases may lead to unfair, inaccurate assumptions on behalf of the provider that every veteran is identical.

The field of counseling psychology is particularly well-suited to meet the behavioral health needs of post-9/11 Black veterans because of its focused attention to issues of multicultural counseling competency (APA, 2020). Given this, one vital future direction for counseling psychologists simply is to increase their involvement and familiarization with Black veterans, their culture, and their history. This involvement may

take the shape of partnerships with surrounding VAs, Vet Clinics, and other veteran

service organizations. Further, counseling psychology graduate programs also can take

active steps in strengthening their students' multicultural counseling competency by

mandating the completion of a program/university- or community-based diversity project.

Such a project could include the conducting of interviews with relevant organizations,

supporting program development for campus cultural centers, and the development of

diversity workshops. Additionally, routine journaling to facilitate personal reflexivity

also might be helpful. Students also may benefit from engaging with computer-based

programs that support their personal reflection of identity and various diversity factors

such as the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, (1998).

Another future direction here may be the development of evidence-based practices for

Black veterans that are more culturally appropriate than are current treatment approaches.

Moreover, these approaches should go beyond symptomatology and instead work to

better incorporate the various values and identity-based issues that are more relevant to

post-9/11 Black veterans.

Final Reflections

This study and its results have shaped the way that I navigate my personal life as a

Captain in the U.S. Army and as a future counseling psychologist. First, I recognize that I

entered the early stages of this qualitative research process with many assumptions about

the influence of maintaining historically marginalized identities on service and post-

service experiences. I believed that the role of race would be undeniable for most, if not

all, Black veterans who served any reasonable amount of time in the Armed Forces.

However, the data demonstrated that cultural identity is quite nuanced and cannot be

viewed through a single lens. The Black veteran identity is layered, complex, and multidimensional. Also, beyond holding a marginalized identity, what matters most is how salient that identity is for the veteran, which illustrates the applicability of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI; Sellers et al., 1998). Given the primary focus of this study and how it was advertised for recruitment, I assumed that the participants would have extensive feedback regarding the salience and value of their racial identities. However, only roughly half of the participants ever mentioned race, and that only was when I prompted them. I have an increased appreciation for the Black veteran identity, and I now have a greater connection to the Army uniform because of the stories that I have heard from those Black veterans who served before me. This process has affirmed the utility of acknowledging and bridling one's own biases beforehand so as to minimize the chances of contaminating a participant's data. In therapy, this contamination can occur in a variety of ways. Mainly, our biases influence the questions that we ask, and they inform when and why we choose to query for additional information. Qualitative research requires a great deal of self-awareness and a high degree of humility on the part of the researchers. The participants' responses inform the results instead of the researcher's personal knowledge or expectations. The participants inform us, the audience, of their phenomenological worlds, rather than us prescribing a certain reality to them.

This has vast parallels for the therapy process. As a future counseling psychologist, I meet with many clients who are hoping to share their personal struggles so that I can help them to experience a more meaningful, well-adjusted life. To do that, I must create a space where it is safe for them to share such stories. Black veterans are

particularly cautious of who they share their stories with, and this study has illuminated to me the importance of military cultural competence in general. Beyond that, there is a military cultural competence that is specific to Black veterans. To better understand the Black veteran experience necessitates at least a moderate degree of understanding of the relevant sociohistorical implications. I have a far greater understanding of, and respect for, how difficult it was for these participants to be open with me as well as greater insight into what aspects of their stories I might have overlooked "in the moment" of the interview. I now am more aware than ever of the profound privilege that I hold as a male within the Armed Forces.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the research questions and the purpose of this study, and its findings were summarized and organized accordingly. I also reflected on how the emerging themes related to the current literature base regarding Black identity, intersecting marginalized identities, and veteran cultural competency. Research and clinical implications of this study for counseling psychologists and other mental health providers also were presented. Limitations of the study then were discussed and followed by recommendations for future directions. A final reflection on how this research process has changed me as a researcher, clinician, and service member then was presented.

Post-9/11 veterans represent the smallest percentage of veterans to serve in the Armed Forces, which further strengthens the divide between civilians and veterans as so very few truly can empathize with their military experiences; 84% of post-9/11 veterans cite that the public does not understand them (Pew Research Center, 2011a). These

cumulative circumstances have made for a cohort of veterans with prior military experiences that are vastly different from previous generations.

Historically, the military and society in general have overlooked the ongoing presence and contributions of Black veterans, treating them as all but disposable. Black Americans are represented in virtually every possible capacity throughout the U.S. Armed Forces' structure, and yet they continue to sacrifice their lives for a promise of democracy that often seems to exclude them. As these veterans reintegrate back into society, they need to have their entire stories told. This means offering more than the quick and easy, "Thank you for your service," which is more to make the civilian feel better than it is to truly appreciate the sacrifices made by the veteran. The veteran narrative and perception of the veteran archetype surely needs to become more inclusive so as to account for the growing diversity within the veteran community. Also, there needs to be room provided for Black veterans to reflect upon and process their experiences through the context of their often multiple historically marginalized identities. Most importantly, these veterans deserve the opportunity to tell their own stories, even the parts that may place the greater U.S. society in a negative light historically. I hope that this study encourages other behavioral health professionals and civilians to seek out opportunities to enhance their veteran cultural competency. It is my wish that others move well beyond their initial discomfort and instead engage in such culturally relevant dialogue so as to make our greater society a safer space for all veterans.

References

Abes, E. S. (2009). Theoretical borderlands: using multiple theoretical perspectives to challenge inequitable power structures in student development theory. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(2), 141-156.

Ahern, J., Worthen, M., Masters, J., Lippman, S. A., Ozer, E. J., & Moos, R. (2015). The challenges of Afghanistan and Iraq veterans' transition from military to civilian life and approaches to reconnection. *PLoS One, 10*(7), 1-13.

Allen, R. L., Dawson, M., & Brown, R. (1989). A schema-based approach to modeling an African-American racial belief system. *American Political Science Review, 83*, 421-441.

Althoff, G. T. (1999). *Amongst my best men: African-Americans and the War of 1812.* Putin-Bay, OH: Perry Group.

American History Archives. (2015). The Korean War. Retrieved from http://www. archives. gov/research/alic/reference/military/korean-war.html

American Psychological Association [APA]. (2007). Presidential task force on military deployment services for youth, families and service members. The psychological needs of US military service members and their families: A preliminary report. Washington, D.C.

American Psychological Association [APA]. (2017). Multicultural guidelines: An ecological approach to context, identity, and intersectionality. Retrieved from: http://www.apa.org/about/policy/multicultural-guidelines.pdf

American Psychological Association [APA]. (2018). Counseling psychology. Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/ed/graduate/specialize/counseling.aspx

American Psychological Association [APA]. (2020). Psychotherapy: Understanding group therapy. Retrieved from https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/group-therapy

Antwi, S. K., & Hamza, K. (2015). Qualitative and quantitative research paradigms in business research: A philosophical reflection. *European Journal of Business and Management, 7*(3), 217-225.

Appy, C. G. (1993). *Working-class war: American combat soldiers and Vietnam.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Archer, S. L. (Ed.). (1994). *Interventions for adolescent identity development.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Arkin, W., & Dobrofsky, L. R. (1978). Military socialization and masculinity. *Journal of Social Issues, 34*, 151-168.

Assari, S., & Caldwell, C. H. (2018). Social determinants of perceived discrimination among Black youth: Intersection of ethnicity and gender. *Children, 5*(2), 24-35.

Assari, S., Gibbons, F. X., & Simons, R. L. (2018). Perceived discrimination among Black youth: An 18-year longitudinal study. *Behavioral Science, 8*(5), 44-55.

Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research. Qualitative Research, 1, 385–405.

Atuel, H. R., & Castro, C. A. (2018). Military cultural competence. *Clinical Social Work Journal, 46*, 74-82.

Atuel, H. R., Keeling, M., Kintzle, S. M., Hassan, A., & Castro, C. A. (2016). Veteran employment in the 21st century. In L. Hicks, E. Weiss, & J. E. Coll (Eds.), *The civilian lives of U.S. veterans: Issues and identities* (Vol. 1, pp. 161–179). Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger/ABC-CLIO

Bahraini, N. H., Breshears, R. E., Hernandez, T. D., Schnieder, A. L., Forster, J. E., & Brenner, L. A. (2014). Traumatic brain injury and posttraumatic stress disorder. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 37*, 55-77.

Baker, P. C. (2016). The tragic, forgotten history of Black military veterans. Retrieved from https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-tragic-forgotten-history-of-black-military-veterans

Baldwin, J. A. (1984). African self-consciousness and the mental health of African-Americans. *Journal of Black Studies, 15*, 177-194.

Baldwin, J. A., Brown, R., & Rackley, R. (1990). Some socio-behavioral correlates of African self-consciousness in African-American college students. *Journal of Black Psychology, 17*, 1-17.

Baptist, J. A., Amanor-Boadu, Y., Garrett, K., Nelson Goff, B. S., Collum, J., Gamble, P.,… Wick, S. (2011). Military marriages: The aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) deployments. *Contemporary Family Therapy, 33*(3), 199-214.

Barbeau, A. E., Henri, F., & Nalty, B. C. (1974). *The unknown soldiers: African-American troops in World War I*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Beck, A. T. (1964). Thinking and depression: II. Theory and therapy. *Archives of General Psychiatry, 10*, 561-571.

Beck, J. S. (2011). *Cognitive therapy: The basics and beyond* (2nd ed). New York: Guilford Press.

Belanger, H. G., Proctor-Weber, Z., Kretzmer, T., Kim, M., French, L. M., & Vanderploeg, R. D. (2011). Symptom complaints following reports of blast versus

non-blast mild TBI: Does mechanism of injury matter? *The Clinical Neuropsychologist, 25*(5), 702–715.

Berger, M. (2017). Black soldiers: Fighting America's enemies abroad and racism at home. Retrieved from https://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2017/06/05/black-soldiers-double-war-fighting-for-freedom/

Betancourt, J. R., Green, A. R., Carrillo, J. E., & Ananeh-Firempong, O. (2003). Defining cultural competence: A practical framework for addressing racial/ethnic disparities in health and health care. *Public Health Reports, 118*, 293–302.

Bik, A. (2013). Mortification at the royal Netherlands military academy. Bachelor graduation paper, Breda: NLDA.

Black, D. A., Haviland, A., Sanders, S. G., & Taylor, L. J. (2008). Gender wage disparities among the highly educated. *The Journal of Human Resources, 43*(3), 630-659.

Black, H. K. (2016). Three generations, three wars: African American veterans. *The Gerontologist, 56*, 33-41.

Black, H. K., & Thompson, W. F. (2012). A war within a war: A World War II buffalo soldier's story. *The Journal of Men's Studies, 20*, 32–46.

Boykin, A. W., Jagers, R. J., Ellison, C. M., & Albury, A. (1997). Communalism: Conceptualization and measurement of an afrocultural social orientation. *Journal of Black Studies, 27*(3), 409-418.

Boylorn, R. M. (2008). As seen on TV: An autoethnographic reflection on race and reality television. *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 25*(4), 413-433.

Brah, A., & Phoenix, A. (2004). Ain't I a woman? Revisiting intersectionality. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 5*(8), 75-86.

Brill, N. Q. (1999). *Being Black in America today: A multiperspective review of the problem*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas Publisher, LTD.

Britton, P. C., Ilgen, M. A., Valenstein, M., Knox, K., Claassen, C. A., & Conner, K. R. (2012). Differences between veteran suicides with and without psychiatric symptoms. *American Journal of Public Health, 102*, S125–S130.

Broman, C. L., Neighbors, H. W., & Jackson, J. S. (1988). Racial group identification among Black adults. *Social Forces, 67*, 146-58.

Brown, A., & Atske, S. (2016). Blacks have made gains in U.S. political leadership, but gaps remain. Retrieved from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/28/blacks-have-made-gains-in-u-s-political-leadership-but-gaps-remain/

Brunger, H., Serrato, J., & Ogden, J. (2013). No man's land: The transition to civilian life. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research, 5*(2), 86-100.

Bryan, J. L. (2015). Fighting for respect: African-American soldiers in WWI. Retrieved from https://armyhistory.org/fighting-for-respect-african-american-soldiers-in-wwi/

Buckley, G. L. (2002). *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm*. New York: Random House Trade Paperback

Burger, B. L. (1997). The lions' history: Researching World War II images of African Americans. *Federal Records and African American History, 29*, 29–52.

Burke, P. J., & Franzoi, S. L. (1998). Studying situations and identities using experiential sampling methodology. *American Sociological Review, 53*, 559-568.

Burnett-Zeigler, I., Ilgen, M., Valenstein, M., Zivin, K., Gorman, L., Blow, A., Duffy, S., Chermack, S. (2011). Prevalence and correlates of alcohol misuse among returning Afghanistan and Iraqi veterans. *Addictive Behaviors, 36*(8), 801–806.

Butler-Kisber, L. (2010). *Qualitative inquiry: Thematic, narrative and arts-informed perspectives*. London: SAGE Publications.

Chambers II, J. W., Anderson, F., Eden, L., Glatthaar, J. T., & Spector, R. H. (Eds.). (1999). *The Oxford companion to American Military history*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc.

Chamlin, M. B. (1987). General assistance among cities: An examination of the need, economic threat, and benign neglect hypotheses. *Social Science Quarterly, 68*(4), 834-846.

Chao, R. L. (2015). *Counseling psychology: An integrated positive psychological approach*. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Charmaz, K. (2002). Grounded theory analysis. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research* (pp. 675–694). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: SAGE Publications.

Christensen, D., & Tsilker, Y. (2017). Racial disparities in military justice: Findings of substantial and persistent racial disparities within the United States military

justice system. Retrieved from https://www.protectourdefenders.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Report_20.pdf

Clark, A. (2018). When Black nurses relegated to care for German POWs. Retrieved from https://www.history.com/news/black-nurses-world-war-ii-truman-desegregation-military

Clark, K. B., & Clark, M. P. (1939). The development of consciousness of self and the emergence of racial identification in Negro preschool children. *Journal of Social Psychology, 10*, 591-599.

Cohen, N., & Arieli, T. (2011). Field research in conflict environments: Methodological challenges and snowball sampling. *Journal of Peace Research, 48*(4), 423-435.

Coll, J. E., Weiss, W. L., & Yarvis, J. S. (2011). No one leaves unchanged: Insights for the civilian mental health care professionals into the military experience and culture. *Social Work in Health Care, 50*(7), 487-500.

Collins, P. H. (2000). Gender, Black feminism, and Black political economy. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 568*, 41-53.

Conrad, C. F., & Serlin, R. C. (Eds.). (2006). *The SAGE handbook for research education: Engaging ideas and enriching inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Constantine, M. G., Richardson, T. Q., Benjamin, E. M., & Wilson, J. W. (1998). An overview of Black racial identity theories: Limitations and considerations for future theoretical conceptualizations. *Applied & Preventive Psychology, 7*, 95-99.

