

Spring 5-2024

Peacing it Together: Post 9/11 Enlisted Student Veterans' Awakening to Peace Leadership

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Peacing it Together: Post 9/11 Enlisted Student Veterans' Awakening to Peace Leadership

A Dissertation by

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Orange, CA

Attallah College of Educational Studies

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

May 2024

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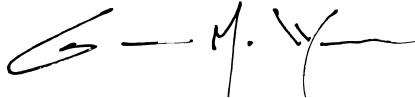
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The dissertation of Nicholas J. Irwin is approved.

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Kris DePedro, Ph.D.

April 2024

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From the bottom of my heart, I first want to thank God because, without Him, I would not have had the resilience and the mental fortitude to see this dissertation through to its completion. I was put on this earth to do this work; this research is larger than mine alone and is intended as a potential launch pad for additional research. This work is dedicated to all the veterans who struggle with the differences between military and civilian cultures and, more importantly, the participants who committed themselves to this program. These participants opened their hearts and created a ripple effect of compassion toward building a community. Seeing these acts of courage gave me hope that like-minded folks genuinely want to be there for each other and create a space for transformation that can extend beyond the space.

To my beloved family, I am deeply grateful for your unwavering support and understanding during the intense months of working on this dissertation. Your love and patience have been my anchor, guiding me to the finish line of this academic marathon.

To my esteemed chair, Dr. Whitney McIntyre Miller, I owe my presence here today to your pioneering work in peace leadership. Eight years ago, when I first encountered this concept, I could not have foreseen its profound impact on my journey to help veterans. Your unwavering support and encouragement have been instrumental in this process. You have been the backbone of this project, facilitating introductions with the Euphrates Institute and beyond.

To my committee member, Dr. Greg Warren, I would also not be here today if it was not for you constantly checking in with me and making miracles happen to see this program through to its fruition. I am forever grateful for your attentive listening and insightful guidance. I know you like to keep a low profile, but you were an integral part of this process and deserve countless blessings for you and your family.

To my committee member, Dr. Kris De Pedro, you may no longer be at Chapman University, but your gentle, loving spirit continues to live on in conversations throughout the halls of Reeves. I am beyond grateful for your continued support throughout my academic journey. Thank you!

When peacebuilders unite, soft eyes emerge as nonviolent communication guides the conversation and invites love, truth, and justice for all. Our community connects, grows, and sharpens each other's practice.

ABSTRACT

Peacing it Together: Post 9/11 Enlisted Student Veterans' Awakening to Peace Leadership

by Nicholas J. Irwin

Student veterans face a spectrum of socialization challenges intrapersonally, interpersonally, in communities, and structurally due to the cultural differences between the military and college. More comprehensive programs that individually and collectively address these challenges need to be developed, and it has become apparent that a new model needs to be evaluated. A peer-based learning program, the Peace Practice Alliance (PPA), is grounded in an integral peace leadership framework, including innerwork, knowledge, community, and environment. With student veterans facing these challenges, such as feeling misunderstood, isolating themselves, and filtering communication among younger students, the PPA program will meet student veterans where they are in their struggle.

This study sought to understand enlisted student veterans' perspectives on integral peace leadership and the usefulness of a framework-based program to help them integrate into college. Outcomes evaluation served as the guiding methodological framework. Pre-interviews, post-interviews, journals, and discussion notes were the data collection methods with five participants who participated in a hybrid four-week program. Constructivist grounded theory was the principal data analysis method utilized for analyzing the collected data. Findings indicated that formerly deployed post-9/11 enlisted student veterans found value in addressing preconceived psychological and social barriers both individually and collectively in the PPA for their

continued transition into and navigation through college. The unanticipated formation of a community transformed student veteran participants' mindsets toward themselves and others and created a sense of feeling more prepared to interact with others, resulting in collective action toward a positive change for student veterans on campus. The findings of this study also suggested implications for higher education and peace leadership as a field.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Studies show veterans are facing complex challenges in transitioning to civilian life (Castro & Kintzle, 2016; Castro & Kintzle, 2017; Kintzle et al., 2023; Whitworth et al., 2020; Zoli et al., 2015). Among the 3,188 Southern California veterans in a recent survey, 54% reported adjusting to civilian life was difficult for them, 66% stated they needed more time to figure out what to do with their lives during their transition, 69% mentioned leaving the military felt like having to start over, and 54% met the criteria for experiencing loneliness (Kintzle et al., 2023). Kintzle and colleagues (2023) suggested the data demonstrated a lack of emotional preparedness to transition out of the military. Being emotionally unprepared to face complex challenges stems from the culture of violence, hazing, and bullying in a conforming environment, such as the military (Redmond et al., 2015). Prior to engaging in this study, I reflected on my similar experiences of navigating supportive and toxic environments throughout my tenure in the military and how these experiences informed my socialization challenges with transitioning and navigating a college environment.

Military culture and student veteran literature demonstrated hypermasculine socialization processes, such as induction rituals (Wood & Toppelberg, 2017), which can lead to a spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges they experience in higher education, such as feeling isolated (DiRamio et al., 2008; Morris et al., 2019), having difficulty relating to civilians (DiRamio et al., 2008; Gregg et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2019); not fitting in (DiRamio et al., 2008; Morris et al., 2019), feeling misunderstood (DiRamio et al., 2008; Morris et al., 2019), feeling out of place (Morris et al., 2019), experiencing a weaker sense of purpose (Alfred et al., 2014) and a lack of sense of belonging in college (Livingston et al., 2011). It was clear that there were a myriad of challenges facing this student veteran population; however, there was a paucity

of research on comprehensive programs that address these military socialization behaviors in a collegiate culture. Therefore, it became essential to find a potential salient model to help student veterans personally, interpersonally, culturally, and systemically in their transition process.

As an emergent theoretical systems change model, integral peace leadership (McIntyre Miller & Abdou, 2018) is "a proactive, intentional approach of individual and collective action built through the interconnected development of skills and practices in order to challenge violence and aggression and create positive, just change" (McIntyre Miller, 2022, para. 1). Integral peace leadership (McIntyre Miller & Green, 2015; McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022) is still an emergent theory with limited empirical studies to date. Thus, in delving into the dearth of comprehensive programs that individually and collectively address the spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges when entering and navigating higher education, it has become apparent to evaluate a new model. With minimal opportunities to explore the impact of the work in multiple contexts of society, this study aimed to explore how formerly deployed Post 9/11 enlisted student veterans find value in utilizing the concepts of integral peace leadership for transitioning into and navigating through college.

Background to the Study/Contextual Underpinnings

Throughout a servicemember's time in service, whether degradation during bootcamp or hazing rituals, they undergo socialization processes that forge a strong loyalty and intense pressure to conform in a hypermasculine environment that perpetuates a culture of violence (Wood & Toppelberg, 2017). Hypermasculinity is an exaggeration of masculinity informed by beliefs in power, control, competition, pain tolerance, and stereotypical gender roles; the celebration of heterosexual manliness; and the devaluation of feminine traits (Wood & Toppelberg, 2017). Military identity formation is harsh, humiliating, and emotionally and

physically exhausting (Redmond et al., 2015). For example, drill instructors use highly gendered stereotypes to dehumanize recruits by judging their behavior, appearance, and intelligence (Redmond et al., 2015). Moreover, drill instructors tell recruits they are wrong whether they are right or not. This confusion forces recruits to become detached from their bodies and look outward to authority for guidance (Redmond et al., 2015).

Experiencing intense pressure to comply with the orders appointed over an individual through group cohesion ignores personal needs (Redmond et al., 2015). While being accepted among a group can be challenging, service members across the United States Armed Forces uphold the same codes of conduct (Kelty et al., 2010) and warrior ethos (Wong, 2005). The warrior ethos emphasizes the mission first, no excuses, overcoming adversities, and never leaving another American behind (Wong, 2005). These characteristics align with the military culture and socialization in boot camp, where recruits are taught a variety of traditional North American masculine norms, values, and skills because they are considered essential to support mission effectiveness (Green et al., 2010). For instance, emotional stoicism and autonomy are believed to aid personal survival and mission completion and are celebrated in military culture (Abraham et al., 2017; Green et al., 2010). Recruits learn to suppress their emotions during high-stress situations to maintain their composure and put their personal feelings aside to focus on the mission at hand. They also learn warfighter attributes, which imply toughness, violence, risk-taking, and overt heterosexual desires (Barrett, 2008; Brooks, 2001; Higate, 2007). These conditioning forms can positively and negatively affect service members' identities during and after military service.

The following section will describe the socialization challenges of traditional masculine norms on service members as they transition out of military service and then transition and

navigate college as student veterans. Then, I will discuss how an adapted integral peace leadership program, known as the Euphrates Institute's Peace Practice Alliance (PPA) program, could benefit enlisted student veterans to transition and navigate their college experience.

Transitioning Out of Military Service

Transitioning out of military service is an inevitable event every service member embarks on at the end of their obligated military service and requires many adjustments. Transitioning service members are not adequately prepared for these adjustments because they are not educated on how to find new sources of support, structure, guidance, and a sense of purpose (Whitworth et al., 2020). In the following subsection, I will discuss the current program in operation, the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), and how it can lead to experiencing a culture shock between military and civilian identities.

Transition Assistance Program

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is mandated by the Department of Defense (DoD) to prepare transitioning service members for the civilian world. Within their last 365 days of service, nearly 200,000 service members transition annually from the armed forces, and each branch conducts its version of TAP (Whitworth et al., 2020). The primary goals of TAP are to prepare transitioning service members "for their next step in life whether pursuing education, finding a job in the public or private sector, starting their new business or other forms of employment, or returning to school or an existing job" (Federal Register, 2016, p. 41803). Despite recent modifications in 2019, TAP substantially ignores the comprehensive challenges of leaving military service (Whitworth et al., 2020). These difficulties include adjusting in educational, employment, cultural, and family settings and having problems with substance

abuse, homelessness, financial mismanagement, mental health, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD; Whitworth et al., 2020).

Although the DoD mandates TAP to assist with employment, college, and veterans' benefits (Congressional Research Service, 2018), it is narrow-focused and provides a "one size fits all" approach (Whitworth et al., 2020, p. 27). TAP does not reflect the broad spectrum of transitioning service members or each member's specific needs, strengths, and goals (Whitworth et al., 2020). While military members are accustomed to being dependent on their chain of command for support, structure, guidance, and a sense of purpose, TAP does not provide military members with the tools to navigate a highly competitive and individualistic civilian culture (Whitworth et al., 2020). Moreover, TAP does not teach transitioning service members how to identify or address psychological needs such as PTSD, mood struggles such as depression and anxiety, or potential changes in family dynamics or interpersonal relationships (Whitworth et al., 2020). Thus, when certain members separate from military service, they do not know how to adjust to civilian settings.

The traditional masculine norms learned and used for survival in the military limit transitioning service members' preparedness to navigate the aforementioned difficulties in civilian life. With transitioning service members being used to the support, structure, guidance, and sense of purpose from the military, veterans who do not experience this same type of culture in their civilian life experience reverse culture shock (Westwood et al., 2002; Koenig et al., 2014). In fact, 40 to 75% of veterans face reverse culture shock during their transition out of the military, and this percentage range can also affect student veterans who are transitioning into higher education.

Transitioning and Navigating College as Student Veterans

Integrating into a highly structured and institutionally oriented military culture is deliberate, whereas transitioning into college is considered organized anarchy (Vacchi & Berger, 2013). For example, one of the first qualitative studies among a diverse group of student veterans described "the structured life of the military and how difficult it was to move from a strictly defined structure to a loosely configured campus where there was no chain of command from which to get answers" (Ackerman et al., 2009, p. 12). Many student veteran responses among studies revealed college orientation programs and transition seminars could have been more helpful because they focused more on traditional students (Olsen et al., 2014; Wheeler, 2012). Thus, being accustomed to the structure of military culture, student veterans may experience a culture clash between military and civilian cultures (Glasser et al., 2009; Vacchi & Berger, 2013) because they do not know where or how to find support in higher education.

In addition to feeling disoriented while navigating a new environment, student veterans can also feel misunderstood or isolated due to their invisible identities and wounds (Morris et al., 2019). Having difficulty relating to civilians (DiRamio et al., 2008; Gregg et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2019), one of the seven themes found in the Morris et al. (2019) survey analysis demonstrated isolation and not fitting in. "Being a veteran and kind of feeling lost, no one understanding. I am alone here w[ith] no family or friends" (Morris et al., 2019, p. 192). Some student veterans also mentioned a need to hide their veteran status due to guilt and shame for service and feeling out of place. These perceived psychological barriers of hiding their service among peers, professors, and college administrators when transitioning into or navigating a college environment could describe their lack of belonging in college (Livingston et al., 2011). It

can also describe their unwillingness to admit their challenges due to being viewed as a sign of weakness in military culture (Brown et al., 2011; Warner et al., 2011; Vacchi, 2012).

The socialized traditional masculine norms may also prevent student veterans from seeking support. With student veterans being taught not to admit their challenges, military socialization can hinder their needs by not burdening others (Vacchi, 2012) and reactivating weak link avoidance (Vacchi & Berger, 2013). "The most difficult task for any veteran to overcome may be learning that it is acceptable to need help and even more importantly to seek help when needed" (Vacchi & Berger, 2013, p. 2). Those who live up to this false expectation in higher education perpetuate the self-reliant socialization of the military and can jeopardize their ability to get the help they need (Vacchi & Berger, 2013). Therefore, student veterans are more likely to have all the weight on their shoulders to resolve their issue(s) (Livingston et al., 2011; Osborne, 2016). Applying these traditional masculine norms in civilian higher education settings led 117 predominantly young, white male student veterans to a weaker sense of purpose, autonomy, and psychological well-being (Alfred et al., 2014).

The study discussed herein aimed to understand enlisted student veterans' perspectives on integral peace leadership and the usefulness of a framework-based program to help integrate into college. The following section will introduce the Euphrates Institute and then describe their adapted integral peace leadership program, the Peace Practice Alliance (PPA), which was utilized as a program to explore this study's research question and purpose.

Euphrates Institute's Peace Practice Alliance Program

Euphrates Institute is a non-profit that connects global peacebuilders worldwide to help them equip, connect, and uplift their peace skills as practitioners (Euphrates Institute, 2022). This peacebuilding organization focuses on building deep relationships personally and interpersonally

through understanding, service, and love (Euphrates Institute, 2022). Annually, the Euphrates Institute hosts a six-month online community program connecting global peacebuilders in a heart-centered environment to practice peace leadership in themselves, their relationships, and their communities (Euphrates Institute, 2022). This peer-based learning program is known as the PPA and is grounded in an integral peace leadership framework, including innerwork, knowledge, community, and environment (Euphrates Institute, 2022; McIntyre Miller et al., under review). Euphrates Institute adapted the four quadrants of integral peace leadership, described more in Chapter 2, into the following practices: personal, interpersonal, community, and global peace. During the six-month program, peace leaders are self-directed to learn and practice personal, interpersonal, community, and global practices in six designated monthly modules (Euphrates Institute, 2022). A more detailed description of the PPA is included in Chapter 3. The following section will address the definition of terms for the study.

Definition of Terms

In order to establish a common language, it is important to define two terms need to be defined for this study: enlisted student veteran and integral peace leadership. Each is defined below.

Enlisted Student Veteran

In this study, an enlisted student veteran is defined as any former enlisted member of the active duty military, the National Guard, or Reserves who separated or retired with rank a between E1-E9, deployed within their branch of service in the military, and is currently attending an institution of higher education. E1-E9 are the designated ranks for enlisted service members among all military branches, whereas the designated ranks for officers are O1-O10. Officers require a bachelor's degree or above to join the military, and enlistees need a high school diploma or to pass

a General Education Development Test (GED). 99% of enlisted service members earn a high school diploma before joining the military (Kane, 2006).