Convoy, S., & Westphal, R. J. (2013). The importance of developing military cultural competence. *Journal of Emergency Nursing, 39*(6), 591-594.

Cooper, H. L. F. (2015). War on drugs policing and police brutality. *Substance Use & Misuse, 50*(8-9), 1188-1194.

Cooper-Thomas, H., & Anderson, N. R. (2006). Organizational socialization: A new theoretical model and recommendations for future research and HRM practices in organizations. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 21*(5), 492-516.

Costa, D. L., & Kahn, M. E. (2006). Forging new identity: The costs and benefits of diversity in Civil War combat units for Black slaves and freemen. *The Journal of Economic History, 66*(4), 936-962.

Coyne, C. J., & Mathers, R. L. (Eds.). (2011). *The handbook on the political economy of war*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(6), 1241-1299.

Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Crocker, J., & Luhtanen, R. (1990). Collective self-esteem and ingroup bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58*, 60-67.

Crocker, J., & Major, B. (1989). Social stigma and self-esteem: The self-protective properties of stigma. *Psychological Review, 96*, 608-630.

Cross, W. E. (1971). The Negro-to-Black conversion experience: Toward a psychology of Black liberation. *Black World, 20*(9), 13-27.

Cross, W. E. (1991). *Shades of Black: Diversity in African American identity.*
Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the
research process*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

Crutchfield, R. D., Fernandes, A., & Martinez, J. (2010). Racial and ethnic disparity and
criminal justice: How much is too much. *The Journal of Criminal Law and
Criminology (1973-), 100*(3), 903-932.

Dahlberg, K., Dahlberg, H., & Nystrom, M. (2008). *Reflective lifeworld research*. Lund,
Sweden: Studentlitteratur.

Dalenberg, S., & Buijs, T. O. D. (2013). Military socialization effects and effective
leadership behavior. In H. Amersfoort, R. Moelker, J. Soeters, & D. Verweij
(Eds.), *Moral responsibility and military effectiveness* (pp. 97-116). The
Netherlands: Asser Press

Dalfiume, R. M. (1968). The Fahy Committee and desegregation of the armed forces.
The Historian, 31, 1-20.

Danish, S. J., & Antonides, B. J. (2013). The challenges of reintegration for service
members and their families. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 83*(4), 550-
558.

Dass-Brailsford, P. (2007). *A practical approach to trauma: Empowering interventions*.
Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

D'Augelli, A. R. (1994). Identity development and sexual orientation: Toward a model of
lesbian, gay, and bisexual development. In E. J. Trickett, R. J. Watts, & D.

Birman (Eds.), *Human diversity: Perspectives on people in context*. San
Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Deaux, K., & Martin, D. (2003). Interpersonal networks and social categories: Specifying
levels of context in identity processes. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 66*(2), 101-
117.

Defense Casuality Analysis System. (2018). Conflict descriptions. Retrieved from:
https://dcas.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/pages/conflict_definitions.xhtml

Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). (2016). Population representation in the
military services. Retrieved from https://www.cna.org/research/pop-rep

Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). (2017). American war and military operations
casualties: Lists and statistics (Report No. RL32492). Washington, DC:
Congressional Research Service.

Demo, D. H., & Hughes, M. (1990). Socialization and racial identity among Black
Americans. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 53*(4), 364-374.

Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological
methods* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Dill, B. T., & Zambrana, R. E. (Eds.). (2009). *Emerging intersections: Race, class, and
gender in theory, policy, and practice*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University
Press.

Donaldson, G. (1991). *The history of African-Americans in the military*. Malabar, FL:
Krieber.

du Plessis, J., & Naude, L. (2017). "Carrying the culture…": Ethnic identity development in Black African adolescents. *Journal of Psychology in Africa, 27*(2), 159-164.

DuBois, W. E. B. (1903). *Souls of Black folk*. Chicago: A. C. McClurg.

Edens, E. L., Kasprow, W., Tsai, J., & Rosenheck, R. A. (2011). Association of substance use and VA service-connected disability benefits with risk of homelessness among veterans. *The American Journal on Addictions, 20*(5), 412-419.

Eisenstein, Z. R. (1994). *The color of gender: Reimaging democracy*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

Eitle, D., D'Alessio, S. J., & Stolzenberg, L. (2002). Racial threat and social control: A test of the political, economic, and threat of Black crime hypotheses. *Social Forces, 81*(2), 557-576.

Ellett, J. (2011). Narrative and phenomenology as methodology for understanding persistence in art teachers: A reflective journey. Marilyn Zurmuehlen Working *Papers in Art Education, 2011*(2), 1-12.

England, K. (1984). Getting personal: Reflexivity, positionality, and feminist research. *The Professional Geographer, 46*, 80-89.

Entman, R. M. (1994). Representation and reality in the portrayal of Blacks on network television news. *Journalism Quarterly, 71*(3), 509-520.

Equal Justice Initiative. (2016). Lynching in America: Confronting the legacy of racial terror. Montgomery, AL: Equal Justice Initiative. Retrieved from https://eji.org/sites/default/files/lynching-in-america-second-edition-summary.pdf

Escott, P. D. (2009). "what shall we do with the Negro?": Lincoln, white racism, and Civil War America. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.

Exum, H., & Coll, J. E. (2008). *A civilian counselor's primer for counseling veterans*. Deerpark, NY: Linus Publications, Inc

Exum, H., Coll, J. E., & Weiss, E. L. (2011). *A civilian counselor's primer for counseling veterans* (2nd Ed.). Deerpark, NY: Linus Publications, Inc.

Fadjukoff, P., & Kroger, J. (2016). Identity development in adulthood: Introduction. *An International Journal of Theory and Research, 16*, 1-7.

Farley, R. (1984). *Blacks and Whites: Narrowing the gap?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Farley, R. (1988). After the starting line: Blacks and women in an uphill race. *Demography, 25*, 477-495.

Feagin, J. R. (2014). *Racist America: Roots, current realities, and future reparations*. United Kingdom: Routledge.

Fleury-Steiner, B. (2012). *Disposable heroes: The betrayal of African American veterans*. Lanham, MD: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.

Freeman, E., Schamel, W. B., & West, J. (1992). The fight for equal rights: A recruiting poster for Black soldiers in the Civil War. *Social Education, 56*(2), 118-120.

Frey, S. R. (1999). *Water from the rock: Black resistance in a revolutionary age*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Gade, D. M., & Wilkins, V. M. (2012). Where did you serve? Veteran identity, representative bureaucracy, and vocational rehabilitation. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 23*(3), 267-288.

Gaines, S. O., & Reed, E. (1994). Two social psychologies of prejudice: Gordon W. Allport, W. E. B. Du Bois, and the legacy of Booker T. Washington. *Journal of Black Psychology, 20*, 8-28.

Gaines, S. O., & Reed, E. (1995). Prejudice: From Allport to Du Bois. *American Psychologist, 50*, 96-103.

Gecas, V. (1979). The influence of social class on socialization. In W. Burr, R. Hill, F. Nye, & I. Reiss (Eds.), *Contemporary theories about the family* (pp. 365-404) New York: Free Press.

Gecas, V. (1981). Contexts of socialization. In M. Rosenberg & R. Turner (Eds.), *Social psychology: Sociological perspectives* (pp. 165-199) New York: Basic Books.

Green, B. L., Maisiak, R., Britt, M. F., & Ebeling, N. (1997). Participation in health education, health promotion, and health research by African Americans: Effects of the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment. *Journal of Health Education, 28*, 196-201.

Green, M. (2010). *Black Yanks in the Pacific: Race in the Making of American Military Empire after World War II.* New York: Cornell University Press

Greenfield, T. K., Midanik, L. T., & Rogers, J. D. (2000). Effects of telephone versus face-to-face interview modes on reports of alcohol consumption. *Addiction, 95*(2), 277-284.