Integral Peace Leadership

In this study, integral peace leadership is a "proactive, intentional approach of individual and collective action built through the interconnected development of skills and practices in order to challenge violence and aggression and create positive, just change" (McIntyre Miller, 2022, para. 1). Integral peace leadership is situated within peace leadership broadly and will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

Defining these two terms was essential because participants of the study are enlisted student veterans, and the framework being used in the program of study is integral peace leadership. In the next section, the statement of the problem will outline what the research will address.

Statement of the Problem

Many service members experience a toxic culture during their socialization in the military, where "manly" characteristics such as toughness, no emotions, and aggression are celebrated (Abraham et al., 2017). Emotional stoicism and autonomy may aid in personal survival and mission completion in the military (Green et al., 2010), but when it comes time to transition out of the military, service members lack the emotional preparedness (Kintzle et al., 2023) to take on the series of complex adjustments (Castro & Kintzle, 2016). Veterans who transition into college also experience difficulties integrating into college due to the cultural differences between military and higher education (Glasser et al., 2009; Vacchi & Berger, 2013) and do not know how to identify or address psychological needs such as PTSD, mood struggles such as depression and anxiety, or potential changes in family dynamics or interpersonal

relationships (Whitworth et al., 2020). Facing these difficulties, student veterans may revert to their military socialization of self-reliance and jeopardize their ability to get the help they need (Vacchi & Berger, 2013), which can lead to a spectrum of socialization challenges including feeling misunderstood or isolated (Morris et al., 2019), having difficulty relating to civilians (DiRamio et al., 2008; Gregg et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2019), experiencing a weaker sense of purpose (Alfred et al., 2014) and a lack of sense of belonging in college (Livingston et al., 2011). Each student veteran has a unique lived experience from their military socialization and has individual needs to reintegrate and navigate their college experience. There is a paucity of comprehensive programs that individually and collectively address the spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges, and therefore, this study aimed to meet student veterans where they were in their struggle between military and civilian cultures through a framework-based peace practice program intrapersonally, interpersonally, culturally, and systemically.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore whether an adapted Peace Practice Alliance (PPA) program, utilizing the integral peace leadership model (McIntyre Miller & Green, 2015; McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022), can potentially help provide skills and behaviors that will help combat the toxicity culture and aid in college transition. As integral peace leadership is still an emergent theory with limited empirical studies and there is a shortage of comprehensive programs that individually and collectively address the spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges when entering and navigating from higher education, this study can fill in empirical gaps in both areas.

In this study, I conducted an outcomes evaluation design with constructivist grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2006; Mertens & Wilson, 2019) to evaluate the effectiveness of an

integral peace leadership program. The depth and detail of the participants' outcomes shed light on the influences of the program activities and how they judge them. With this insight into the integral peace leadership framework, I discern which areas of the program resonated the most to yield a better positive transition and navigation experience and inform future programming and theoretical development. Therefore, this study provided one of the first opportunities to evaluate the real-world value and implications of integral peace leadership work with student veterans.

Research Questions

Therefore, this study utilizes the following research questions to explore enlisted student veterans' perspectives on integral peace leadership and the usefulness of a framework-based program to help integrate into college.

1. In what ways might formerly deployed Post 9/11 enlisted student veterans find value in an integral peace leadership program for transitioning into and navigating through college?
 1. What are the specific areas of integral peace leadership areas that student veterans relate to and why?
 2. In what ways, if any, do student veterans view an integral peace leadership program as a tool to foster college transition and navigation?
 3. How do student veterans see an integral peace leadership program contributing to the college transition experience?
 4. How do student veterans see themselves applying their integral peace leadership program learning to navigate their college and life experiences?

Significance of the Study

The study revealed that formerly deployed post-9/11 enlisted student veterans found value in addressing preconceived psychological and social barriers individually and collectively in the Peace Practice Alliance (PPA) through the germination of community support for their continued transition into and navigation through college. The unanticipated formation of a community transformed student veteran participants' mindsets toward themselves and others and created a sense of feeling more prepared to interact with others, resulting in collective action toward a positive change for student veterans on campus. By humanizing their lived experiences in a safe space, participants obtained greater personal peace, interpersonal peace, self-awareness, cultural fluency, systemic awareness, a better sense of purpose, and a more positive impact on their community peacebuilding practice without the negative side effects of the military.

As a result of the program learning, they demonstrated a multi-layered understanding of integral peace leadership by sharing things never mentioned and transcending past things that were bothering them individually and collectively through shared respect to help rise above them. Taking this time to process, heal, and move forward peacefully individually and collectively led some participants to address two overarching themes interconnected with the lack of student veteran engagement on campus, including a sense of community and student veteran recognition. Communicating these challenges with key stakeholders on and off campus and through different media platforms addressed the following solutions: a Student Veterans Club, a well-sized space for student veterans and military-connected students, marketing, and veteran-specific support services. These understandings led to knowledge that helped frame a program experience to better yield a positive transition and navigation experience into a private four-year University.

The findings contributed to peace leadership as a field. The results put integral peace leadership into practice and helped further refine the integral peace leadership theory related to student veterans. Putting integral peace leadership into practice transformed the minds of student veterans to enact new traits, characteristics, and practices in making peace internally and externally to help combat toxicity culture and aid in their transition. It also influenced student interactions as a community, leading participants to understand integral peace leadership and put all quadrants into practice. In addition to advancing the emergent theory with empirical evidence, the study is also helpful for stakeholders involved during the life cycle of student veterans by shedding light on contributing factors and ways to overcome them. The findings of this study also suggested implications for Veteran Resource Centers (VRC) and higher education and peace leadership as a field. These will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Summary

The adapted PPA program was the conduit to provide skills and behaviors that helped combat the toxicity culture and aid in transition. Thus, by pairing an outcomes evaluation methodology with constructivist grounded theory methods, I understood the effectiveness of an integral peace leadership program through the voices of student veterans' experiences. Exploring the depth of each participant's experience illuminated the influences of the program activities and how they judge them. With this insight into the integral peace leadership framework, I discerned which areas of the program resonated the most to yield a positive transition and navigation experience better and inform future programming. Ultimately, the participants involved and applying theory in practice benefitted from this study. In Chapter 2, I present a literature review relevant to studying student veterans' experiences within peace leadership.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter will present the literature relevant to studying student veterans' experiences within the context of peace leadership. This literature review responds to the call for the development of a salient conceptual model from which to consider the college experiences of student veterans (Vacchi & Berger, 2013) by utilizing integral peace leadership as a theoretical framework (McIntyre Miller & Green, 2015; McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022). This literature review begins with a discussion on integral peace leadership to frame this study. Next, existing literature on the integration into military culture is covered to understand where student veterans adopt a spectrum of military socialization challenges they face in higher education. Then, the extant literature for transitioning and navigating college as student veterans will reveal the differences between military and civilian cultures and how these differences lead to a spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges. Following the student veteran socialization recommendations in higher education to address student veterans' intrapersonal, interpersonal, community, and structural challenges section, the final part of the literature review discusses how an integral peace leadership program can address gaps identified in extant literature surrounding the spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges they experience in higher education.

Theoretical Framework: Integral Peace Leadership

Through the utilization of an integral peace leadership framework to examine the experiences of student veterans. An integral peace leadership framework served to answer the call as a way to develop a salient conceptual model from which to consider the college experiences of student veterans (Vacchi & Berger, 2013). Integral peace leadership is defined as "a proactive, intentional approach of individual and collective action built through the

interconnected development of skills and practices in order to challenge violence and aggression and create positive, just change" (McIntyre Miller, 2022, para. 1). McIntyre Miller and Green's (2015) integral peace leadership framework focused on peace leadership practices and concepts by integrating peace leadership into Wilber's (2000) integral theory framework. The key components of this framework will be described below.

Wilber's Integral Theory Framework

Wilber (2000) discussed a four-quadrant integral theory framework, in which "some of the hierarchies are referring to individuals, some to collectives; some are about exterior realities, some are about interior ones, but they all fit together seamlessly" (p. 40). In other words, there are two quadrants relating to the interior and exterior of an individual and two quadrants relating to the interior and exterior of a collective. Each quadrant contains its functions and is considered a holon resembling a whole inside another whole. For instance, Wilber described how a whole word is a part of a whole sentence, and a whole sentence is a part of a whole paragraph. Thus, a holonic nature is formed among quadrants where each quadrant overlaps the other and is interrelated (Wilber, 2000).

The interior of an individual (I quadrant) is the self and consciousness or subjective, located in the upper left quadrant. In contrast, the interior of a collective (WE quadrant) is considered culture and worldview or intersubjective, below the I quadrant in the lower left. The exterior of an individual (IT quadrant) is behavioral or objective, located in the upper right quadrant. In contrast, the exterior of a collective (ITS quadrant) is the social system and environment or interobjective, below the IT quadrant in the lower right (Wilber, 2000).

McIntyre Miller's Integral Peace Leadership

Wilber's (2000) quadrants inform the design for integral peace leadership, embedding works from leadership, peace studies, conflict transformation, and peace psychology in the integral framework (McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022). First, literature from leadership studies helped inform thinking focused on collective leadership, self-reflection for leadership, and systems thinking (McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022). Next, peace studies and conflict transformation focused on personal peace practices, peacebuilding, and building stronger, inclusive societies. In contrast, peace psychology focuses on integrating positive and negative peace across a myriad of unit analyses and societal levels, personal and collective safety and security, and building nonviolent transformations (McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022). These practices and concepts rooted in the foundation of the integral peace leadership framework provide a comprehensive developmental lens to investigate how change is made in each quadrant individually and collectively. "Peace leadership is truly present when work is being done within each quadrant" (McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022, p. 7). In the integral peace leadership framework, the quadrants were renamed to reflect the work of peace leadership: I Quadrant (Innerwork), WE Quadrant (Community), IT Quadrant (Knowledge), and ITS Quadrant (Environment; McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2019; McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022).

Innerwork Quadrant

Connecting self-reflective leadership and personal peace approaches, the innerwork quadrant examines the readiness of the individual introspectively to engage in the work of peace leadership. There are personal peace practices that have been modified through subsequent work to connect to the core of peace leadership, including practices such as respect for others' worldview, nonviolence, forgiveness, empathy, adaptability, mindfulness, vision, pacifism;

authentic leadership, and optimism and hope (McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2019; McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022). "As recovery from violence, denigration, and self-deprecation may be a part of the human condition, a sort of moral inventory may be essential to this kind of inner work" (McIntyre Miller & Green, 2015, p. 3). The innerwork quadrant is the internal space to connect and reconcile with respect for oneself and humanity, as shown in peace leaders throughout history, such as Abraham Lincoln and Nelson Mandela (Lieberfeld, 2009).

Adding to the ideas of innerwork, Amaladas and Byrne (2018), in the edited book *Peace Leadership: The Quest for Connectedness*, suggested that peace leaders, in order to connect and reconcile with respect for oneself, need to transform inner and external blockages toward peace by first taking care of themselves through meditation and self-awareness. Taking the time to care for oneself critically can help peace leaders precisely care for others through compassion, empathy, and a healing capacity to humanize relationships. Conducting practices of inner peace consistently prepares leaders to see the good in bad situations and make good choices that inspire others to follow. Inner peace also allows peace leaders to reflect critically and imagine more peaceful and holistic environments. When peace leaders can imagine more just and caring societies, they can shift their mindset from a culture of war to a culture of peace through educational strategies such as praxis, empowerment, awareness, cooperation, and evolvment (PEACE; Amaladas & Byrne, 2018). Therefore, one must shift one's consciousness through peace before bringing peace to others.

Knowledge Quadrant

While the community quadrant provides a space for individuals and groups to build skillsets collectively, the knowledge quadrant is where the individual moves away from their identified self externally toward creating peace with others, resulting in peacebuilding.

Extending this peaceful work through the interactions of others reflects the innerwork practices in motion through personal and collective safety and security. In the knowledge quadrant, peace leaders model practices grounded in nonviolence and challenge issues of violence or aggression toward others (McIntyre Miller & Green, 2015). Kouzes and Posner (2017) refer to this just action of following one's moral compass as model the way. The practices these peace leaders model in this quadrant include the use of moral leadership practice, creative strategization, servant leadership practices, effective dialogue and communication, negotiation, creating effective structures, mediation, reconciliation techniques, and conflict transformation skills (McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022).

Kouzes and Posner (2017) similarly refer to this just action as following one's moral compass in order to model the way. When peace leaders exemplify peacebuilding traits, they encourage others to act (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Thus, the knowledge quadrant provides a space for leaders to engage in peace leadership through practices involving others externally.

Community Quadrant

The next quadrant is rooted in the community's collective knowledge, which can be shared among individuals to deepen community practices. In the community quadrant, peace leaders link the innerwork quadrant to provide a space to build nonviolent transformations: democratic practices and processes, organizational capacity building fostering diversity, creating relationships, building coalitions, fostering human and social capital, building trust, and utilizing adaptive leadership practices (McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022). Although community practices may not be present among groups due to a power imbalance or other conflicts, communities can provide a forum to build collectively toward these principles. Thus, the community quadrant

unites individuals and groups to communities to develop peace work collectively (McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022).

Environment Quadrant

The last quadrant, the environment quadrant, goes beyond innerwork, communities, and interactions with others to larger, systems-based practices, nonviolent social movements, and the leadership needed to support these. Living in a world among functioning systems that perpetuate war, violence, and discrimination, the peace leader engages in peacebuilding practices that extend beyond the knowledge quadrant on a larger capacity to bring societal change for a more just world (McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022). When there is an absence of positive peace structurally in macro or microsystems, there is an indication that the root causes of conflict have not been addressed and are not meeting the needs when they potentially could (Bangura, 2016). The failure to address the root causes of violence in a complex system holistically can deteriorate any progression among peace leaders. Thus, peace leaders utilize methods such as a culture of peace, activism and advocacy, shifting systems and structures, networked and distributed leadership models, and complexity and chaos theories in peace leadership practice (McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022). As shown in peace movements, leaders must also build relationships and construct sustainable solutions to challenge power (Ganz, 2010; Irwin et al., 2022; McIntyre Miller, 2016). Jane Addams is an example of a woman who was noted for her leadership and activism toward sustainable positive peace through her work in the social settlement movement (Shields & Soeters, 2016).

Being the first woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize in the United States, she advocated positive peace models within Chicago by changing the views of the city as a household and governance as civic housekeeping. These positive peace examples generated spaces where peace

could grow, welcoming the diversity of all humans, including children, elders, immigrants, women, and minorities. Shields and her colleague, Joseph Soeters (2016), produced a term known as peaceweaving to summarize her notions of peace, which included relationships, listening, sympathetic understanding, a community of inquiry, and lateral progress.

We see peaceweaving as a way to build the fabric of peace by "emphasizing relationships. These positive relationships are built by working on practical problems, engaging people widely with sympathetic understanding, while recognizing that progress is measured by the welfare of the vulnerable" (Shields & Soeters, 2016, p. 30).

As illustrated in the discussion above, the foundation of integral peace leadership aligns with Wilber's (2000) argument that these quadrants all work together and are interconnected. "Both require systems literacy and an authentic life-long learning orientation at both the individual and collective levels" (Satterwhite et al., 2015, p. 69). If a peace leader is only focused on bringing change to systems in one quadrant, they create an imbalance in the other quadrants. Thus, when examining the experiences of student veterans in higher education, integral peace leadership can identify what is happening in each quadrant and show how they are all interconnected. Before describing student veteran literature, the researcher will discuss the literature on the effect of military culture and socialization on student veterans will be discussed next.

Integrating into Military Culture

To understand the integration into military culture, it is important to understand culture as a whole and how it adapts during war and peacetime for the military. Culture is an accumulated shared learning among people who see the world as the same to solve its problems externally through internal integration (Soeters et al., 2006). Specifically, military culture focuses on

integration to minimize individual differences to create an institutionally oriented environment that adjusts during war and peacetime (Moore, 2011; Soeters et al., 2006). When the military focuses on war, the attention shifts toward control, courage, fear, and an us-versus-them mentality with a cohesive, strong, and collective culture (Moore, 2011; Soeters et al., 2006). However, when the prime focus is peacetime, the culture emphasizes training, maintenance, and boredom (Moore, 2011; Soeters et al., 2006). Although there are cultural shifts between war and peacetime, the integration into the military is the same for all military members: basic training (Soeters et al., 2006).