Greenwald, A. G., McGhee, D. E., & Schwartz, J. L. K. (1998). Measuring individual differences in implicit cognition: The implicit association test. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74*, 1464-1480.

Greer, C. M. (2013). *Black ethnics: Race, immigration, and the pursuit of the American dream*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Griffith, J. (2017). Homecoming of citizen soldiers: Postdeployment problems and service use among Army National Guard soldiers. *Community Mental Health Journal, 53*(7), 766-777.

Grodsky, E., & Pager, D. (2001). The structure of disadvantage: Individual and occupational determinants of the black-white wage gap. *American Sociological Review, 66*(4), 542-567.

Habeck, M. (2012). What does al Qaeda want? Retrieved from https://foreignpolicy. com/2012/03/06/what-does-al-qaeda-want/

Hammond, S. (2015). Complex perceptions of identity: The experience of student combat veterans in community college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 40*(2), 146–159.

Harada, N. D., Villa, V. M., & Andersen, R. (2002). Satisfaction with VA and non-VA outpatient care among veterans. *American Journal of Medical Quality, 17*(4), 155-164.

Harrell, M. C., & Berglas, N. (2011). Losing the battle: The challenge of military suicide (Policy Brief). Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security.

Harrod, M., Miller, E. M., Henry, J., & Zivin, K. (2017). "I've never been able to stay in a job": A qualitative study of veterans' experiences of maintaining employment. *Work, 57*(2), 259-268.

Hayes, S. C., Follette, V. M., & Linehan, M. M. (Eds.). (2004). *Mindfulness and acceptance: Expanding the cognitive-behavioral tradition.* New York: Guilford Press.

Heals, C. (2012). African-Americans played pivotal role in War of 1812. Retrieved from

    https://thegrio.com/2012/06/21/african-americans-played-pivotal-role-in-war-of-

    1812/

Hecht, M., & Ribeau, S. (1991). Socio structural roots of ethnic identity: A look at

    America. *Journal of Black Studies, 21*, 501-513.

Helms, J. E. (1986). Expanding racial identity theory to cover counseling process.

    Journal of Counseling Psychology, 33, 62-64.

Henkel, K. E., Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2006). Institutional discrimination,

    individual racism, and Hurricane Katrina. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public

    Policy, 6*, 99-124.

Henry, W. J., West, N. M., & Jackson, A. (2010). Hip-hop's influence on the identity

    development of Black female college students: A literature review. *Journal of

    College Student Development, 51*(3), 237-251.

Herman, J. L. (1992). *Trauma and recovery*. Ney York, NY: Harper Collins.

Hobbs, K. (2008). Reflections on the culture of veterans. *Workplace Health & Safety,

    56*(8), 337-341.

Hoge, E. A., Austin, E. D., & Pollack, M. H. (2007). Resilience: Research evidence and

    conceptual considerations for posttraumatic stress disorder. *Depression and

    Anxiety, 24*, 139-152.

Hoge, W. C., Auchterlonic, C. J., & Miilliken, S. C. (2006). Mental health problems, use

    of mental health services, and attrition from the military service after returning

    from deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan. *The Journal of the American Medical

    Association, 295*(9), 1023-1032.

Holm, J. (1992). *Women in the military: An unfinished revolution*. Navato, CA: Presidio
    Press.

Horowitz, R. (1939). Racial aspects of self-identification in nursery school children.
    Journal of Psychology, 7, 91-99.

Horvath, A. O., & Luborsky, L. (1993). The role of the therapeutic alliance in
    psychotherapy. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 61*(4), 561–573.

Hughes, M., & Demo, D. H. (1989). Self-perceptions of Black Americans: Self-esteem
    and personal efficacy. *American Journal of Sociology, 95*, 132-59.

Institute of Medicine. (2008). Gulf War and health. Vol. 6. Physiologic, psychologic, and
    psychosocial effects of deployment-related stress. Washington, DC: The National
    Academies Press.

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. (2017). Continue to combat suicide among
    troops and veterans. Retrieved from https://iava.org/campaign/combatingsuicide/

Iverson, S. V., & Anderson, R. (2013). The complexity of veteran identity:
    Understanding the role of gender, race, and sexuality. In F. A. Hamrick, C. B.
    Rumann, & Associates (Eds.), *Called to serve: A handbook on student veterans
    and higher education* (pp. 89-113). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Iverson, S. V., Seher, C. L., DiRamio, D., Yarvis, K., & Anderson, R. (2016). Walking a
    gender tightrope: A qualitative study of female student veterans' experiences
    within military and campus cultures. *Journal About Women in Higher Education,
    9*(2), 152-168.

Jackman, R. (1992). *The divided skies: Establishing segregated flight training at
    Tuskegee, Alabama, 1934-1942*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Johnson, A. A., & Quaye, S. J. (2017). Queering Black racial identity development. *Journal of College Student Development, 58*(8), 1135-1148.

Johnson, E. A. (1899). *History of Negro soldiers in the Spanish-American War: And other items of interest*. Raleigh, NC: Capital Printing Co.

Johnson, J. (2010). Veterans who go back to school want more support. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2010/11/03/AR20101103 07448.html?noredirect=on

Jones, M. M. (2016). Does race matter in addressing homelessness? A review of the literature. *World Medical & Health Policy, 8*(2), 139-156.

Jones, S. R., Abes, E. S., & Magolda, M. B. B. (2013). *Identity development of college students: Advancing frameworks for multiple dimensions of identity*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons. Inc.

Jones, S. R., Torres, V., & Arminio, J. (2014). *Negotiating the complexities of qualitative research in higher education: Fundamental elements and issues* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Kambon, K. (1992). *The African personality in America: An African-centered framework.* Tallahassee, FL: NUBIAN Nation.

Kang, H. K., Bullman, T. A., Smolenski, D. J., Skopp, N. A., Gahm, G. A., & Reger, M. A. (2015). Suicide risk among 1.3 million veterans who were on active duty during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Annals of Epidemiology, 25(2), 96-100.

Kaplan, M. S., Huguet, N., McFarland, B. H., & Newsom, J. T. (2007). Suicide among male veterans: A prospective population-based study. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 61*, 619–624.

Kaplan, M. S., McFarland, B. H., Huguet, N., & Valenstein, M. (2012). Suicide risk and precipitating circumstances among young, middle-aged, and older male veterans. *American Journal of Public Health, 102*, S131–S137.

Kime, P. (2014). Rand: Civilian mental health providers don't 'get' the military. Retrieved from https://www.militarytimes.com/pay-benefits/military benefits/health-care/2014/11/21/rand-civilian-mental-health-providers-don-t-get-the-military/

Korman, M. (1974). National conference on levels and patterns of professional training in psychology: Major themes. *American Psychologist, 29*, 301-313.

Kulka, R. A., Schlenger, W. A., Fairbanks, J. A., Hough, R. L., Jordan, B. K., Marmar, C. R., Weiss, D. S. (1990). *Trauma and the Vietnam War generation: Report of findings from the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Landes, S. D., Wilder, J., & Williams, D. (2017). The effect of race and birth cohort on the veteran mortality differential. *Social Science & Medicine, 179*, 36-44.

Latty, Y. (2004). *We were there: Voices of African American veterans, from World War II to the war in Iraq*. In R. Tarver (Ed.). New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Laub, Z. (2014). The Taliban in Afghanistan. Retrieved from https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan

Laufer, R. S., Gallops, M. S., & Frey-Wouters, E. (1984). War stress and trauma: The Vietnam veteran experience. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 25*, 65-85.

Leonardo, Z., & Hunter, M. (2007). Imagining the urban: The politics of race, class, and schooling. In W. T. Pink & G. W. Noblit (Eds.), *International handbook of urban education* (pp. 779-802). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Lively, K. J., & Smith, C. L. (2011). Identity and Illness. In B. A. Pescosolido, J. K. Martin, J. D. McLeod, and A. Rogers (Eds.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Health, Illness, and Healing* (pp. 505-525) New York: Springer Publishers.

Lopreato, S. C., & Poston, D. L. (1977). Differences in earnings and earnings ability between Black veterans and nonveterans in the United States. *Social Science Quarterly, 57*(4), 750-766.

Louis, M. R. (1980). Surprise and sense making: What new-comers experience in entering unfamiliar organizational settings. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 25*(2), 226-251.

Maples, S. (2017). The inconvenience of being a woman veteran. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/11/the-inconvenience-of-being-a-woman-veteran/545987/

Martineau, P. (2007). Grad student works to add color to military history. *Diversity: Issues in Higher Education, 24*(4), 14.

May, R. E. (1987). Invisible men: Blacks and the U.S. Army in the Mexican War. *The Historian, 49*(4), 463-477.

McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs, 30*(3), 1771– 1800.

McCallum, C. M. (2015). "Mom made me do it": The role of family in African Americans' decisions to enroll in doctoral education. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 9*, 1-14.

McLean, K. C. (2005). Late adolescent identity development: Narrative meaning making and memory telling. *Developmental Psychology, 41*(4), 683-691.

Mental Health Advisory Team (MHAT). (2006). Operation Iraqi Freedom 05-07 final report. Retrieved from http://www.armymedicine.army.mil

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Meyer, E. G., Writer, B., & Brim, W. (2016). The importance of military cultural competence. *Current Psychiatry Reports, 18*(26), 1-8.

Midanik, L. T., Hines, A. M., & Greenfield, T. K. (1999). Face-to-face versus telephone interviews: Using cognitive methods alcohol survey questions. *Contemporary Drug Problems. 26*(4), 673-693.

Migliore, L. A., & Pound, L. B. (2016). The military identity project: A mixed method investigation of military self-schema content. *Military Behavioral Health, 4*(2), 183-192.

Moore, A. L., & Neal, L. V. I. (2010). African Americans and the civil war: Brave standard bearers. *African Americans and the Civil War, 73*(2), 4-7.

Moore, B. (1991). African-American women in the U.S. military. *Armed Forces and Society, 17*(3), 363-384.

Moore, B. A., & Kennedy, C. H. (2011). Wheels down: Adjusting to life after deployment. Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association.

Morehouse, M. (2006*). Fighting in the Jim Crow Army: Black Men and Women Remember World War II*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Mulrine, A. (2011, April). With Obama's speech, momentum gathering to cut defense spending. Retrieved from www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/

Myers, L. J. (1993). *Understanding an Afrocentric world view: Introduction to an optimal psychology* (2nd ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Myers, M. D. (2009). *Qualitative research in business & management*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Nalty, B. (1986). *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military*. New York: The Free Press.

National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2015). Veteran homelessness. Retrieved from https://endhomelessness.org/resource/veteran-homelessness/

National Archives. (2017). Black soldiers in the U.S. military during the Civil War. Retrieved from https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/blacks-civil-war

National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (NCVAS). (2018). Profile of post-9/11 veterans: 2016. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs

National Commission on Terrorist Attacks. (2004). Retrieved from https://www.9-11commission.gov/

National Survey on Drug Use and Health. (2015). Racial/ethnic differences in mental health service use among adults. Retrieved from https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/racialethnic-differences-mental-health-service-use-among-adults

Neville, H. A., Viard, B., & Turner, L. (2014). Race and recognition: Pathways to an affirmative Black identity. *Journal of Black Psychology, 41*(3), 247-271.

Norman, O., Ault, C. R., & Meskimen, L. (2001). The Black–White "achievement gap" as a perennial challenge of urban science education: A sociocultural and historical overview with implications for research and practice. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 38*(10), 1101-1114.

Novaco, R. W., Cook, T. M., & Sarason, I. J. (1983). *Military recruit training: An arena for stress coping skills.* In D. Meichenbaum, & M. Jaremko. (Eds.), Stress reduction and prevention. New York: Plenum Press.

Nunn, K. B. (2002). Race, crime and pool of surplus criminality: or why the "war on drugs" was a "war on black." *The Journal of Gender, Race & Just, 6*, 381-445.

Office of Suicide Prevention. (2016). Suicide among veterans and other Americans 2001-2014. Retrieved from https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/2016suicide datareport.pdf

Ogbu, J. U. (2004). Collective identity and the burden of "acting White" in Black history, community, and education. *The Urban Review, 36*, 1-35.

Overby, L. M., Brown, R. D., Bruce, J. M., Smith, C. E., & Winkle, J. W. (2004). Justice in Black and White race, perceptions of fairness, and diffuse support for the judicial system in a southern state. *Justice System Journal, 25*(2), 159-182.

Page, C. (1991). Blacks should be able to be all they can be-as civilians. Retrieved from articles.chicagotribune.com/1991-01-23/news/9101070273_1_civil-rights-leaders-black-americans-black-leaders

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

Peck, S. C., Brodish, A. B., Malanchuk, O., Banerjee, M., & Eccles, J. S. (2014). Racial/ethnic socialization and identity development in Black families: The role of parent and youth reports. *Developmental Psychology, 50*(7), 1897-1909.

Pew Research Center. (2011a). The military civilian gap: War and sacrifice in the post-9/11 era. Retrieved from http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/10/05/war-and-sacrifice-in-the-post-911-era/.

Pew Research Center. (2011b). Wealth gaps rise to record highs between Whites, Blacks and Hispanics. Retrieved from http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.397.5775&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Philogene, G. (2004). Racial identity in context: The legacy of Kenneth B. Clark. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1998). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Ponterotto, J. G. (2005). Qualitative research in counseling psychology: A primer on research paradigms and philosophy of science. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(2), 126-136.

Porter, C. J., & Dean, L. A. (2015). Making meaning: Identity development of Black undergraduate women. *Journal About Women in Higher Education, 8*(2), 125-139.

Porter, J. R., & Washington, R. E. (1979). Black identity and self-esteem. *Annual Review of Sociology, 5*, 53-74.

Posey, E. (2009). *The US Army's First, Last, and Only All-Black Rangers: The 2d Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) in the Korean War, 1950-1951*. El Dorado Hills: Savas Beatie.

Primack, J. M., Borsari, B., Benz, M. B., Reddy, M. K., & Shea, M. T. (2017). Mental health treatment utilization in OIF/OEF National Guard and Reserve troops with and without DSM diagnoses. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 87*(2), 157-165.

Pruitt, S. (2018). Was 'don't ask, don't tell' a step forward for LGBT in the military? Retrieved from https://www.history.com/news/dont-ask-dont-tell-repeal-compromise

Puddington, A. (1991). Black leader vs. Desert Storm. Retrieved from https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/black-leaders-vs-desert-storm/

QSR International. (2018). NVIVO features and benefits. Retrieved from http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo_features-and-benefits.aspx

Quarles, B. (1961). *The Negro in the American Revolution*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Radford, A. W. (2009). Military service members and veterans in higher education: What the new GI Bill may mean for postsecondary institutions. Washington, DC: American Council on Education. Retrieved from http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ProgramsServices/CPA/Publications/Mil Service.errata.pdf

Reger, M. A., Etherage, J. R., Reger, G. M., & Gahm, G. A. (2008). Civilian psychologists in an army culture: The ethical challenge of cultural competence. *Military Psychology, 20*, 21- 35.