To better understand the effect of the integration into military culture, the first subsection outlines the socialization into the military, basic training, and the influences traditional masculine norms have on service members, including psychological and social effects. The second subsection discusses how these traditional masculine norms are reinforced in military structure and why this shapes service members' identity and self-worth. All service members have a unique lived experience from military socialization; therefore, the literature will briefly discuss the differences. Then, the third subsection will discuss the inevitable situation for all military members, transition, and how traditional masculine norms may no longer serve them, leading to a clash between military and civilian cultures.

Basic Training

"The military socializes new recruits through exhaustive military training known as basic training or boot camp, which is known as a degrading process, where leaders deconstruct the recruits' civilian status and give them a new identity" (Redmond et al., 2015, p. 14). Recruits are isolated from family and friends and are exposed to uniform clothes, haircuts, food, shelter, and exercise. Military identity formation is harsh, humiliating, and emotionally and physically

exhausting. For example, drill instructors and recruit division commanders use instrumental language to dehumanize recruits by judging their behavior, appearance, and intelligence (Redmond et al., 2015). Recruits are consistently told they need to be corrected, whether suitable or not. This confusion forces recruits to become detached from their bodies and look outward to authority for guidance (Redmond et al., 2015).

All military branches in the United States highly value the following characteristics: discipline, obedience, courage, self-sacrifice, and trust (Collins, 1998; Hillen, 1999; Howard, 2006). Recruits are taught to follow the orders appointed over them and respect the chain of command, which enables good order and discipline. This respect for hierarchy and authority can stifle innovation, creativity, and independence. Drill instructors or recruit division commanders will execute whatever means necessary to accomplish the mission of indoctrinating recruits to become "good" recruits, which Pinar (2019) referenced as the institutionalization of authoritarianism. This conformist environment favors recruits who are compliant in following the rules and reinforces good behavior through a reward system for their discipline (Rosenberg, 2015). Those who choose to "exercise their freedom to dissent" or express their individuality do not fit in with the hegemonic military culture because they are not conforming to the orders appointed over them.

Apple (2004) pointed out that hegemony can function as a conduit to saturate one's consciousness. He further asserted that hegemony is "an organized assemblage of meanings and practices, the central, effective and dominant system of meanings, values, and actions which are lived" (Apple, 2004, p. 14). Thus, being isolated from the rest of the world in a conformist environment leads recruits to saturation and compliance by adopting new military norms, values, philosophies, and language (Olenick et al., 2015). This socialization to military culture is

significantly different from the typical undergraduate experience (Soeters et al., 2006). The culture and socialization of the military have been designed to teach recruits a range of traditional North American masculine norms, values, and skills that are considered critical to meeting mission requirements.

Traditional Masculine Norms

When service members acculturate into the armed forces, the culture and socialization of the military teach a range of traditional North American masculine norms. For instance, emotional stoicism and autonomy are believed to aid personal survival and mission completion and are celebrated in military culture (Abraham et al., 2017; Green et al., 2010). Recruits learn to suppress their emotions during high-stress situations to maintain their composure and put their personal feelings aside to focus on the mission at hand. They also learn warfighter attributes, which imply toughness, violence, risk-taking, and overt heterosexual desires (Barrett, 2008; Brooks, 2001; Higate, 2007). Toughness can help you take on demanding tasks and challenging conditions, such as standing multiple watches on top of your primary responsibilities or conducting downrange operations in a hazardous area. These other aggressive and assertive behaviors promote decisiveness at the moment to support mission accomplishment.

While these forms of aggression may be more prevalent in combat-affiliated service branches, dominance is still highly valued during basic training: superiors dominate recruits; competent service members defeat their adversaries; and recruits must overcome their weaknesses to earn the title of becoming a service member (Rueb et al., 2008; Woodward, 2003). The conformist military environment believes these masculine norms enhance recruits' hardiness (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978).

Hardiness refers to a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation to turn adversity into growth opportunities and the ability to sustain healthy stature despite highly stressful situations (Maddi, 2006). While more significant levels of hardiness associated with better mental health have shown lower levels of depression and anxiety in service members who returned from an overseas deployment within one to five months (Dolan & Adler, 2006), different experiences can influence the way people treat others in the cycle of socialization or social constructionism (Adams et al., 2013). While these traditional notions of masculinity are intended to aid recruits toward mission success, there are long-lasting psychological and social effects that go well beyond an individual's military service.

Psychological and Social Effects of Notions of Masculinity. Being immersed in an environment that isolates service members from the realities, systems, and structures of the civilian world perpetuates the psychological and social effects of traditional masculine norms in military culture and socialization. Although the stigma of mental health is shifting in America, emotional stoicism and autonomy can still reign over different individuals and contexts, which makes it challenging for service members to ask for help or seek mental health. In an authoritarian environment, followers are seen as weak for asking for help or feeling intimidated to express their needs and concerns to their leaders. In addition to not asking for help, they are taught not to rely on others, which can lead to loneliness and isolation. To survive in the military, service members choose the path of least resistance to avoid dehumanization, peer degradation, manipulation, or coercion. This significant emphasis on self-reliance to accomplish the mission creates a side effect: high pressure to avoid negative stigmas of becoming the weakest link (Institute of Medicine, 2013). Weak link avoidance is articulated by many veterans who seek mental health and experience challenges with post-traumatic stress, anxiety disorders, drug and

alcohol addictions, and other undiagnosed medical issues (Institute of Medicine, 2013). These forms of avoidance show up in toughness, too.

Exemplifying toughness characteristics can create conditions for tolerating behaviors that dismantle core values such as respect and selfless service (Williams, 2017). While being accepted among a group can be challenging, service members across the United States Armed Forces uphold the same codes of conduct (Kelty et al., 2010) and warrior ethos (Wong, 2005). The warrior ethos emphasizes the mission first, no excuses, overcoming adversities, and never leaving another American behind (Wong, 2005). Thus, individuals may act tough in front of their peers to fit in even though it conflicts with their values or the group's betterment. This can lead to a culture of hazing, harassment, and bullying, which can have myriad enduring residual psychological and social effects on the perpetrator(s) and victim(s) involved. When service members avoid challenging traditional masculine norms such as toughness, it perpetuates a culture of violence and aggression, too.

Entering the military alone doubles the risk of sexual assault (Brenner et al., 2017). Traditional masculine norms such as aggressiveness and assertiveness can perpetuate a leading statistic: one out of six women in the military are sexually assaulted (Brenner et al., 2017). In fact, women are more likely to be sexually assaulted during their military service than be shot by an enemy. With respect for authority and hierarchy in the military, too, 70% of sexual assault victims are assaulted by superiors. Thus, the high pressure of obedience and conformity in the military also perpetuates increased rates of sexual assault despite programs by Congress and the DoD (Wood & Toppelberg, 2017). This statistic alone reveals how the system can resist positive change and how the chain of command structure is inexhaustible.

Experiencing military culture briefly can create strong military socialization (Soeters et al., 2006). Therefore, these notions of masculinity can shape service members' identity and sense of worth. Traditional masculine norms continue to be reinforced outside of boot camp through the military structure.

Navigating Military Structure

The lifestyle in the military is a highly structured setting where basic needs are fulfilled for active-duty service members and their families, including housing, health care, food, economic independence, life insurance, education benefits, and training that may be transferable to the civilian world (Kelty et al., 2010). With basic needs covered, service members can focus on the mission, and the military structure reinforces it through the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). Military laws bind military personnel and their families and must sustain good order and discipline per the UCMJ (Redmond et al., 2015). Senior military personnel enforces good order and discipline to subordinates by issuing lawful orders that junior military personnel must follow through the chain of command. Those who violate lawful orders are subject to committing a criminal act under the UCMJ (Redmond et al., 2015). This can lead to authoritarianism because superiors can issue lawful orders and punish their subordinates for not meeting their expectations.

The military structure, from the top to the bottom of the organization, forms a chain in which everyone is linked. Trust and confidence between everyone in the chain of command are critical for mission completion (Redmond et al., 2015). Subordinates must trust the lawfulness of the orders received and be confident they can accomplish the mission. Similarly, leaders must trust that the orders will be executed and be confident that all actions conducted by junior personnel follow good order and discipline. However, trust and confidence between various

levels of the chain of command can be severed. Thus, leading good order and discipline suffers the consequences. A way to build more trust and confidence in the chain of command structure is reflected in the constant training on self-improvement, health, personal responsibility, and community and civic engagement (Kelty et al., 2010).

The uniformity among all military branches helps service members have a shared expectation of a warrior mindset and encourages ways of behaving that show unrelentless dedication toward the better good of the country, mission, and fellow service members (Riccio et al., 2004). Most service members support the greater mission in preparing, serving, and returning from combat or deployment. Nevertheless, service members also differ in their engagement with direct combat depending on their military occupation and branch of service (Redmond et al., 2015). This level of engagement with direct combat can also weigh on the individual service member's socialization differences.

Differences in Socialization

There are two differences in socialization among service members: institutionally oriented and those who find military service a means to an end. Institutionally oriented are those who highly overlap their military lives with their personal lives by prioritizing the military mission and values first (Moore, 2011; Soeters et al., 2006). This subculture will also more likely be a career service member because they believe in serving their country or in the material incentives they receive (Eighmey, 2006; Griffith, 2008; Woodruff et al., 2006). Conversely, those who find military service as a means to an end focus their attention outside the military and orient themselves around their job (Redmond et al., 2015). Whether a service member is considered institutionally oriented, a means to an end, or somewhere in between, service members are socialized to rely on the military's basic needs, follow orders of those appointed

over them per the UCMJ, put the mission first, and are immunized from the civilian world's culture and structure. Thus, when the evitable transition out of the military prevails, service members are not adequately prepared to navigate civilian structures to fulfill their basic needs and may struggle with non-military-related cultures due to their traditional masculine norm socialization.

Transitioning Out of the Military

Being immersed in a conformist environment that isolates service members from the realities, systems, and structures of the civilian world creates a complex problem when transitioning out of military service. With every chain of command being different and all having different missions, active duty service members are at the mercy of their chain of command's support to transition out of military service. Supportive chains of command may have the proper guidance to meet the specific needs of the transitioning service members, whereas unsupportive chains of command prioritize the mission first and neglect the specific needs of the transitioning service members. Regardless of how supportive chains of command can be, transitioning out of military service can be challenging for all members because they are unprepared to find new sources of support, structure, guidance, and a sense of purpose (Whitworth et al., 2020). The current program utilized within the military, the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), substantially ignores the comprehensive challenges of leaving the military (Whitworth et al., 2020), which can lead to a culture shock between military and civilian identities.

Transition Assistance Program

To teach nearly 200,000 transitioning service members the appropriate resources to navigate civilian structures annually, the DoD mandates the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to assist with employment, college, and veterans' benefits (Congressional Research

Service, 2018). With TAP's primary focus being on employment, college, and veterans' benefits, there is little attention on building up the resilience or hardiness of service members toward the broad range of challenges that occur in non-military life (Whitworth et al., 2020). These challenges include but are not limited to adjusting in educational, employment, cultural, and family settings and having problems with substance abuse, homelessness, financial mismanagement, mental health, and PTSD (Whitworth et al., 2020). Historically, at a broader systemic level, the DoD and the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) have responded to these challenges of transitioning service members as independent problems rather than looking at them from a holistic perspective (Whitworth, 2020). For example, employment support programs can help transitioning service members fulfill their basic needs, yet those programs neglect to navigate cultural differences between military and civilian environments.

Experiencing Culture Shock Between Military and Civilian Identities

With the differences between military and civilian cultures, transitioning service members may discover that their traditional masculine norms for survival in the military may no longer serve them in the civilian world. This struggle between military and civilian identities is referred to as reverse culture shock (Westwood et al., 2002; Koenig et al., 2014). Veterans who experience reverse culture shock have difficulty finding meaning or purpose in the civilian world, feel a lack of support and structure from civilian institutions, and are disconnected from civilian society due to military service (Ahern et al., 2015; Orazem et al., 2017). These struggles to navigate civilian life correlate with traditional masculine norms of conditioning from military socialization since emotional stoicism, self-reliance, toughness, aggressiveness, and respect for authority shape a service member's identity and self-worth. In a recent survey among 3,188 veterans in Southern California, 81% of men and 76% of women reported that being a veteran is

an integral part of their self-image (Kintzle et al., 2023). Although many transitioning service members may experience a successful transition (Whitworth et al., 2020), 40 to 75% of veterans experience reverse culture shock (Castro & Kintzle, 2017; Zoli et al., 2015). These socialization challenges between military and civilian cultures are also prevalent in higher education when student veterans transition and navigate their college experience.

Transitioning and Navigating College as Student Veterans

To set the stage for transitioning and navigating college as student veterans, the extant literature revealed the same differences between military and college cultures (Glasser et al., 2009; Vacchi & Berger, 2013) and how these differences lead to a spectrum of challenges. When reading empirical studies regarding student veterans' experiences with transitioning into and navigating college, the socialization and cultural differences repeatedly appeared in many forms, whether in student voices or surveys. The dialogue related to student veterans' experiences in the literature highlighted the spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges when entering and navigating higher education challenges and recommendations to address them.

The spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges they experience in higher education can be examined individually and interconnectedly. It also responded to the call for developing a salient conceptual model from which to consider the college experiences of student veterans (Vacchi & Berger, 2013). The spectrum offers insight into an area of the student veteran's challenges that needs more attention within the campus community. Looking at them ultimately will uncover the forecast of the student veteran functioning within a campus community. The following spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges includes student veterans' intrapersonal challenges, student veterans' interpersonal challenges, student veterans' community challenges, and student veterans' structural challenges.

To better understand the spectrum of challenges student veterans face and feel on a college campus, the first subsection outlines the intrapersonal challenges they experience and what influences drive their behaviors. The second subsection outlines the student veterans' interpersonal challenges and how this influences their interpersonal communication among campus community members. Then, the third subsection describes the challenges that veteran students experience in their community and what influences them not to be their authentic selves. Finally, the fourth subsection explains the structural challenges that veteran students encounter in college.

Student Veterans' Intrapersonal Challenges

Student veterans' intrapersonal challenges consist of what they face and feel internally when transitioning and navigating through college. Student veterans face a dilemma as they intermingle with the campus community about whether they want to hide their veteran status (DiRamio et al., 2008; Livingston et al., 2011; Morris et al., 2019) or disclose it. What drives student veterans' decision-making is how they perceive themselves around civilians, explored in the first subsection, intrapersonal preconceived psychological barriers. In the second subsection, student veterans are faced with adopting socialization strategies to blend in (DiRamio et al., 2008) with civilians in an attempt to gain full citizenship and moral agency. In the third subsection, student veterans are faced with having a lack of identity (Iverson et al., 2016), self-actualization (Kinchin & DeVita, 2018), or purpose (Alfred et al., 2014) intrapersonally when transitioning into and navigating college. These three subsections will be further explored below.

Intrapersonal Preconceived Psychological Barriers

Intrapersonal preconceived psychological barriers described among three studies consisted of how student veterans perceived themselves around civilians. In the three studies,

student veterans described their experiences of how they perceived themselves around civilians as hiding their veteran status (DiRamio et al., 2008; Livingston et al., 2011; Morris et al., 2019); feeling isolated (DiRamio et al., 2008; Morris et al., 2019); not fitting in (DiRamio et al., 2008; Morris et al., 2019); feeling misunderstood (DiRamio et al., 2008; Morris et al., 2019); and feeling out of place (Morris et al., 2019). The classic theory used among these three studies to understand transition experiences is Schlossberg's 4S theory (1981). Schlossberg's 4S Model (1981) is a theory used for counseling adults during mid-career transitions and includes four strategies to manage a transition: situation, self, support, and strategies. These four strategies obtain strengths and weaknesses that may enable or deter an individual's ability to experience a successful transition (Evans et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2011). This model assesses how the transitioning person views, responds, and manages stress positively through close relationships. However, Vacchi & Berger (2013) asserted a shortcoming associated with this model in understanding and studying student veteran experiences, which will be further explained below.