Richelson, J. (2004). Iraq and weapons of mass destruction. Retrieved from https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB80/

Ritchey, K. (2014). Black identity development. *The Vermont Connection, 35*(12), 99-105.

Roberts, A. L., Gilman, S. E., Breslau, J., Breslau, N., & Koenen, K. C. (2011). Race/ethnic differences in exposure to traumatic events, development of post-traumatic stress disorder, and treatment-seeking for post-traumatic stress disorder in the United States. *Psychological Medicine, 41*, 71-83.

Roccas, S., & Brewer, M. B. (2002). Social identity complexity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 6*(2), 88–106.

Rogers, R. G. (1992). Living and dying in the USA: Sociodemographic determinants of death among Blacks and Whites. *Demography, 29*(2), 287-303.

Rosenberg, M. (1975). The dissonant context and the adolescent self-concept. In S. Dragastin & G. Elder, Jr (Eds)., *Adolescence in the life cycle* (pp. 97-116). New York: Wiley.

Rosenberg, M. (1979). Group rejection and self-rejection. *Research in Community Mental Health, 1*, 3-20.

Ross, P. T., Ravindranath, D., Clay, M., & Lypson, M. L. (2015). A greater mission: Understanding military culture as a tool for serving those who have served. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education, 7*(4), 519-522.

Roulo, C. (2013, January 24). Defense Department expands women's combat role. [Press Release]. American Forces Press Service. Retrieved from http://www.defense. gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=119098

Rozanova, J., Noulas, P., Smart, K., Roy, A., Southwick, S. M., Davidson, L., & Harpaz-Rotem, I. (2015). "I'm coming home, tell the world I'm coming home". The long homecoming and mental health treatment of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans. *The Psychiatric Quarterly, 87*(3), 427-443.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Rumann, C. B., & Hamrick, F. A. (2010). Student veterans in transition: Re-enrolling after war zone deployments. *The Journal of Higher Education, 81*(4), 431-458.

Santovec, M. L. (2012). Women veterans: 'Invisible warriors' on your campus. *Women in Higher Education, 21*(11), 29-30.

Scheper-Hughes, N. (2008). A talent for life: Reflections on human vulnerability and resilience. *Ethnos, 73*, 25-56.

Scott, G. C. (2017). Homelessness has a Black face. Retrieved from https://www. huffingtonpost.com/entry/homelessness-has-a-black-face_us_58b5fea2e4 b0658fc20f9b32

Segal, M. W. (1993). Women in the armed forces. In R. H. Howe & M. S. Stevenson (Eds.), *Women and the use of military force* (pp. 81-93). Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers.

Sellers, R. M., Smith, M. A., Shelton, J. N., Rowley, S. A. J., & Chavous, T. M. (1998). Multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 2*, 18-39.

Shapiro, R. (2016). Chili's apologizes for taking meal from Black veteran on Veteran's Day. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/chilis-apologizes-veterans-day_us_58297fe7e4b0c4b63b0d47d1

Shields, S. A. (2008). Gender: An intersectionality perspective. *Sex Roles, 59*, 301-311.

Signoracci, G. M., Bahraini, N. H., Matarazzo, B. B., Olson-Madden, J. H., & Brenner, L. A. (2014). Delivering mental health services to OEF/OIF veterans: A VHA qualitative study. *Journal of Holistic Nursing, 32*(3), 161-172.

Silver, J. M., McAllister, T. W., & Arciniegas, D. B. (2009). Depression and cognitive complaints following mild traumatic brain injury. American Journal of Psychiatry, 166(6), 653–661.

Sloan, D. M., Beck, J. G., & Sawyer, A. T. (2017). Trauma-focused group therapy. In S. N. Gold (Ed.), *APA handbooks in psychology®. APA handbook of trauma psychology: Trauma practice* (p. 467–482). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/0000020-022

Smith, R. T., & True, G. (2014). Warring identities: Identity conflict and the mental distress of American veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. *Society and Mental Health, 4*(2), 147-161.

Smith, T. W. (1992). Changing racial labels: From "Colored" to "Negro" to "Black" to "African American." *The Public Opinion Quarterly, 56*(4), 496-514.

Spoont, M. R., Nelson, D. B., Murdoch, M., Rector, T., Sayer, N. A., Nugent, S., & Westermeyer, J. (2014a). Are there any racial/ethnic disparities in VA PTSD treatment retention? *Depression and Anxiety, 32*(6), 415-425.

Spoont, M. R., Nelson, D. B., Murdoch, M., Rector, T., Sayer, N. A., Nugent, S., & Westermeyer, J. (2014b). Impact of treatment beliefs and social network encouragement on initiation of care by VA service users with PTSD. *Psychiatric Services, 65*(5), 654-662.

Stabler, S. L., & Green, M. S. (Eds.). (2015). *Ideas and movements that shaped America: From the Bill of Rights to 'Occupy Wall Street'* [3 Volumes]. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.

Stecker, T., Adams, L., Carpenter-Song, E., Nicholson, J., Streltzov, N., & Xie, H. (2016). Intervention efficacy in engaging Black and White veterans with PTSD into treatment. *Social Work Public Health, 31*(6), 481-489.

Stecker, T., Fortney, J. C., & Sherbourne, C. D. (2011). An intervention to increase mental health treatment engagement among OIF veterans: A pilot trial. *Military Medicine, 176*(6), 613-619.

Stewart, R. W. (2009). American military history. Washington D.C.: Center of Military History.

Stouffer, S. (1949). *The American soldier: Adjustment during army life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Stryker, S., & Serpe, R. T. (1982). Commitment, identity salience, and role behavior. In W. Ickes & E. Knowles (Eds.), *Personality, roles, and social behavior* (pp. 199-218). New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

Sturges, J. E., & Hanrahan, K. J. (2004). Comparing telephone and face-to-face qualitative interviewing: A research note. *Qualitative Research, 4*, 107-118.

Sue, D. W., & Torino, G. C. (2005). Racial–cultural competence: Awareness, knowledge, and skills. In R. T. Carter (Ed*.), Handbook of racial– cultural psychology and counseling: Vol. 2. Training and practice* (pp. 3–18). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Sue, S. (1998). In search of cultural competence in psychotherapy and counseling. *American Psychologist, 53*, 440–448.

Syme, S. L., & Berkman, L. F. (1976). Social class, susceptibility, and sickness. *American Journal of epidemiology, 104*, 1-8.

Tajfel, H. (1982). Social psychology of intergroup relations. *Annual Review of Psychology, 33*, 1–39.

Tanielian, T., & Jaycox, L. H. (Eds.). (2008). Invisible wounds of war: Psychological and cognitive injuries, their consequences, and services to assist recovery. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

Terry, W. (2004). *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans*. New York: Ballentine Books

Teyber, E., & Teyber, F. H. (2017). *Interpersonal process in therapy: An integrative model* (7th Ed). Boston, MA: Brooks Cole.

Thomas, J. T., Wilk, J. E., Riviere, L. A., McGurk, D., Castro, C. A., & Hoge, C. W. (2010). Prevalence of mental health problems and functional impairment among

active component and National Guard soldiers 3 and 12 months following combat in Iraq. *Archives of General Psychiatry, 67*(6), 614-623.

Thomas, V. G. (2004). The psychology of Black women: Studying women's lives in context. *Journal of Black Psychology, 30*(3), 286-306.

Thompson, C. E., & Neville, H. A. (1999). Racism, mental health, and mental health practice. *The Counseling Psychologist, 27*(2), 155-223.