Each of these studies highlighted student veterans hiding their veteran status among peers, professors, and college administrators when transitioning or navigating a college environment, which could be indicative of military socialization. With student veterans being taught not to admit their challenges, military socialization can hinder their needs by not burdening others (Vacchi, 2012) and reactivate weak link avoidance (Vacchi & Berger, 2013). Thus, intrapersonal preconceived psychological barriers can prevent student veterans from seeking support from others and will be further examined in the three studies below.

The first qualitative study to draw attention to student veteran experiences adapted Schlossberg's 4S Model and suggested the most challenging transition was into college because they are adjusting to new social norms such as connecting with college peers, relearning study

skills, and worrying about financial security with college (DiRamio et al., 2008). This study highlighted many aspects of student veterans' complex transition experiences and how academic community members do not understand them well. For example, the feelings of isolation, guilt, and shame sometimes had them consider returning to war, where a sense of belonging and camaraderie was felt. Thus, feeling misunderstood causes student veterans to typically not self-disclose their veteran identity, which can also make it difficult for others to support them when they remain invisible. While these socialization issues are prevalent for student veterans, Vacchi and Berger (2013) noted that these issues do not provide a complete understanding of the student veteran experience on campus, which is why they recommend a comprehensive model to understand student veteran experiences.

In the next study, Vacchi & Berger (2013) also highlighted some drawbacks of Livingston and colleagues' (2011) study, including the limited exposure to transitions into college and the disregard for strategies to navigate college life successfully. Livingston et al. (2011) explored re-enrollment experiences in higher education with an adapted version of Schlossberg's 4S theory (1981). Among fifteen participants from one institution, student veterans were less likely to ask for academic support because pride impacted their self-disclosure of their veteran status. By hiding their veteran status, student veterans intentionally put all the weight on their shoulders to resolve their issue(s). They also reported that student veterans who did not feel a sense of belonging were more likely to connect with fellow veterans for social support. Furthermore, they also reported student veterans experiencing a lack of military recognition on campus.

The responses of this study highlighted some of the socializing behaviors of military culture, such as not burdening others (Vacchi, 2012) and reactivating weak link avoidance

(Vacchi & Berger, 2013). "The most difficult task for any veteran to overcome may be learning that it is acceptable to need help and even more important to seek help when needed" (Vacchi & Berger, 2013, p. 2). Those who live up to this false expectation in higher education perpetuate the self-reliant socialization of the military and can jeopardize their ability to get the help they need (Vacchi & Berger, 2013).

Adapting Schlossberg's 4S Model (1981) informed Morris and colleagues (2019) survey study of 328 student veterans. They collected survey data from a campus with many student veterans to understand how they perceived services relating to their quality of life, integration on campus, and challenges within the campus environment. One of the seven themes found in Morris et al. (2019) survey analysis demonstrated isolation and not fitting in: "Being a veteran and kind of feeling lost, no one understanding. I am alone here w[ith] no family or friends" (Morris et al., 2019, p. 192). Some student veterans in the study also mentioned a need to hide their veteran status due to guilt and shame for service and feeling out of place. Thus, when student veterans reveal their identities to the academic community, the influences of military culture loom over them in educational settings and among civilian peers, which leads most student veterans to adopt socialization strategies.

Adoption of Socialization Strategies

Adopting socialization strategies aligns with military culture when applying countermeasures against their enemies. One strategy is blending in (DiRamio et al., 2008). Blending in is an attempt to gain full citizenship and moral agency. Physical attributes male student veterans adopt are growing out their hair and beard (DiRamio et al., 2008). In contrast, women can embrace their femininity by wearing their hair down or hide their veteran identity by wearing more diverse jewelry or clothing (Iverson et al., 2016).

In a classroom environment, blending in consists of being quiet and neutral (DiRamio et al., 2008). However, "Faculty members who insisted on violating anonymity could make the veteran attempting to blend in feel uncomfortable" (DiRamio et al., 2008, p. 88). When student veterans apply this countermeasure for their safety, they deny their existence, identity, and being. Student veterans must be aware and intentional about this countermeasure's usage, or they will further neglect themselves. Therefore, student veterans need to unlearn military socialization behaviors that no longer serve them when transitioning and navigating higher education. Otherwise, the hegemonic masculinity experienced in military socialization contributes to the lack of identity development, self-actualization, and purpose outside the military in a college setting.

Having a Lack of Identity, Self-Actualization, or Purpose

A lack of identity is explored in a qualitative study by Iverson et al. (2016) on twelve female student veterans. It displayed the complex interaction of women's identities in and out of the military and how it presents a gender expectation tightrope. Women navigate hypermasculinity in their military experience with situations where they must assimilate into the military culture while also strategizing their femininity. This form of earning respect daily also aligns with how participants shared that they must work harder than men to prove themselves. Living this below-par feeling in the male-dominated work environment leads to "corrosive self-doubt about their worth and identity as military members and after discharge as veterans" (Iverson et al., 2016, p. 9).

A qualitative study focusing on four Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) student veterans and three LGB college administrators revealed experiences specific to LGB identity, military identity, and the intersection of both (Kinchen & DeVita, 2018). LGB student veterans in the

study could not self-actualize their sexual orientation identities in higher education due to a lack of resources, recognition, and sometimes reluctance. Also, LGB student veterans expressed the absence of an LGB center on their campuses nor an intersection between a Veterans' center and an LGB center. Lastly, one respondent stated that her campus created the appearance of inclusion to attract student veterans and LGB students but did not conduct institutional changes to make them feel included. This form of interest convergence led these student veterans to believe they could explore multiple identities when this was not true.

A quantitative study focused on 117 predominantly young, white male student veterans who experienced at least one deployment suggested that the military's conforming masculine norms applied from military socialization to civilian higher education settings led to a weaker sense of purpose, autonomy, and psychological well-being (Alfred et al., 2014). These military-conforming masculine norms include self-reliance, emotional stoicism, dominance, violence, toughness, overt heterosexual desire, and risk-taking. Since this study consisted of predominantly young, white male student veterans and does not reflect men of color or older men, masculinity can have different meanings to all ages and ethnic backgrounds. However, this study did include the ranks of military members from multiple branches of service. They also included participants from various colleges and universities, including military and technical schools.

These studies show how being socialized with conforming masculine norms and putting others first for an extended period in military culture places a hold on identity development for a diverse population of student veterans with various identities. Moreover, applying military conforming masculine norms in a civilian higher education setting reflects the struggles of reverse culture shock. Overall, facing these student veterans' intrapersonal challenges burdens student veterans from getting the help they need due to reverting to their military socialization.

Student veterans' interpersonal challenges are more related to adjusting to new social norms among civilians.

Student Veterans' Interpersonal Challenges

Student veterans' interpersonal challenges consist of what they face and feel interpersonally among civilians on campus. Student veterans are faced with filtering their communication among civilians because they cannot be authentic around civilians. Therefore, their communication can appear rude or aggressive (Olsen et al., 2014). Therefore, student veterans experienced interpersonal preconceived psychological barriers, as described in this first subsection, when considering how civilians perceived them. In addition to being mindful of communication around civilians, student veterans face distinct differences from others around campus, known as social barriers, as will be described in the second subsection below.

The most common distinct difference among student veterans is being a nontraditional student (Gregg et al., 2016; Iverson et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2019; Olsen et al., 2014) because their perceptions of student norms are heightened in their social environment (DiRamio et al., 2008). Being a nontraditional student does not require self-disclosure of veteran status; however, those who reveal their veteran status can also face stereotypes (Ackerman et al., 2009; DiRamio et al., 2008; Dudley-Miller & Radel, 2020; Elliott et al., 2011; Parks et al., 2015) and have difficulty interacting with traditional students (Gregg et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2019). These two subsections will be further explored below.

Interpersonal Preconceived Psychological Barriers

Interpersonal preconceived psychological barriers described in two studies detailed how student veterans consider civilians to perceive them. In the two studies, student veterans described feelings as though civilians perceived them as rude or aggressive (Olsen et al., 2014),

and one student veteran perceived his professor as treating him as a kid (Morris et al., 2019).

Being socialized in a hierarchical structure where student veterans follow and issue orders in the military while suppressing emotions, they are used to hearing and stating direct, assertive, and sometimes dehumanizing language. While this language may seem like a cultural norm to student veterans, civilians could perceive it as rude or aggressive in college (Olsen et al., 2014).

In a mixed-method study, Olsen and colleagues (2014) explored the perceptions of 10 active military and reserve component student veterans on strengths, challenges, and factors with participation in University resource programs. Some of the respondents discussed the cultural differences between military and college environments and suggested that they be more intentional about interacting with civilians. Thus, student veterans must be conscious about what they say around traditional students, which can lead to filtering communication. Student veterans encounter these situations quite frequently in their social environments around campus, which can lead them to social barriers.

Social Barriers. Social barriers are ways in which student veterans noticed distinct differences between themselves and others around them in college. The most common distinct difference among student veterans is being a nontraditional student (Gregg et al., 2016; Iverson et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2019; Olsen et al., 2014) because their perceptions of student norms are heightened in their social environment (DiRamio et al., 2008). Nontraditional student attributes among student veterans include any of the following examples: being older (Gregg et al., 2016; Iverson et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2019; Olsen et al., 2014), being around civilians as a student veteran (Morris et al., 2019; Olsen et al., 2014), being a parent and spouse, being looked at as a mother figure among classmates (Gregg et al., 2016; Iverson et al., 2016), having worldview or combat experiences, having responsibilities, living off-campus (Gregg et al., 2016;

Morris et al., 2019; Olsen et al., 2014), and being mentally or physically disabled (Morris et al., 2019). These characteristics of being a nontraditional student do not require self-disclosure of veteran status; however, those who reveal their veteran status can also face stereotypes (Ackerman et al., 2009; DiRamio et al., 2008; Dudley-Miller & Radel, 2020; Elliott et al., 2011; Parks et al., 2015) and have difficulty interacting with traditional students (Gregg et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2019). Facing these challenges in the campus community further reinforces student veterans to hide their veteran identity (DiRamio et al., 2008; Livingston et al., 2011; Morris et al., 2019) and perpetuate their self-reliant socialization of the military (Vacchi & Berger, 2013). Thus, understanding the stereotypes and difficulty interacting with traditional students among student veterans can educate the campus community on how assumptions and differences in life experiences can further alienate them from getting the help they need.

Across five studies, student veterans described stereotypes they experienced from their campus community. Stereotypes are assumptions the campus community makes based on their perceived reality in the revealed social differences. While not every student veteran faces stereotypes, a few student veterans among a sample of 25 respondents in a qualitative study revealed their student veteran identity dealt with stereotypes such as a "terrorist" and "traitor" from their professors and classmates (Ackerman et al., 2009, p. 11). Moreover, three student veterans were asked if they killed anyone and found the comments very disturbing. The student veterans in this sample generally only paid attention to their identity if it was warranted for classroom discussion. The same sample's initial qualitative study echoed sentiments from student veteran narratives, including inaccurately being judged as uneducated (DiRamio et al., 2008).

The most disturbing expression of alienation was felt by student veterans whose professors discredited their military service by denouncing military conflicts and stereotyping

service members as "baby killers" and "torturers" (Elliott et al., 2011, p. 287). A quantitative study with 104 predominantly male combat-exposed student veterans revealed that more exposure to combat tended to have more symptoms of PTSD and were more alienated on campus (Elliott et al., 2011). Combat experiences, including shooting or being shot at, left many student veterans with disturbing memories, difficulty concentrating, and feeling cut off from others in social experiences. Stereotypes from civilians can also appear when they associate PTSD and combat. A quantitative study from an academic medical center with a fair balance of student veteran men (nine) and women (eight) felt their civilian peers assumed that male veterans experienced post-traumatic stress due to combat (Dudley-Miller & Radcl, 2020). This stereotype of combat veterans loomed over the nine male participants in this study, even though only three experienced deployments.

Moreover, when civilians stereotype student veterans toward job placement due to their military service, in a qualitative portion of a mixed-methods study, three out of the five respondents experienced military norm guidance from their academic advisors, which caused them to be someone they did not want to be or frustrated them (Parks et al., 2015). Military norm guidance is when academic counselors assume student veterans will fit a particular occupation due to their military experience. For example, "All military guys make great business operations guys, and we're not that creative" (Parks et al., 2015, p. 48). Stereotyping student veterans toward job placement due to their military service does not also align with a recent survey among 75% of 3,188 Southern California employed veterans who reported their current job is different from their military occupation (Kintzle et al., 2023). This statistic shows the importance of getting to know student veterans rather than jumping to conclusions.

In two studies, student veterans described their difficulty interacting with traditional students. Morris et al. (2019) found, from 40 respondents, that there was a difficulty in interacting with traditional students due to age, sense of entitlement, lack of commonality around stress and responsibilities, and lack of concern and understanding of service-connected injuries. For example, "Honestly dealing with little kids that think they know about the world when they have never left their hometown" (Morris et al., 2019, p. 189).

Similarly, Gregg et al. (2016) conducted a phenomenological study of 13 student veterans transitioning from military deployment to higher education. They described their lived experiences in college as repurposing military experiences for life as a student veteran, reconstructing civilian identity, and navigating postsecondary context and interactions. When navigating interactions among traditional students, student veterans expressed difficulty relating their life-story experiences. Having difficulty relating their life-story experiences with the traditional students also connects with the spaces student veterans congregate on campus.

Student Veterans' Community Challenges

Student veterans' community challenges consist of what they face and feel in the spaces they congregate on campus. Student veterans are faced with non-veteran-friendly spaces that prevent them from being their authentic selves. For example, many student veterans' responses within the literature found that college orientation programs and transition seminars could have been more helpful because they focused more on traditional students (Olsen et al., 2014; Wheeler, 2012). Another example is that multiple studies have reported a need for more student veteran organizations in higher education (DiRamio et al., 2008). When they do not have a forum, space, or center to be themselves, the previous two shades, student veterans' intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges, can lead them to treat college transactionally as a means to an end

and revert to their military socialization. Being isolated or feeling alone in your experience can prevent student veterans from humanizing, liberating, and transforming themselves individually and collectively. A forum, space, or a center where student veterans can be themselves to transition into and navigate through college is the Veterans Resource Center (VRC).

Veterans Resource Center (VRC)

The Veterans Resource Center (VRC) serves as a support hub to help student veterans navigate college administratively and address any academic concerns toward degree completion (Griffin & Gilbert, 2014; Rumann & Hamrick, 2009; Summerlot et al., 2009). McBain et al. (2012) reported 71% of colleges have a dedicated space for student veterans to receive programs and services. Although this percentage is more significant than in 2009, at 49% (McBain et al., 2012), multiple studies reported a significant variation in the quality of services among different VRCs while expressing the need for improved and increased VRC services (DiRamio et al., 2008; Glasser et al., 2009; Jones, 2013). With VRCs varying from school to school, student veterans may experience a safe haven at one VRC and a distressing experience at another VRC. A safe haven is considered a "place of refuge from stressors" (Hass et al., 2014, p. 391). Student veterans' community challenges are interconnected with how the campus community operates structurally.

Student Veterans' Structural Challenges

Student veterans' structural challenges consist of what they are facing and feeling structurally from their college to support their needs. Student veterans require special needs and support from policymakers and program providers (Ackerman et al., 2009) because college staff often were not sufficiently knowledgeable concerning veteran-related issues and benefits (Persky & Oliver, 2010). In several studies, student veterans expressed their college's lack of expertise

and knowledge to assist their needs (Flink, 2017; Glasser et al., 2009; Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2017; Vance & Miller, 2009). For example, one of the first qualitative studies among a diverse group of student veterans described "the structured life of the military and how difficult it was to move from a strictly defined structure to a loosely configured campus where there was no chain of command from which to get answers" (Ackerman et al., 2009, p. 12).

When student veterans do not have the support they once experienced in the military from their chain of command, the first two areas on the spectrum, student veterans' intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges, can make them feel unsupported and rely on their military socialization to navigate their college experience. To enact a different culture in the campus community, student veteran socialization recommendations can address this spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges.

Student Veteran Socialization Recommendations

The student veteran socialization recommendations in higher education potentially address student veteran's intrapersonal, interpersonal, community, and structural challenges. Although these are individual challenges, they are interrelated, as described above, and addressing one or two challenges can create an unstable forecast of the student veteran's functioning within the campus community moving forward. Thus, when academic communities can come together to form standards that address all the challenges interconnectedly, student veterans can receive consistent quality services across multiple schools and integrate into and navigate through college successfully. An example of minimum standards is the California Community College (CCC) Veterans Resource Center (VRC) minimum standards (Veterans Resource Center Minimum Standards, 2024). The CCC VRC minimum standards will be in the subsection, followed by recommendations from student veteran experience studies.

California Community College (CCC) Veterans Resource Center (VRC) Minimum Standards

The CCC VRC minimum standards were revised in February 2024 and have three overarching areas: structure, student services and activities, and staffing and professional development (Veterans Resource Center Minimum Standards, 2024). Minimum standards and recommended best practices are required in these overarching areas. Furthermore, each overarching area should consider the local needs and size of the student veteran and military-connected population to determine adequate structure size, services and activities, and staff.

Structure. The structure of the VRC is required to be Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant, have visible signage of the location, and have private access for counseling and/or certification of benefits (Veterans Resource Center Minimum Standards, 2024). The recommended best practices consist of having a front desk and/or virtual front desk, lounge area and/or study area, and access to printers, copiers, and computers that support accessibility. Although having a lounge area and/or study area is considered a recommended best practice, the VRCs may also serve as a safe haven for mentorship programs and support groups (Elliott et al., 2011; Griffin & Gilbert, 2014; Rumann & Hamrick, 2009; Vance & Miller, 2009). Thus, having an adequate space that is known, visible, and accessible to student veterans can provide a veteran-friendly forum for them to work through challenges as a student veteran community.

Student Services and Activities. The student services and activities are required to do pre-admission advising and VA education benefits advising; provide a written personal summary of the total cost of the program to the student; conduct a military credit evaluation; collaborate with other campus-based programs to provide basic needs, mental health, tutoring, financial aid, disabled student programs and services, and other local programs; and use local data to determine the types of student services and activities to provide to students with a focus on

student outcomes (Veterans Resource Center Minimum Standards, 2024). These required standards can address the student veteran's intrapersonal and structural challenges by supporting their academic and non-academic needs with veteran-specific providers. The recommended best practices are outreach materials, events, and promotion of VRC services and supports; peer-to-peer mentoring; textbook and electronic loan device program; instructional materials and textbook vouchers; establishing and maintaining partnerships to promote and support transfer goals; and cultivating external partnerships for housing, mental health, financial literacy, food services, among others (Veterans Resource Center Minimum Standards, 2024). These recommended best practices can address all the student veterans' challenges and should be reconsidered as standards through external partnerships with mental health, peer-to-peer mentoring, outreach materials, events, and VRC services and support promotion.

DiRamio et al. (2008) also suggested the importance of developing outreach strategies to help student veterans transition into college. Although peer-to-peer mentoring is considered a best practice, several studies show the benefits of social support among student veterans (Ackerman et al., 2009; Bodrog et al., 2018; Elliott et al., 2011; Elliott, 2015; Livingston et al., 2011; Osborne, 2016; Wheeler, 2014) and a student veteran peer mentorship program (DiRamio et al., 2008; Glasser et al., 2009; Summerlot et al., 2009). The following studies will expound on the benefits of social support and why it should be considered a standard.

A quantitative study of 157 predominantly Army combat male first-generation college students found that connectedness and mattering are essential for college adjustment and understanding student veterans' educational processes (Bodrog et al., 2018). This study is unique because it has varying perspectives from different-sized institutions (large and small), with 53 people who have not deployed, 40 women, and 17 graduate students. They discovered that

student veterans not deployed to a combat zone experienced a greater sense of social connectedness with classmates. In contrast, those deployed to a combat zone had more negative views of themselves in school.

Elliott et al. (2011) suggested that social support may protect against PTSD by helping student veterans feel understood and less alone. In a follow-up study, Elliott (2015) found that social support among other student veterans who could validate other's lived experiences was one of the critical factors associated with fewer symptoms of depression, PTSD, and negative experiences on campus for student veterans. Livingston et al. (2011) found that student veterans are likelier to connect with fellow veterans for social support. For example, "you just can't relate unless you have been there" (Ackerman et al., 2009, p. 11). This aligns with Wheeler's (2014) findings that "most veterans associate with other veterans based on their shared experience and inherent trust in others who have served" (p. 783) and how they can serve as "counselors" for each other (p. 784). Valuing each other's experience with social support has a ripple effect in addressing student veterans' intrapersonal, interpersonal, and community challenges, especially in a safe haven.

Osborne (2016) created a safe and respectful environment through a dialogue-based transition class with 21 first-year male student veterans. This study found the importance of authentic engagement around discussions related to feeling out of place on campus or non-academic issues such as facing a divorce, parenthood, loss of a loved one, inadequacy as a man, and combat or military-related stress. A safe environment to process these topics provides a forum for student veterans to humanize their experience with others who understand them, which can ultimately help them integrate into college. Numerous studies recommended that higher education assist incoming student veterans with their transition through a separate cultural

transition program (DiRamio et al., 2008; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Kirchner, 2015; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010) or an orientation (DiRamio et al., 2008; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). Thus, pairing a safe and respectful environment with social support and the required student veteran services and activities standards can address all the student veteran's challenges. In order to provide these types of environments and student veteran services and activities, higher education needs the appropriate veteran-specific staff to sustain an effective integration and navigation through college.

Staffing and Professional Development. The required staffing and professional development include a School certifying official (SCO), VRC Coordinator and/or Director - separate from the SCO, and a veteran-specific academic counselor (Veterans Resource Center Minimum Standards, 2024). With the increased demands of a SCO, the Director needs more time and opportunities to expand their role on behalf of student veterans (Summerlot et al., 2009). Several studies also suggest that a specific point person may advocate and rectify the issues student veterans experience on campus rather than be a certifying official (Griffin & Gilbert, 2014; Kirchner, 2015; Vance & Miller, 2009). Therefore, having a separate SCO, VRC director, and a veteran-specific academic counselor can structurally address student veteran's challenges.

In addition to these requirements, the recommended best practices are one full-time SCO for every 125 GI Bill recipients, VA work-study students who have civilian work experience to provide support in the VRC, and staff engagement in veterans regional meetings (Veterans Resource Center Minimum Standards, 2024). Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) revised its policy effective December 5, 2023, recommending one SCO full-time employee for every 125 GI Bill students and/or dependents enrolled in their institution (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2024). Furthermore, the VA stated, "This change was created

due to the increased complexity of monitoring and reporting GI Bill students. This number should be adjusted as appropriate by the educational institution when the SCO's duties are expanded beyond certifying GI Bill beneficiaries' enrollments (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2024, School Responsibilities para. 2). While the recommended best practices mentioned professional development, the only form of professional development is staff engagement in veterans' regional meetings. Many studies suggested professional development opportunities for staff and faculty to understand student veterans' needs and ways to approach them (DiRamio et al., 2008; Kirchner, 2015; Osborne, 2016; Persky & Oliver, 2010). Thus, professional development should also extend beyond the VRC to staff on campus to address all the student veteran's challenges.

Integral Peace Leadership and Student Veterans

This study proposed that an integral peace leadership program may address gaps in the extant literature surrounding the spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges they experience in higher education. With the transition from military service to college being the most challenging due to a culture clash (Glasser et al., 2009; Vacchi & Berger, 2013), several studies recommended a separate cultural transition program designed explicitly for incoming student veterans to assist their transition (DiRamio et al., 2008; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Kirchner, 2015; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). Two empirical articles validate the effectiveness of an adapted model of integral peace leadership through the Euphrates Institute's Peace Practice Alliance (PPA) and how this transformative process led participants to experience a positive change in their lives (Atwi et al., 2022; McIntyre Miller et al., under review). Thus, integral peace leadership may serve to help student veterans transform their mindsets to remove the inner and outer blockages toward peace by applying lessons learned from the first two studies and

putting integral peace leadership into action. The subsections will identify how an adapted model of integral peace leadership through the PPA may help address gaps in extant literature surrounding the spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges in the following modules: personal, interpersonal, community, and global peace.

Personal Peace

Student veterans can learn inner peace practices that can help them understand their human needs and how to address them. For example, Atwi et al. (2022) evaluated a PPA model, which validated the effectiveness of a transformative online global program. Participants from the study found all quadrants from integral peace leadership to be helpful and understood the interconnectedness between them in an adapted model, including personal, interpersonal, community, and global peace. Participants reported personal peace as the most beneficial part of the curriculum because they experienced greater inner peace and improved self-care. They also discovered that those with the most personal peace were a new addition to the material and experienced positive impacts after applying the lessons to their personal lives (Atwi et al., 2022). With student veterans being used to putting others or the mission first (Wong, 2005), they are not used to addressing their personal needs and may feel guilty for doing so. However, integral peace leadership can allow student veterans to recognize the importance of taking care of themselves before prioritizing the needs of others first.

Interpersonal Peace

To develop humanizing relationships, student veterans could learn practices in interpersonal peace that may help them connect with civilians on campus and learn how to advocate for themselves to feel understood. Atwi and colleagues (2022) also noted nonviolent communication as an instrumental part of the PPA curriculum. They also found improvements in

how their participants approached work or personal situations, such as being less reactive and a better listener. Although student veterans have had a different life experience through military socialization compared to traditional college students, they can learn sympathetic understanding, which is the ability to suspend judgment and put themselves into others' shoes to create an openness to listen (Hamington, 2009). Learning to cultivate this practice can provide student veterans opportunities to connect with others from different backgrounds and open up possibilities toward finding common ground or a shared goal. When student veterans can find common ground or a shared goal with civilians on campus, this can provide an opportunity to transcend ideological divides and invite new possibilities to either enlighten each other's understanding or collaborate on passions together. Recall, Shields & Soeters (2016) referred to this notion of peace by Jane Addams as a "community of inquiry" (p. 27).

Community Peace

With student veterans feeling isolated (DiRamio et al., 2008; Morris et al., 2019) or feeling misunderstood (DiRamio et al., 2008; Morris et al., 2019), community peace may teach them the importance of extending their relationship-building practices toward others by fostering diversity and inclusion. Atwi et al. (2022) also found PPA participants being more collaborative, creating more space for others to lead, and prioritizing more engagement with diverse stakeholders. This may be an easy feat; however, because student veterans may have a robust and rigid mindset from their military socialization and may look at civilians as the enemy or evil because they do not understand them (Shields & Soeters, 2016). Furthermore, they may even feel a sense of betrayal to open their heart to see it from the "other's" perspective (Shields & Soeters, 2016). Thus, with practice in a forum to build collectively, student veterans may learn how to acknowledge the whole person rather than just someone's appearance by practicing an

"Expressive Arts Therapies" section of a psychology class: soft eyes (Ercolano, 2017). This can ultimately lead student veterans to feel more comfortable sharing their military experience or identity because their audience may be more receptive to the peace practices they are modeling.

Global Peace

Modeling these peace practices may create a culture of peace from global peace and transform student veterans' mindsets toward cultivating positive peace. Atwi et al. (2022) found that PPA participants developed and deepened their peace leadership skills and practices. They also noted systems thinking as a beneficial part of the curriculum. McIntyre Miller et al. (under review) discovered that participants felt positive about the "step-by-step" progression of learning peace skills from the integral peace leadership framework, both theoretically and through practical application. Perhaps, when student veterans can change their mental models toward visualizing more caring and just societies in their lived experience, they can be more capable of removing inner and outer blockages toward peace. The practices in global peace may help student veterans learn how to challenge structural violence to ensure their needs are being addressed systemically. Learning these practices can help student veterans advocate for themselves or collaborate with civilians with whom they discovered a shared passion for bringing possibilities toward a just cause. Overall, utilizing all the modules of PPA together may help student veterans address the spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges they face in higher education. It is this notion that is explored in the remainder of the chapters.

Summary

This chapter discussed integral peace leadership as it was used as a theoretical framework in this study and the college experiences of student veterans. This chapter also examined integrating into military culture and transitioning and navigating college to understand the

differences between military and civilian cultures. The literature review revealed that differences lead to a spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges intrapersonally, interpersonally, in communities, and structurally. This literature review also revealed student veteran socialization recommendations in higher education to address these challenges. Numerous studies recommended that higher education assist the incoming student veterans with their transition through a separate cultural transition program (DiRamio et al., 2008; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Kirchner, 2015; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010) and integrate a physical space to serve as a safe haven for mentorship programs and support groups (Elliott et al., 2011; Griffin & Gilbert, 2014; Rumann & Hamrick, 2009; Vance & Miller, 2009). Furthermore, several studies showed the benefits of social support among student veterans (Ackerman et al., 2009; Bodrog et al., 2018; Elliott et al., 2011; Elliott, 2015; Livingston et al., 2011; Osborne, 2016; Wheeler, 2014). Thus, integrating a separate cultural transition program and a physical space to serve as a safe haven for mentorship programs and support groups may support student veterans' experiences in higher education.

An integral peace leadership cultural program may effectively bridge the gaps in extant literature surrounding the spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges they experience in higher education. There are two empirical articles that validate the effectiveness of an adapted model of integral peace leadership through the PPA and how this transformative process led participants to experience a positive change in their lives (Atwi et al., 2022; McIntyre Miller et al., under review). Therefore, implementing an integral peace leadership program within a safe environment informs the conducting and analysis of this study. Chapter 3 outlines and discusses the methodology and methods used in examining student veterans' experiences with an integral peace leadership program.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the study's methodology and methods and explains why an outcomes evaluation design with constructivist grounded theory methods is the appropriate methodology for my study. To begin, I will reiterate the purpose and research questions of the study to revitalize a sense of direction. Next, I will introduce the research methodology of outcomes evaluation and constructivist grounded theory and explain why this methodology and methods were selected. Then, I will discuss the overall program study design, including the necessary steps during the study, including program preparation, pre-program, program, and post-program. This discussion of study steps includes details about the modifications made for the adapted four-week hybrid program, participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. Finally, I will present my positionality statement, my role as a researcher in this study, detailed descriptions of each participant and Greyhound University's Veteran Resource Center (VRC), and a summary.

Reiteration of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore whether an adapted Peace Practice Alliance (PPA) program, utilizing the integral peace leadership model (McIntyre Miller & Green, 2015; McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022), can potentially help provide skills and behaviors that will help combat the toxicity culture and aid in college transition. Utilizing an outcomes evaluation design with constructivist grounded theory methods, I will be able to assess and account for different outcomes with integral peace leadership to evaluate the effectiveness of the program (Charmaz, 2006; Mertens & Wilson, 2019). The depth and detail of their outcomes will shed light on the influences of the program activities and how they judge them. Student veterans' perspectives of the program can also illuminate areas for improvement in theoretical

development toward integral peace leadership, and suggestions can inform future programming for student veterans. With the paucity in the literature, evaluating the impact of an interconnected model that could potentially address the spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges through peace skills and practices to create positive change when entering and navigating higher education is worth investigating.

Reiteration of Research Questions

This study was framed using the following research question and sub-questions:

1. In what ways might formerly deployed Post 9/11 enlisted student veterans find value in an integral peace leadership program for transitioning into and navigating through college?
 1. What are the specific areas of integral peace leadership areas that student veterans relate to and why?
 2. In what ways, if any, do student veterans view an integral peace leadership program as a tool to foster college transition and navigation?
 3. How do student veterans see an integral peace leadership program contributing to the college transition experience?
 4. How do student veterans see themselves applying their integral peace leadership program learning to navigate their college and life experiences?