Torreon, B. S. (2017). U.S. periods of war and dates of recent conflicts (Report No. RS21405). Washington D. C.: Congressional Research Service.

Trautwein, C. (2018). Academics' identity development as teachers. Teaching in Higher Education. doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2018.1449739

Tsai, J., & Rosenheck, R. A. (2015). Risk factors for homelessness among US veterans. *Epidemiologic Reviews, 37*, 177–195.

Tsai, J., Rosenheck, R. A., Kasprow, W. J., & McGuire, J. F. (2013). Risk of incarceration and other characteristics of Iraq and Afghanistan era veterans in state and federal prisons. *Psychiatric Services in Advance, 64*, 36–43.

Tucker, S. (Ed.). (1998). *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A political, social, and military history*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tuerk, P. W., Yoder, M., Grubaugh, A., Myrick, H., Hamner, M., & Acierno, R. (2011). Prolonged exposure therapy for combat-related posttraumatic stress disorder: An examination of treatment effectiveness for veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 25*(3), 397-403.

Tufford, L., & Newman, P. A. (2010). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work, 11*, 18–96

U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). Quickfacts United States. Retrieved from https://www.
census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045217

U.S. Const. amend. XIII, § 1

U.S. Department of Defense (DOD). (2016). 2016 demographics: Profile of the military
community. Retrieved from http://download.militaryonesource.mil/
12038/MOS/Reports/2016-Demographics-Report.pdf

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. (2017). America's wars fact sheet. Retrieved from
https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/fs_americas_wars.pdf

U.S. White House. (2012). Joining forces: Taking action to serve America's
military families. Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces

Veterans Affairs Office of Health Equity. (2016). National veteran health equity
(Report No. FY2013). Washington, DC: US Department of Veterans' Affairs.
Retrieved from http://www.va.gov/healthequity/NVHER.asp

Vandenberg, R. J., & Seo, J. H. (1992). Placing recruiting effectiveness in perspective: A
cognitive explication of the job-choice and organizational-entry period. *Human
Resource Management Review, 2*(4), 239-273.

Van Maanen, J. (1973). Observations on the making of policemen. *Human
Organizations, 32*(4), 407-418.

Van Maanen, J. (1975). Police socialization: A longitudinal examination of job attitudes
in an urban police department. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 20*, 207-28.

Van Maanen, J., & Schein, E. H. (1979). Toward a theory of organizational socialization.
In B. M. Staw, (Ed.), *Research in organizational behavior,* Vol. 1, (pp. 209-264),
JAI Press, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. London, ON: The Althouse Press.

Van Manen, M. (2007). Phenomenology of practice. *Phenomenology & Practice, 1*, 11-30.

Vogt, D., Fox, A. B., & Di Leone, B. A. L. (2014). Mental health beliefs and their relationship with treatment seeking among U.S. OEF/OIF veterans. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 27*(3), 307-313.

Ward, J. D. (Ed.). (2018). *Policing and race in America: Economic, political, and social dynamics*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Waterman, A. S. (1982). Identity development from adolescence to adulthood: An extension of theory and a review of research. *Developmental Psychology, 18*(3), 341-358.

Weiner, B. (Ed.). (1974). *Cognitive views of human emotion*. New York, NY: Academic.

Westheider, J. (2003). African Americans and the Vietnam War. In M. B. Young & R. Buzzanco (Eds.). *A companion to the Vietnam War* (pp. 333–347). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Wilkins, A. (2012). "Not out to start a revolution": Race, gender, and emotional restraint among Black university men. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 41, 34-65.

Williams, C. L. (2010). *Torchbearers of democracy: African American soldiers in the World War I era*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.

Williams, E. N., & Morrow, S. (2009). Achieving trustworthiness in qualitative research: A pan- paradigmatic perspective. *Psychotherapy Research, 19*(4-5), 576-582.

Williams, R. (2001). Department of Defense salutes African-American Korean War

    veterans. Retrieved from http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?

    id=44714

Wilson, R. M., Leary, S., Mitchell, M., & Ritchie, D. (2009). Military veterans sharing

    first□person stories of war and homecoming: A pathway to social engagement,

    personal healing, and public understanding of veterans' issues. *Smith College*

    Studies in Social Work, 79(3-4), 392-432.

Winder, T. J. A. (2015). "Shouting it out": Religion and the development of Black gay

    identities. *Qualitative Sociology, 38*(4), 375-394.

Zinzow, H. M., Grubaugh, A. L., Monnier, J., Suffoletta-Maierle, S., & Frueh, B. C.

    (2007). Trauma among female veterans: A critical review. *Trauma, Violence, &*

    Abuse, 8(4), 384-400.

Zogas, A. (2017). U.S. military veterans' difficult transitions back to civilian life and the

    VA's response. Retrieved from https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/

    2017/us-military-veterans-difficult-transitions-back-civilian-life-and-va-s-

    response

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

I n s t i t u t i o n a l R e v i e w B o a r d

DATE:	January 24, 2019
TO:	Deon Marcell Hall
FROM:	University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB
PROJECT TITLE:	[1365259-2] Military Life Narratives & Identity Development among Black Post-9/11 Veterans
SUBMISSION TYPE:	Amendment/Modification
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	January 23, 2019
EXPIRATION DATE:	January 23, 2020
REVIEW TYPE:	Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB has APPROVED your submission. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of January 23, 2020.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Morse at 970-351-1910 or nicole.morse@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT STATEMENT

Potential email to recruit participants through social media:

Hello, my name is Deon Marcell Hall, and I am a doctoral student in counseling psychology and an Army Reservist currently conducting research on the military and post-service experiences, and strengths of Black post-9/11 veterans. Your involvement would consist of one interview and potentially a brief check afterward. All forms of intersectionality are welcomed (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, etc.). I am particularly interested in learning about how your unique military experiences were shaped by and influenced your identity development. This research will help to develop veteran support services options to become more inclusive and knowledgeable about the unique experiences of Black veterans. If you and or someone you know may be interested in sharing their stories and experiences, please click on this hyperlink "Qualtrics link" for further information and/or send an email to Hall0773@bears.unco.edu

Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Respectfully,
Deon Marcell Hall (USAR)

Potential message for email to recruit participants through the National Association for Black Veterans (NABVETS):

Attention NABVETS:

Hello, my name in Deon Marcell Hall, and I am currently in the Army reserves and serving as a doctoral student in the APA-Accredited Counseling Psychology program at UNC. I am doing my dissertation on identity development of post-9/11 veterans who identify within the Black diaspora. I am interested in learning about how one's identity may evolve from the time one begins their miliatry service to their current post-service experiences as veterans. I am passionate about this topic as I am currently navigating aspects of my own military identity as a Black Reservist. I believe that learning about the veteran identity development process and unique military experiences of Black post-9/11 military members will allow healthcare professionals to provide more inclusive, competent treatment options that more adequately meet the needs of Black post-9/11 veterans. If you know anyone who may be interested in sharing their stories and experiences with me, please send an email to Hall0773@bears.unco.edu

Thank you for your time and attention to this request.

Respectfully,
Deon Marcell Hall (USAR)

Potential script to recruit potential participants who expressed interest in study to other veterans:

Hello, my name in Deon Marcell Hall, and I am currently in the Army reserves and serving as a doctoral student in the APA-Accredited Counseling Psychology program at UNC. I am interested in hearing about your experiences and strengths as a Black post-9/11 veteran. Another participant suggested that you might be interested in participating in this research opportunity. It involves completing a brief questionnaire to be access through this Qualtrics link and answering questions in an audio recorded interview that should take roughly 60-90 minutes. You will have the opportunity to choose a pseudonym before the interview begins, and the results of the study will be organized in an anonymous manner so to ensure that your responses cannot be linked back to you. Your consideration is greatly appreciated, and your contribution to this study will benefit other veterans, military-affiliated persons, as well as healthcare professionals. Your participation will help healthcare professionals to better develop veteran support services that are inclusive and can more adequately meet the needs of the military community. Would you be interested in participating?