Research Methodology

The conceptual design of this study was an outcomes evaluation that utilized constructivist grounded theory methods and techniques for data analysis. An outcomes evaluation assesses program effectiveness based on participants' behavior changes, skill development, and knowledge gain (Mertens & Wilson, 2019). Utilizing a constructivist grounded

theory method for data analysis invokes iterative strategies to capture student veterans' experiences and voices with the PPA through the co-construction of meaning and experience through data (Charmaz, 2014). Pairing outcome evaluation methodology with grounded theory methods is considered "inductive, pragmatic, and highly concrete" (Patton, 1987, p. 39).

In the following section, I will discuss the evolution of program evaluation and outcomes evaluation specifically to assess student veterans' individualized outcomes of the program's activities they will experience in the PPA. Then, I will discuss the evolution of grounded theory research, focusing specifically on constructivist grounded theory, highlighting the advantages and shedding light on the limitations of constructivist grounded theory, and providing a rationale for using program evaluation methodology with constructivist grounded theory methods.

Program Evaluation

The definitions and understandings of program evaluation have evolved over the last three decades. Brown (1989) stated that program evaluation is "the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of a curriculum and assess its effectiveness and efficiency, as well as the participants' attitudes within the context of the particular institutions involved" (p. 222). Scriven (1991) added further meaning to program evaluation by "judging the worth or merit of something or the product of the process" (p. 139). Merit is the absolute quality of something, either intrinsically or regarding a particular sampling, whereas worth is the outcome of the evaluation (Mertens & Wilson, 2019). Adding to the context of worth, Patton (2008) referenced worth as the extrinsic value to those outside the program. For example, an integral peace leadership program that helps student veterans transition into and navigate through college has merit for those who have a positive change in their college experience and worth to higher education by understanding their needs for academic success.

Rallis and Rossman (2003) further mentioned that evaluation data describe, compare, and predict. The description of the data analyzes patterns and participants' responses to attributes. The comparison of the data measures the program's effectiveness to an ideal standard. Data prediction recommends any improvements needed and how to implement them in the future. A more recent definition from Patton (2015) tied in attributes from all these definitions:

Program evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming.

Policies, organizations, and personnel can also be evaluated (p. 10).

Given these definitions of program evaluation, there are some differences in purpose between research and evaluation. "Research is generally considered to be the creation of new knowledge and theory construction, whereas the purpose of evaluation is to support decision making" (Mertens & Wilson, 2019, p. 11). Although research and evaluation have different purposes, they have parallel developments.

They contribute "to our understanding of how to bring people together to address critical social issues" (Mertens & Wilson, 2019, p. 12). Mertens (2009) mentioned, "There is a place at which research and evaluation intersect--research provides information about the need for, improvement of, or effects of programs or policies" (p. 2). With this overlap between evaluation and research, researchers can use several program evaluations to address specific needs for their study.

Outcomes Evaluation

There are diverse types of program evaluations; however, for this study, I utilized an outcomes evaluation. An outcomes evaluation assesses program effectiveness based on

participants' behavior changes, skill development, and knowledge gain (Mertens & Wilson, 2019). Outcomes evaluation primarily focuses on "accountability-driven evaluation" (Patton, 2002, p. 151) and short-term results (Mertens & Wilson, 2019). When judging the effectiveness of an outcomes evaluation, it is vital to understand the stories behind the numbers (Patton, 2002). Thus, utilizing an outcomes evaluation that considers qualitative methods can illuminate dimensions of desired outcomes that are difficult to quantify (Patton, 2002).

In addition to being accountability-driven through qualitative methods, outcomes evaluation can also consider individualized outcomes. For example, "a common activity for all students can result in drastically different outcomes for different students depending on how they approach the experience, what their unique needs were, and which part of the activity they found most stimulating" (Patton, 2002, p. 158). While each student veteran is on a continuum of socialization experiences (Vacchi, 2012) and has unique needs, the depth and detail of their responses illuminated the influences of the program's activities and how they judge them.

The primary purpose of using a program evaluation, and outcome evaluation in particular, for this study, was to evaluate student veterans' perceptions of how they may or may not find value in an integral peace leadership program for their transition into and navigation through college. Moreover, the study aimed to put integral peace leadership into practice (McIntyre Miller, 2016). The effort to generate an accurate and detailed description of the program processes and impacts of the adapted PPA program among student veterans lends itself to qualitative methods, which is why this study utilizes a qualitative design, as described later in this chapter. For programs that focus on transformation or prevention, the "best source and form of information are client stories" (Kibel, 1999, p. 13), which is a part of qualitative research.

Understanding student veterans' narratives can show how they potentially grow in response to program activities and factors in their lives (Kibel, 1999).

While there are many advantages to using outcomes evaluation as a methodology, there are some disadvantages to consider. Outcomes evaluation research needs to be more coherent in conception and reporting findings (Patton, 1987). "Evaluators are accused of being technicians who simply collect data without regard to the theoretical relevance of possible empirical generalizations. Certainly, pure outcomes evaluations are nontheoretical" (Patton, 1987, p. 39). Furthermore, many decision-makers need specific data for fine-tuning program operations (Patton, 1987). With the lack of attention to the nontheoretical, an outcomes evaluation study should be paired with methods that can provide theoretical relevance to possible empirical generalizations (Patton, 1987). Thus, grounded theory methods help address this by describing the relationships observed in the data and how those relationships informed the effectiveness of behavioral change, skill development, and knowledge gain through multiple realities. Since this study is paired with constructivist grounded theory methods, I will next describe the evolution of grounded theory research.

Grounded Theory Research

Before the late 1960s, qualitative researchers or sociologists were focused on creating their concepts through verification and generated theory deductively (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory emerged when Glaser and Strauss (1967) posited how theory can be derived inductively through data in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. This was revolutionary at the time because most of the work involved theory testing, not theory generation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* provided qualitative researchers with a systematic

process to generate conceptual categories from evidence and then use that evidence from the category that emerged to demonstrate their findings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Another paradigm shift that set it apart was its focus on "theory as process" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 32) rather than a perfected product. This discovery led to further explanation in Theoretical Sensitivity, where Glaser (1978) expounded on the unit of analysis, core variables, and eighteen sociological coding families to assist with implementing grounded theory. These contributions and several other publications started the inception of traditional grounded theory from a positivist point of view.

For example, Glaser looked at theoretical concepts as variables and focused on observable facts (Charmaz, 2006). Viewing data as explanations of the phenomenon generalizes information and leaves out emotions and cultural contexts of the participants' lived experiences (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, depending on the scholar's assumptions, views, objectives, and research questions ultimately determine the methodology design and philosophical viewpoint. Glaser and Strauss (1967) focused on proving their predecessors wrong rather than building off their knowledge to augment their understanding further. As grounded theory continued to evolve, additional interpretive points of view, such as constructivism, entered the academic arena as an alternative to objectivist forms (Charmaz, 2006).

Pairing Constructivist with Grounded Theory

Charmaz's contribution (2006) to the evolution of grounded theory shifted the researcher's position from a distant expert to a participant, accepting multiple realities and co-constructing meaning and experience through data. Constructivists aim to generate a credible theory of the situation from the data through a systematic yet iterative process of collecting and analyzing data (Charmaz, 2006). Due to the iterative nature of constructivist grounded theory,

"researchers must think about what they themselves are doing, be explicit about how and why they are doing it and consider the effect they are having on the data and eventual findings" (Mills & Birks, 2014, p. 111). This conscious awareness of the researcher's influence on the data and mutual construction with the participants sets it apart because, traditionally, grounded theorists believe the researcher and participant can be separated during data generation (Mills & Birks, 2014).

Advantages of Constructivist Grounded Theory

There are many advantages to constructivist grounded theory, starting with its inclusive approach to include as many voices as possible. Constructivists value the participants' voices, enabling a mutual construction, whereas objectivists prioritize the researcher's voice (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, depending on the researcher's views on how they use their voice in their data, they may include or exclude participants' meanings and actions. This is where constructivist grounded theory becomes advantageous because everyone sits at the table, and their voice is verified through member checks. Nevertheless, before researchers understand whose voice dominates the data, it is imperative to construct a positionality statement in constructivist grounded theory.

Awareness of presuppositions provides a unique vantage point for researchers because they realize how their values or voice affect the views of the research (Charmaz, 2014). With this insight, researchers can locate the difference between their inclinations and the participants' meanings and actions (Charmaz, 2014). Thus, shedding light on invisible forces between micro and macro levels. This process is referred to as reflexivity. "Reflexivity enhances the quality of research through its ability to extend our understanding of how our positions and interests as researchers affect all stages of the research process" (Primeau, 2003, p. 9).

In addition to being inclusive, constructivists get to the deeper meaning of the phenomenon and link together both the subjective and the social (Charmaz, 2006). This is achieved through inductive theorizing by producing categories and making deductions about them. Researchers who used constructivist grounded theory in their study with female student veterans showed how analytical techniques such as code clustering "raised the level of abstraction and depth of category formation" (Williams et al., 2018, p. 329). These possibilities unfold in grounded theory's nature because theorizing is an ongoing activity that can be shaped by the researcher's newfound interest in the data (Charmaz, 2006).

Rather than being restricted to presupposed terms, grounded theory's holistic and iterative nature provides researchers with an omnidirectional tool to further explore the depth of an anomaly among the data or explore a new path that did not surface during the initial interview. For example, an unfolding pattern in the data could reveal a gap in the literature or tie in other forms of literature the researcher did not explore initially (Charmaz, 2014). The limitations sections will further expound on this ongoing process.

Limitations of Constructivist Grounded Theory

Although there are many advantages to constructivist grounded theory, there are also limitations. While researchers must choose the most suitable methodology, viewpoint, and methods to answer the research questions, it is also essential for researchers to determine if they have enough time to serve the justice of the research (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Constructivist grounded theory is unique due to its ongoing theorizing nature, but it can also lead to an everlasting collection and analysis period (Charmaz, 2006). This can overwhelm the researcher's physical or mental stress because they may go down several pathways or generate more findings. These forms of anxiety can alter decision-making or demotivate researchers not to continue the

theorizing process, which is why this study utilizes constructivist grounded theory methods as opposed to generating a new theory (Charmaz, 2006).

Another limitation relating to time is the need to simultaneously conduct data collection and analysis in constructivist grounded theory (Mills & Birks, 2014). While an interview is considered a popular data source in grounded theory (Mills & Birks, 2014), the researcher must conduct their initial coding immediately afterward. In addition to directly analyzing the data, the researcher must conduct memos to track the analytical process, record new insights, and log research activities (Birks et al., 2009). In theory, these may be feasible, but the researcher can only manage these steps with dedicated time to focus.

Considering the potential limitations of constructivist grounded theory methods, presupposed boundaries should be incorporated into the research proposal to prevent burnout and demotivation (Charmaz, 2006). While well-thought-out boundaries help manage collection and analysis effectively, the ongoing nature of constructivist grounded theory will also require flexibility. This may include scheduling interviews at times different from a plan or conducting back-to-back interviews. These potential obstacles can be alleviated by shifting one's schedule or utilizing small, medium, or significant breaks to prevent burnout.

In addition to the limitations of time and flexibility, several critics challenge the assumptions in grounded theory regarding researchers' procedures, inductive methods, and preconceived ideas (Charmaz, 2006). For example, Swedberg (2012) asserted that grounded theory blurs the discovery and justification in theorizing, which leads to errors in theoretical sampling and misplaced attribution. This could be obscured by the researcher's presuppositions changing as the data unfolds and their interests altering in constructivist grounded theory.

Therefore, an objectivist would view this as a limitation, whereas a constructivist would use the data to determine the direction of theorizing. This observation again highlights the importance of choosing a philosophy that best answers the research question. It also shows how critics who attack assumptions of grounded theory criticize either the historical contexts of grounded theory or different philosophies. To understand these critiques, the researcher must acknowledge their assumptions while researching and understand which philosophy best aligns with them. My viewpoint aligns with the assumptions of constructivist grounded theory in that the data is situational and can be influenced by my values (Charmaz, 2014). Thus, the following section presents the rationale for choosing constructivist grounded theory methods for my study.

Rationale

Now that I have described the evolution of grounded theory and explored some of the advantages and limitations of constructivist grounded theory, I will delve into why the constructivist grounded theory methods complement an outcomes evaluation. First, I chose to do an outcomes evaluation study with constructivist grounded theory methods to analyze my program review because together, it is considered "inductive, pragmatic, and highly concrete" (Patton, 1987, p. 39). As mentioned, outcomes evaluation research evaluates program effectiveness regarding behavior change, skill development, and knowledge gain. Outcomes evaluation research is mainly considered nontheoretical, whereas constructivist grounded theory methods co-construct meaning through a systematic yet iterative process of collecting and analyzing data. Thus, pairing them together can describe relationships observed in the data and how those relationships informed the effectiveness of behavior change, skill development, and knowledge gain through multiple realities.

Second, I chose program evaluation with the constructivist grounded theory methods due to the need for a comprehensive program that addresses the transition difficulties of joining and navigating an academic community among student veterans. Understanding student veterans' comprehensive factors that affect their college experience through an additional model has become a calling card among student veteran scholars (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017). Thus, this study aims to examine the possibility of using integral peace leadership as one such model. Pairing program theory with methods whose philosophy is grounded in the assumptions of student veterans' realities and the researcher's reality, such as constructivist grounded theory methods, can be the impetus to understand student veterans' perspectives of the integral peace leadership program and how it may influence their transition and navigation in college.

The final reason I paired outcomes evaluation with constructivist grounded theory methods is the minimal number of people who have explored the impact of integral peace leadership in an empirical study (McIntyre Miller, 2016). For example, only one study to date refines the notions of integral peace leadership utilizing women peacebuilders' work (McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022). Also, two studies evaluated the integral peace leadership framework theoretically and through practical application (Atwi et al., 2022; McIntyre Miller et al., under review). For example, Atwi et al. (2022) evaluated a PPA model, which validated the effectiveness of a transformative online global program. Participants from the study found all quadrants from integral peace leadership to be helpful and understood the interconnectedness between them in an adapted model, including personal, interpersonal, community, and global peace. Miller et al. (under review) discovered that participants felt optimistic about the "step-by-step" progression of learning peace skills from the integral peace leadership framework, both theoretically and through practical application.

With these participants' positive progression in putting integral peace leadership theory into practice, I want to explore whether student veterans' perspectives from similar experiences provide value to their transition into and navigation through college. Thus, pairing program evaluation with constructivist grounded theory methods can open opportunities for student veterans to tell their stories about their experience with integral peace leadership and how these events will shape their reintegration and navigation in college. The following section will describe the study's design to collect the data needed to answer my research questions.

Study Design

This section will detail the program study design, including the methodology, methods, data collection, and data analysis utilized. The study design consists of a four-week program with various data collection points, including pre-interview and post-interview, journals before and during the program, and discussion notes during the program. The program is an adapted, hybrid program based on Euphrates Institute's Peace Practice Alliance (PPA). In the sections below, I will describe the necessary steps during the program preparation, pre-program, program, and post-program.

In the program preparation section, I will discuss the overall program by reintroducing the Euphrates Institute's PPA, followed by a discussion of the modifications made for the adapted four-week hybrid program and the necessary steps that took place for participant selection, including site and access, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and informed consent form. Then, I will discuss the pre-program section and the strides taken for data collection, including demographic information, pre-interview, and pre-program journal entry. In the last section, I will discuss the post-interview after the program.

Program Preparation

In preparation for the program, I partnered with Euphrates Institute to create a certification program based on the Peace Practice Alliance (PPA) for student veterans. I was inspired by the PPA and wanted to conduct a similar program with student veterans. In the first subsection, I will reintroduce the Euphrates Institute's PPA. In the second subsection, I will describe the modifications made for the adapted four-week hybrid program in the second subsection. I adapted the program's timeframe from six months to four weeks, along with shifting the program from a virtual program to a hybrid one. In the remaining subsections, I will highlight the steps for participant selection for the study, including site and access, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and informed consent forms. I planned and organized this program outside of the study at Greyhound University in Southern California. Upon IRB approval, I asked the participants to participate in the study and the program, and they all said yes. Participants could still be part of the program rather than the study.

Reiteration of Euphrates Institute's Peace Practice Alliance Program

Euphrates Institute is a peacebuilding organization that partners with global citizens worldwide to help participants equip, connect, and uplift their peace leadership skills as practitioners (Euphrates Institute, 2022). Euphrates Institute's approach cultivates deep relationships personally and interpersonally through understanding, service, and love. Annually, Euphrates Institute hosts a six-month online community program connecting global peacebuilders in a heart-centered environment to practice peace leadership in themselves, their relationships, and their communities. This peer-based learning program is known as the PPA and is grounded in an integral peace leadership framework, including innerwork, knowledge, community, and environment. Euphrates Institute adapted these four quadrants into the following

practices: personal, interpersonal, community, and global peace. During the six-month program, peace leaders are self-directed to learn and practice personal, interpersonal, community, and global practices in six designated monthly modules (Euphrates Institute, 2022).

As part of the first module, Personal Peace Practice, peacebuilders learn and integrate methods for practicing and cultivating innerwork. Throughout the program, they apply this insight and re-visit their inner peace practices through meditation, reflection, and building empathy for themselves and others (Euphrates Institute, 2022). In the second module, Interpersonal Peace Practice, peacebuilders learn theories and processes for peacefully interacting with others from diverse backgrounds and viewpoints. These theories and processes include nonviolent communication, active listening, and other strategies to promote peaceful dialogue (Euphrates Institute, 2022).

In the third module, Community Peace Practice, peacebuilders expand their understanding of how to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice through different community-building practices (Euphrates Institute, 2022). In the fourth module, Global Peace Practice, peacebuilders deepen their awareness and understanding of systems that support and hinder positive peace and how to address them (Euphrates Institute, 2022). They gain insight into these parameters, which can guide them to create sustainable change. In the fifth module, peacebuilders learn how all four modules are interconnected (Euphrates Institute, 2022). In the sixth module, peacebuilders deeply reflect on the program's learning outcomes and discuss the following steps to apply lessons learned in their lives and work (Euphrates Institute, 2022). The sixth module also invites participants to apply for a grant through Euphrates Institute to launch a peace leadership project in their local community. In each module, peacebuilders can access a

range of peace references and reflection prompts to engage in purposeful online discussion through three activities: transform, inform, and inspire (Euphrates Institute, 2022).

In the transform section, each monthly module contains experiential activities to enhance peacebuilders' understanding of bringing peace inwardly and outwardly (Euphrates Institute, 2022). The inform section includes readings from book chapters, articles, and websites related to the peace leadership section. In the inspire section, a form of inspiration is posted each week to re-ignite participants toward hope through poetry, podcasts, TED Talks, and videos (Euphrates Institute, 2022). In addition to these three activities, each module contains a deeper dive to explore further topics related to the designated peace leadership module and access to global peace leaders.

Each month, two virtual meetings via Zoom video chat bring participants worldwide together (Euphrates Institute, 2022). In the first Zoom session, a workshop is guided by a PPA facilitator or guest speaker for 90 minutes on the peace leadership section. The second call is designated to bring the virtual platform's online discussion to an open space to learn from each other and reflect on lessons learned for 90 minutes. Overall, each module offers three hours of online gatherings. To understand the effectiveness of the PPA, McIntyre Miller et al. (under review) conducted a program evaluation of participants' experiences and gathered lessons learned.

McIntyre Miller et al. (under review) discovered that participants felt optimistic about the "step-by-step" progression of learning peace skills from the integral peace leadership framework, both theoretically and through practical application. These findings are helpful because this study was the first to apply a guiding framework in a virtual platform. As with any program evaluation, there is always room for improvement. Some lessons learned from McIntyre Miller and

colleagues (under review) suggested more time for engagement sessions and spaces to support dialogue between participants. While other online peace education programs also made an intentional effort to create a sense of community through co-learning pedagogies such as the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP; Stuart & Moonbeams, 2021), in-person gatherings can provide a space to foster awareness, support, and action. Therefore, applying these lessons learned and introducing the same comprehensive guiding framework to student veterans can potentially address the spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges they experience in higher education.

Adapted PPA Program

The adapted PPA (program design appears in Appendix A) is a four-week hybrid program that took place from July 10 to July 28 and resumed on August 7 to August 11, 2023. Within the four-week program, the first three weeks focused on each peace leadership module: personal, interpersonal, community, and global peace and the final week combined the fifth and sixth modules: practicing peace practices interconnectedly and conducting final reflections on the program. I did not include the peace leadership project in this program, as the four weeks were an accelerated pace, and an additional, long term project might conflict with the student veteran's fall semester.

Building off the premise that deep learning and sustainable change stem from ongoing community support among co-creators (Euphrates Institute, 2022), the adapted PPA program followed the same heart-centered environment with some added benefits of in-person gatherings. I facilitated the in-person sessions Monday through Friday, from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM or 2:00 PM, depending on the content and discussion, and created a peer learning environment to discuss our ongoing development of peace practices daily through community support. Asynchronous

work was administered on Euphrates Institute's virtual PPA platform during the student veteran's time away from the group. They were also expected to conduct daily readings and reflections on the virtual platform to be prepared to share what they had learned the following day in person. Throughout the four-week hybrid program, the intention was to equip, connect, and practice peace leadership practices together so that student veterans could reconnect with a familiar community to help each other autonomously navigate college and overcome transition difficulties (Euphrates Institute, 2022). This change from a virtual community to a hybrid model presented opportunities for student veterans to create a more profound sense of community. Overall, the greatest modification of the program increased the time for engagement sessions from three hours per module to a range of between five to fifteen hours.

Site and Access

The site and access of this study consisted of primarily Greyhound University stakeholders and one member from the Euphrates Institute. When considering site and access in an outcomes evaluation study, evaluators come into the planning process with their cultural lenses. These forms of socialization can affect their interactions with stakeholders regarding who is involved and how they are involved (Mertens & Wilson, 2019). Leading up to this study, I built a rapport with several key people who assisted with site access. These included my advisor, the Head of Programs and Strategy at Euphrates Institute, the Veterans Resource Center Director, and the Greyhound University Administrative Assistant. These relationships were pivotal in promoting the success of the program. I will describe the steps I took with each of these stakeholders.

My advisor connected me to the Head of Programs and Strategy at Euphrates Institute, and they suggested that I take the six-month PPA. I completed the program on July 12, 2023.

While in the program, I expressed my interest in creating a curriculum for student veterans and received administrative permission to utilize Euphrates Institute's online learning platform for my own modified PPA. With my administrative privileges on the PPA's website, I received access to the materials, and then I could select what I wanted to do to reflect the four-week hybrid program. I safeguarded each student veteran's profile to promote confidentiality. If any platform issues arose, I could directly communicate with the Head of Programs and Strategy at Euphrates Institute.

With the Greyhound University semester ending in mid-May, I sent an email with a flier advertising the program (Appendix B) to the Director of the Veterans Resource Center on May 2, 2023. This email and flier described the details of the program and included a link to a secure Google Program Registration Form for interested participants to complete. I requested interested participants to submit a Google Form by May 18, 2023. At the time, I was recruiting for the program only, so there was no information regarding a study in the email, flier, or Google Form. All of these documents aimed to see who was interested in the program, the demographics of those interested, who could participate based on the program's framework, and when they were available. During the recruitment for the program, I had also submitted an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application so that I could use the program as part of my dissertation research. Upon IRB approval, I emailed the participants who had already signed up for the program to participate in the study (Appendix C), with no ramifications to their participation in the program if they did not want to participate in the study portion. All participants who had signed up for the program agreed to also participate in the study.

In the Google Participant Registration Form, student veterans were asked demographic questions (Appendix D) to gain an understanding of the diversity of interested participants. There

were also questions regarding the program inclusion criteria to see if those interested met the inclusion criteria. The inclusion and exclusion criteria section below further expands the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the program and, therefore, the study. Lastly, there were questions about the student veterans' availability to find an accommodating time for most participants. Utilizing the information from the Google Program Registration Form, I was able to inform the Administrative Assistant at Greyhound University by May 18, 2023, with the most accommodating timeframe to schedule a classroom for July 10, 2023, to July 28, 2023, and August 7, 2023, to August 11, 2023. In the next section, I will describe further the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the program and the study.

Participant Selection

To be included in the program and the aligned study, participants needed to meet the following criteria: served a minimum of four years as an enlisted service member in the United States military after September 11, 2001; conducted at least one deployment; was not currently serving in any military status including Active, Reserve or Guard status; and were a student. Students could be undergraduate or graduate students, as this accurately reflected the populations and subpopulations of enlisted student veterans who are entirely separated from military service. Participants who did not fit these inclusion requirements could not participate in the study.

A subpopulation of veterans excluded from this research proposal were Active, Reserve, or National Guard members due to the liminal space they occupied between the military and civilian worlds. For example, these subpopulations of veterans must go back and forth between military and college cultures, exacerbating the incongruity of cultures (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). While Active Duty enlisted service members are in full-time status, both National Guard and Reserve members are still a part of the military in part-time status. Introducing the integral

peace leadership curriculum to this subpopulation of student veterans may have challenged their military socialization and made it challenging to move forward. Therefore, with this inclusion and exclusion criteria in place, the qualified candidates to participate in this study were limited to 54 male student veterans and six female student veterans. Eight male candidates volunteered for the study and five of those male candidates met the inclusion criteria. The five male participants were asked if they knew any women student veterans on campus, and one male participant did; however, she was unavailable to participate due to summer school.

In grounded theory methods, purposive sampling is essential to locate sources relevant to the study's aim (Mills & Birks, 2014). The power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of crucial importance to the purpose of the evaluation, thus the term 'purposeful' sampling" (Patton, 1987, pp. 51-52). I utilized purposive sampling to locate five student veterans from Greyhound University. The following section introduces important principles to protect participants in this study.

Informed Consent Form

After IRB approval and once the participants agreed to be a part of the study and not just the program, they received an email to review and sign an informed consent form (Appendix E) covering ethical management principles such as reciprocity, trust, and rapport. I reviewed the electronic informed consent form with the participants via Zoom to ensure they understood the overall scope of the study, risks and benefits, and their ability to leave or not participate in the study at any time. The areas covered in the informed consent form were addressed in an IRB-approved consent form I used for the study.

Reasonable steps were taken to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the study's data. The data was stored electronically through a secure server and was only seen by the research team during the study. The only people who had access to my research records were the research team members, the IRB, and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. As with any research study, gathering demographic information is essential and will be discussed in more detail within the pre-program section below.

Pre-Program

Once the five participants signed their informed consent form, each participant entered the pre-program section of the study. The pre-program included the following elements: a demographics questionnaire, a pre-interview, and pre-program journal entry. These stages of the pre-program are described in the subsections below.

Demographic Information

First, qualified participants for the study received a demographic information questionnaire to establish a good baseline of understanding of the participants' backgrounds. The in-depth demographic information questionnaire was different from the previously mentioned Google Form. At the same time, I collected available dates for a pre-interview. The demographic information questionnaire (Appendix D) included questions about the participant's age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, relationship status, degree they are pursuing, major, branch of service the age when they joined the military, years and months of military service; rank when they separated, retired, or medically retired; date of separation; type of discharge; primary occupation in service; duty stations; number and locations of deployments; and wars/operations supported during service. This electronic questionnaire established a good baseline of understanding and saved time for the pre-interview. It took participants five to fifteen

minutes to fill out the questionnaire. Upon receipt of the questionnaire, I immediately analyzed the data collected. Below, in Table 3.1, are the demographic highlights of the five participants who qualified for the study and the program. Pseudonyms were used to protect student veterans' privacy and anonymity. Following the demographic questionnaire, the participant's pre-interview set the stage for the program.

Table 3.1

Participant Demographics

| | Participant 1 | Participant 2 | Participant 3 | Participant 4 | Participant 5 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Pseudonyms | Jarell | Chris | Tim | William | Victor |
| Age: | 32 | 34 | 35 | 32 | 27 |
| Race: | Hispanic, Black, White, Asian | White | Asian | Black | Hispanic |
| Ethnicity/ Ethnicities: | Mexican, Jamaican, Indian | Caucasian | Korean | African American | Hispanic |
| Gender: | Male | Male | Male | Male | Male |
| Sexual Orientation: | Heterosexual | Heterosexual | Heterosexual | Heterosexual | Heterosexual |
| Relationship Status: | Married | Divorced | Single | Single | Single |
| Degree pursuing: | Bachelors | Bachelors | Bachelors | Masters | Bachelors |
| Major: | Sociology | Human Physiology | Accounting | Leadership Development | Film Production |
| Branch of service: | Marines | Navy | Air Force | Navy | Marines |
| Age joined: | 19 | 23 | 23 | 19 | 18 |
| Years/months of service: | 4 years | 5 years | 7 years | 8 years and 10 months | 4 years |

| | Participant 1 | Participant 2 | Participant 3 | Participant 4 | Participant 5 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Rank: | E-4 | E-2 | E-3 | E-5 | E-5 |
| Date of separation: | July 2015 | January 2017 | May 2016 | October 2019 | September 2018 |
| Discharge: | Honorable | Honorable | Honorable | Honorable | Honorable |
| Occupation: | Administrative Specialist | Hospital Corpsman | Engineering | Aviation Ordnanceman | Administrative Specialist |
| Number of deployments: | One | One | One | One | Two |

Pre-Interview

The pre-interview aimed to get to know each participant and understand the enlisted student veterans' experience with their transition into and navigation through college. Conducting interviews at various parts of a program provided an opportunity to explore participants in greater depth and allow for unanticipated areas of inquiry (Patton, 2002). Thus, this study administered a pre-interview before and post-interview after the program through a semi-structured interview guide approach (See Appendices F and G). The semi-structured format allowed for open-ended and in-depth exploration of the participant's experience with the research topic (Charmaz, 2014).

The pre-interview aimed to get to know each participant and understand their enlisted student veterans' experience with their transition into and navigation through college. Specifically focusing on how military culture influenced the student veterans' transition into and navigation through college. Unpacking how military culture influences student veterans' transition into and navigation through college can shed light on whether student veterans are experiencing symptoms of reverse culture shock, and if so, how it is affecting their lived

experience on campus, off campus, in communities, in civilian structures, in jobs, in interests, in relationships, within families, and in seeking themselves and fulfilling their purpose.

For the pre-interviews, I scheduled a Zoom session with each participant. With permission from each participant, I recorded the Zoom session. The pre-interviews ranged from 30 minutes to one hour. After the interview, I uploaded the recording to Otter.ai to create a naturalized transcription (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Recording the Zoom session enabled multiple benefits, such as replaying, pausing, and slowing down the speed for transcription and analysis. I only denaturalized filler and repeated words to sustain the integrity of the participant's words (Birks et al., 2009). Then, immediately after the transcription, I decided to use the pre-interview as a detailed description of the participants, which I wrote the detailed descriptions of the participants after the whole study was complete. The participants' detailed descriptions are located in the final section of this chapter.

I kept memos during and after the pre-interviews to track analytical processes, record new insights, and log research activities (Birks et al., 2009). Conducting memo writing is crucial between data collection and writing drafts of papers because it provides a space to capture my thoughts, annotate connections observed, crystallize questions to pursue, and provide a sense of direction moving forward (Charmaz, 2014). It is also advised to use memoing throughout the research process to maintain an audit trail that reinforces quality activities, aiding reflexivity practices and analytic techniques (Mills & Birks, 2014). The pre-interview process took one week, including scheduling, re-scheduling, interviewing, transcribing, and memoing for five people. Upon completing the pre-interview, student veterans started their reflection process in the pre-program journal entry.