Thank you,

Deon Marcell Hall (USAR)

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
University of Northern Colorado

Project Title: Military Life Narratives and Identity Development Among Black Post-9/11 Veterans
Researcher: Deon Marcell Hall, B.A., Doctoral Student, Counseling Psychology, Email: Hall0773@bears.unco.edu
Research Advisor: Jeffrey Rings, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education, Phone: (970) 351-1639, Email: Jeffrey.Rings@unco.edu

The purpose of this study is to investigate the service and post-service experiences and identity development process of post-9/11 Black veterans. If you choose to participate in this study, you will fill out a demographic questionnaire, which will ask about your age, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation, in addition to questions regarding your military history. You will then participate in a semi-structured interview—lasting roughly 60-90 minutes—which will be audio-recorded on a password-protected device.

Inclusion criteria are that participants (a) identify within the Black diaspora, (b) are at least 18 years old, (c) maintain veteran status, (d) served in the U.S. military during post-9/11 military operations (e.g., OEF, OIF, and OND), and (e) experienced one or more military deployments overseas for a total aggregate period of at least 90 days.

Your responses will be kept confidential to the greatest extent possible. Your name will not be recorded, and a pseudonym will be used in any field notes, transcriptions of interviews, and any other written data. The researcher will de-identify your story to the greatest extent possible to help enhance confidentiality, not revealing specifics about you, but focusing on themes within your military experience. Data will be stored within a password-protected Microsoft word document on a password-protected computer. All possible efforts will be made to maximize confidentiality of your responses.

Your participation will benefit other veterans, military-affiliated persons, as well as healthcare professionals. Specifically, your participation will help healthcare professionals to better develop veteran support services that are inclusive and can more adequately meet the needs of the Black military community. Additionally, your participation will contribute to the understanding of the unique experiences of Black veterans. In this project, there are no known economic, legal, physical, or social risks to participants in either immediate or long-range outcomes.

(Page 1 of 2)_____
(participant initials here)

There are minimal risks in this study given the potentially sensitive nature of some of the questions that may be explored during the interview. Specifically, some questions that ask about possible unpleasant military and post-service experiences could potentially elicit some unpleasant emotions. I understand that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in a research study, but I believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and the potential, but unknown risks. You may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. After you complete the interview, the researcher will provide you with referrals to counselors and other veteran-specific resources in case you (a) are interested in further processing their military experience and/or identity development, and/or (b) felt any emotional distress from the interview.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study, and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please select Yes, I consent to participate to indicate your consent to participate in the study. You will retain a copy of this form to for future reference. After you provide your consent, you will be directed to a confidential survey webpage where you will answer questions about various demographic and inclusion criteria information.

All participants are invited to participate in a member check after the interview. This will involve the researcher emailing participants de-identified results which consist of themes and significant quotes. Participants will then have the opportunity to review the themes and set up a phone call or email the researcher back regarding their opinions and perceptions of the themes derived from the research study. If you are interested in participating in a member check, please provide your email below and the researcher will contact you after the initial data analysis process.

If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Research Compliance Manager at the Office of Research, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO, 80639; (970) 351-1910.

_____
Participant's Email (if interested in participating in the member check)

Please contact the researcher, Deon Marcell Hall, if you have any questions:
Email: hall0773@bears.unco.edu

- Yes, I consent to participate
- No, I do not consent

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA/MILITARY HISTORY FORM

Demographic Data Form

Age:

Gender identity:

Ethnicity:

Sexual orientation:

Current occupation:

Marital Status:

Ages of children, if any:

Do you come from a military family?

Dates of Military Service:

Information Regarding your Military History –

Branch of Service:

Dates of military service:

How many times did you deploy?

      Locations and dates of deployments:

      Were you engaged in direct combat?

Please circle which service component you served within:
Active-Duty/National Guard/Reserves

Highest rank:

Military Occupational Specialty (MOS):

Marital status while serving:

APPENDIX E

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

The current literature defines identity as that which explains who a person is. Identity can be understood as a social category distinguished by specific traits or attributes. Tell me about the identities that you hold that are important to you.

1. I am trying to understand how post-9/11 Black veterans identify themselves and how their military life has had an impact on that identity. How do you identify yourself and what is most important to you?

2. When/how/why did your military story begin?

3. Tell me about your military story.
   a. How/Why did your story begin?
   b. How did your cultural identities shape your military experiences? Which identities?
   c. In what ways did you change during your military service?
   d. How did your identities develop as you progressed through your military service?
   e. Tell me about your experience in leaving the military.

4. Culture can be understood as attributes of a group to include customs, habits, beliefs, and values that affect behavior and lifestyle. How would you describe the culture or climate of the post-9/11 military?

5. Tell me about your experiences as a veteran following discharge.
   a. In what ways have you changed since discharging from the military?
   b. What is your current relationship or connection with the military?

6. After reflecting on your military experiences, how would you name and describe the different stages of your military/veteran experience? (e.g., recruitment, indoctrination, deployment, discharge, reintegration, etc.)

7. How would you name your overall Becoming a veteran experience in one word or statement? Why?

8. How has your Black identity or sense of Blackness influenced your service member and veteran experiences?

9. What forms of support have you found most helpful in working through your service member and veteran experiences?

10. What prior experiences/interactions have you had with mental health providers?

11. What do you think mental health providers need to know to be helpful to you and other Black post-9/11 veterans?

APPENDIX F

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Debriefing Statement

This study in which you have participated is titled "Military Life Narratives & Identity Development Among Black Post-9/11 Veterans." The purpose of the research is to examine the identity development process of Black veterans from the military entrance to civilian reintegration. Specifically, the primary goals of this study are to gain insight, promote awareness, strengthen military cultural competence, and inform practices in the healthcare field tailored to meet the needs of veterans who identify within the Black diaspora. This research is of value to mental health providers, psychologists, veterans' support providers, and social scientists.

If you have experienced any psychological or emotional discomfort during or after participation, and would like someone to talk to, please see the resource provided below.

Thank you for your participation! Your contribution is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at any time.

Deon Marcell Hall
Doctoral Student—Counseling Psychology
Department of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education
University of Northern Colorado
Greeley, CO 80639

Email: Hall0773@bears.unco.edu

<div align="center">MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES –</div>

- National Veterans' Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255
- DCoE Outreach Center – The Centers of Excellence   1-866-966-1020
  for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury:
  resources@dcoeoutreach.org
- Wounded Warrior Resource Center/Military OneSource: 1-800-342-9647
- National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) Helpline: 1-800-950-NAMI
- Department of Defense National Helpline: 1-877-995-5247
- Veteran Combat Call Center   1-877-927-8387
- Psychological Health Resource Center 24/7   1-866-966-1020

<div align="center">HOUSING SERVICES –</div>

- National Call Center for Homeless Veterans: 1-877-424-3838
  https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/NationalCallCenter.asp

<div align="center">BLACK VETERANS' SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS –</div>

- The National Association for Black Veterans, Inc: 1-877-NABVETS
  www.nabvets.org
- Black Veterans for Social Justice, Inc: 718-852-6004
  admin@bvsj.org
- Black Veterans of America   612-401-7673
  www.BlackVetsofAmerica.org
- Minority Veterans of America   minorityvets.org