Pre-Program Journal Entry

Following the pre-interview, the participants completed the final stage of the pre-program: a pre-program journal entry. Student veterans were given a prompt to set their intentions on what areas of their lives they want to focus on in the PPA and how they want to cultivate relationships with other student veterans while conducting the program (See Appendix A). Janesick (1999) mentioned that journaling between the participants and the researcher is an interactive communication tool and is considered an interdisciplinary triangulation of data. Utilizing this research instrument provides student veterans with an alternate form to use their voices and have agency in their challenges and triumphs. That way, student veterans can also personally name their experiences through reflection and recognize the moments they have cultivated peace practices.

The pre-program journal prompt was located on the virtual PPA platform, and student veterans were notified via email to complete their first journal entry. The journal entry was shared amongst participants, and each participant could view the other's reflections and comment if they desired. However, Euphrates Institute could not see their journal entries to protect the identities of the participants. This pre-program journal entry took participants approximately five minutes to complete. Upon receiving the journal entries, I analyzed the generated data with grounded theory techniques, as described in the data analysis section below. Following the pre-program, the adapted PPA program began, as discussed below.

Program

The adapted PPA program was administered at Greyhound University and on Euphrates Institute's virtual platform from July 10 to July 28 and resumed from August 7 to August 11, 2023, with five student veterans. The in-person gatherings were conducted over three or four

hours, depending on the content and discussion, Monday through Friday, depending on the content and discussion. Outside of the classroom, student veterans engaged in an online community, where they could learn things from peace resources and reflect on their learnings through journal prompts. This outside-of-class learning took no longer than one hour per day.

During the in-person gatherings, student veterans were introduced to daily rituals, also known as an opening ceremony, to practically apply our theoretical learnings of integral peace leadership inwardly and outwardly. These practices are from the transform section of the virtual platform. Student veterans sat in a circle during the opening ceremony and practiced personal, interpersonal, and community peace practices. The personal peace practices were different mindfulness and grounding activities to help student veterans learn and practice how to become more present. Each opening ceremony began with a mindfulness practice and a check-in question relating to the asynchronous reading material. During the check-in question, student veterans were encouraged to practice interpersonal and community peace by actively listening and practicing non-judgment through compassionate understanding among differences. Once the opening ceremony was complete, student veterans watched a recorded or live guest speaker together and then engaged in a deeper dialogue around peace practices through group discussions (Appendix H).

The recorded guest speakers were Zoom clips from the pre-existing PPA program. To maximize time in the in-person gatherings, I edited the recordings to strictly focus on the peace practices, group discussion questions, and presentations from guest speakers. That way, as a group, we paused at different moments to conduct group discussions (Appendix H). These group discussions have questions related to the peace practices or presentations to ensure we are all learning individually and collectively from each other to heighten our practice.

Throughout these group discussions, student veterans communicated honestly about their experiences before, during, and after military service. Examples they shared included personal life circumstances, such as experiencing loss of a loved one, toxic work environments, divorce, and parenthood. It should be carefully noted that this program was not therapy nor intended to address mental health issues. Furthermore, ethical considerations were taken very seriously to ensure veteran related resources were readily available, such as veteran's crisis line and veteran mental health services, in the event of emotional and/or psychological distress occurred during the pre-program, program, or post-program.

Thus, it was my duty in every reasonable attempt to maintain confidentiality and serve as a mandated reporter if any participants disclosed any suicidal thoughts, suicidal ideations, or forms of abuse. During the program, one participant disclosed suicidal thoughts. Therefore, I responded immediately in private with him and asked his permission to contact the veteran's crisis line and veteran mental health services, which he granted. Throughout the program and after the program, I continued to follow-up with him to ensure he received appropriate mental health care for his personal life circumstances and felt comfortable proceeding with the program and the study, which he did.

As the time length of the program shifted from six months to four weeks, and this also adjusted the work completed in the virtual platform. Student veterans conducted daily readings in the inform section and/or watched daily interviews, podcasts, TED Talks, and forms of poetry in the inspire section (Euphrates Institute, 2022). Thus, the name was changed from "weekly sparks of inspiration" to "daily sparks of inspiration" (Euphrates Institute, 2022). Each section had reflection prompts in which student veterans were asked to write a reflection on their learning. These readings and/or videos and the reflections discussed the following day in the program

were opportunities to share our understanding and heighten our awareness. As mentioned previously, group discussions were administered during the in-person gatherings, and a dedicated note-taker took discussion notes.

Discussion Notes

Patton (1987) articulated several advantages of discussion notes, such as their efficiency in gathering more qualitative data in a shorter period, their ability to weed out any false extremes through checks and balances among participants, and their enjoyability. With these advantages, the study and its participants benefitted because discussion notes captured what was said at the moment so that they could be reflected upon and utilized to further the discussion. For study purposes only, discussion notes were taken by a dedicated note taker, Leo, who was assigned to take descriptive notes about the interactions among the group. Upon IRB approval, Leo was recruited through convenience sampling to serve as a participant and an observer in the program. He was not one of the five participants in the study. All the participants were familiar with Leo and were glad he volunteered for the position.

Each discussion in which notes were taken ranged from two to three hours, depending on the content. There were eleven discussions throughout the study, so approximately 25 hours of notes were taken. Once the program ended, I analyzed the generated data with grounded theory techniques described in the data analysis section below. In addition to having group discussion notes, journal entries were continued after the pre-program entry.

Journal Entries

There were journal prompts given every day of the program except the first day. Thus, there were 19 days of journal entries, including the final journal entry. These journal entries were stored on the Euphrates Institute's online platform, and each participant could view and comment

on each other's reflections if they desired. As aforementioned, Euphrates Institute could not see their journal entries to protect the identities of the participants. Journal entries conducted during the program were not analyzed until after the program was complete to ensure I did not speak for any participants during in-person gatherings. Thus, once the program ended, I analyzed the generated data with grounded theory techniques described in the data analysis section below. At the conclusion of the program, the post-program commenced, as described below.

Post-Program

The post-program consisted of one post-interview with each participant. Post-interviews were held from August 12, 2023, to August 16, 2023. Participants were invited to conduct the post-interview via Zoom. I will describe these steps further below in the post-interview section.

Post-Interview

Saldaña and Omasta (2018) stated, "Evaluations are said to answer three questions: What? So what? Now what?" (p. 5). Thus, the post-interview aimed to determine whether student veterans find value in an integral peace leadership program for transitioning into and navigating college. Understanding student veterans' experience and learning will show how they see themselves contributing integral peace leadership to their college transition experience and how they apply it to navigating college. Lastly, the in-depth interview also determined whether student veterans see integral peace leadership as a tool to foster college transition and navigation. The post-interview followed the same steps as the pre-interview, and each post-interview averaged 40 minutes in length. Instead of turning the post-interviews into detailed descriptions, I analyzed the generated data with grounded theory techniques described in the data analysis section below. Overall, the post-interviews took five days to complete everyone's interview.

Data Analysis

During the data analysis stage, a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014) was used to analyze the oral and written data collected through interviews, journals, and discussion notes. Utilizing this emerging analysis invoked iterative strategies to capture veterans' experiences with integral peace leadership (Charmaz, 2014). To describe relationships observed in the data and how those relationships informed the effectiveness of behavior change, skill development, and knowledge gain through multiple realities, there are three coding phases recommended by Charmaz (2006): initial, focused, and theoretical coding. I will introduce these three coding phases and then specifically address the steps following initial coding among all the data collection techniques that will be analyzed, including post-interviews, journals, and discussion notes.

Initial Coding

In the initial coding phase for all the data collected, as discussed above, I sorted each piece of data into incidents and created gerund codes for each incident in an Excel spreadsheet, following the recommendation of Charmaz (2014). This prevented me from implementing my personal biases into my respondents' representations and led me to change some initial codes to line-by-line to go deeper into the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006). It also guided me to bring light to any hidden assumptions and give student veterans new insights. Upon finishing the initial coding stage, I started the focused coding stage.

Focused Coding

In the focused coding phase, initial coding is sharpened and more conceptual (Glaser, 1978) through a constant comparative method (Glaser, 2004). This method compares coded data from one participant with another and compares incidents within a participant's data with others

(Glaser, 1978). During this coding phase, I noticed participants' words emerging and started to observe alignments and frequency between many focused codes. As these alignments appeared, I compared these focused codes to see what "unexpected ideas emerge" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 143) and memoed some possible categories these emerging words resembled. As I continued this process, I also noticed some differences among participants. Seeing these incongruencies, I also memoed these emerging words separately to see if they generated possible categories independently through generating, validating, and correcting, leading to the emergence of categories and theoretical sampling (Glaser, 1998).

Categories and Theoretical Sampling

Next, I reviewed my memos, kept throughout my data collection phases, and created tentative categories from the focused codes. "Treating focused codes as tentative categories prompts you to develop and scrutinize them" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 189). In creating these tentative categories, I highlighted each category with a different color to see the frequency of alignment and difference. Highlighting each category led to the emergence of relationships between them, and I memoed those relationships. After highlighting each category, I verified each incident, initial code, and focus code to ensure they reflected the participant's voice and were not editorialized. Making categories as conceptual as possible allows researchers to go back to codes and determine what category aligned with the emerging words from the participants (Charmaz, 2014). In the final coding phase, theoretical sampling further refined these emerging categories.

Theoretical sampling means "seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories in your emerging theory" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 192). I spent considerable time understanding how the emerging categories were related at this stage. Through trial and error and further refinement of the categories, I further crystallized the relationships between the

categories. Once the relationships between the categories became more apparent, I noticed a direct correlation between the categories, and there was no need for theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation is achieved when you receive new data that does not spark theoretical insights (Charmaz, 2006). Since no new data was needed to spark theoretical insights, I moved into the final step: theoretical sorting.

Conducting a thorough inspection of theoretical sampling led to an easier transition into theoretical sorting. "In grounded theory, sorting gives you a logic for organizing your analysis and a way of creating and refining theoretical links that prompts you to make comparisons between categories" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 216). These relationships between abstract concepts lead to themes. Studying the overarching themes can reveal a process among each theme and help conceptualize relationships between events or experiences (Charmaz, 2014). With the iterative nature of going back and forth with theoretical sampling, the relationships between these abstract concepts made sense and formed five themes.

Applying these coding phases provided plenty of moments to take a step back and reflect on my participant's realities and my perceptions consistently from start to finish. Moreover, analyzing multiple data sources, including interviews, journals, and discussion notes throughout the study, aligns with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) constructs to capture validity and credibility concerns by being in a setting for a long time.

Once all the data collection analysis steps were complete, I conducted member checks with each participant to ensure the data speaks truth to their experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This allowed for identifying gaps in the analytical process and correcting them before finalizing themes (Charmaz, 2014). In addition to identifying gaps, member checking enables co-construction between multiple participants and the researcher. Next, I will introduce my

positionality statement and role in the study to understand my lived experience and aligned experiences as a student veteran.

Positionality Statement

I am a multi-racial, middle-class, cisgender, straight, service-connected disabled veteran male. I grew up in San Diego, California, and have been moving abroad and stateside for the last 20 years with the United States Navy. I am a first-generation servicemember in my family and climbed the ranks from a working-class position to a white-collar managerial position as a Chief Petty Officer. I spent all my adult life in the military and became the first and only person in my family to obtain a graduate degree. My older sister was also a first-generation college student and was the first to receive an undergraduate degree. My parents adopted me at four months old through open adoption, and I have met both of my birth parents and their children.

Being adopted, I experienced many identity challenges throughout my childhood and adolescent experiences because I felt out of place and defective. This feeling led me to be someone others wanted me to be. Over time, I became detached from people because I was disconnected from my authentic self and did not know how to explore it. This led to my career choice with the United States Navy, as I craved a sense of identity and community.

In my young adulthood with the United States Navy, I was unhappy with my working-class position as an aircraft mechanic due to the menial work and hazing I experienced. Therefore, I volunteered for off-duty hours with computer technicians to gain enough experience to switch my Navy profession. Although I felt a sense of community with some of the mechanics, I experienced another identity crisis when going into a new career. Attempting to prove myself again in my new position, I continued to search for deeper meaning and understanding of my identity.

By reaching middle adulthood, I found more comfort in my identity. I met my birth father for the first time at 27 years old and began more in-depth conversations with my birth mother to understand my adoption. However, I was still unhappy with my job and searched for ways to transition out of the military. I actively pursued my education to create a smooth transition in the civilian world.

Leaving active-duty service after 12 years, I began my graduate educational journey to understand my past, values, identities, mission, and vision. As a first-generation graduate student veteran, I continued searching from school to school and program to program. At last, discovering a program and school that helped me learn more about myself, I began several forms of inner work to understand my underlying meaning. This privilege allowed me to have more intention and direction in life. Upon discovering my heartfelt mission, I still struggled to see it through wholly and ventured back into active service with the military.

Coming back into military service in another community was yet again a culture shock. This culture shock was due to my education, as I was able to identify inequities within the organization. Being able to identify them is one thing, but actively changing them is another. I felt powerless and unheard when trying to advocate or make changes for the voiceless. This cycle continued, and I eventually lost my sense of self again. I was eager to remove myself from active service again to regain my sense of self and seek ways to advocate for social change.

With 20 years of combined active and reserve service, this constant search and experience in multiple communities has had many benefits. It helped me with an open mind toward people and their experiences. It also influenced my research questions because I wanted to provide a voice to invisible ones since I have felt invisible in certain instances throughout my life. Thus, my lived experiences influence my research to understand myself better and seek

advocacy for those who have no autonomy over their choices. With this in mind, the following section will introduce my role in the study.

Role

Using a constructivist grounded theorist lens, my role in this study was to co-construct meaning and experience with my research participants (Mills & Birks, 2014). Throughout the dissertation, I served those who served our country from start to finish by ensuring each participant's voice was heard during their informed consent forms, demographic information, pre-interviews, transcriptions, discussion notes, reflections, and post-interviews. This research study is unique because the participants and I have a shared experience serving as an enlisted service member after September 11, 2001, and are now higher-education students. Although we share this commonality, we have multiple realities before, during, and after military service. Thus, my role is to accurately represent enlisted student veterans' experiences and honor their sacrifices for their country, families, and fellow Americans. Emphasizing reflexivity throughout this process will help me see how my lived experience and my participants' experiences influence the data, analysis, and theory (Mills & Birks, 2014). Finally, in the next sections, I will provide detailed descriptions of each participant and Greyhound University's Veteran Resource Center (VRC).

Detailed Descriptions of Participants

As aforementioned, after the first pre-interview, I used the pre-interview to create a detailed description of each participant to capture their continued transition into Greyhound University before the program commenced. Listening to each participant share their challenges during their journey highlighted the spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges they were experiencing in higher education and where they were currently in their journey for their

continued transition into and navigation through Greyhound University. With everyone on a different part of their journey, the detailed descriptions provide a deeper understanding of what each participant was facing and feeling during their continued transition into higher education, intrapersonally, interpersonally, in the community, and structurally. The detailed descriptions also briefly describe their characteristics and how they showed up during the PPA to capture their essence.

Jarell

Jarell is strong, bold, rational, logical, prescriptive, artistic, and challenges the status quo. He grew up in Jamaica as a child soldier and was taught to take care of himself at a young age. Being neglected as a child, Jarell stated that he did not know how to hug people and that he did not know how to cry. On Jarell's first day of the PPA, he questioned everything we were doing because it was new material that challenged his thinking.

When Jarell described his transition out of the military, he mentioned that he felt out of place and needed to readjust himself for civilian life. He quickly noticed that he did not have anything in common with others, leading to difficulty finding a job. After experiencing this difficulty, he decided to move back to his hometown before joining the military in New Jersey.

After spending a year and a half in New Jersey, he decided to come to California by himself for school in 2017. He started community college at age 25 and quickly noticed he could not relate to younger students. In addition to age, he felt the military matured him a lot and did not have the patience to deal with immaturity. He stated that he wanted to correct it when he saw people being immature, but he realized he could not do it because he was not in the military, and it hurt people's feelings. Having these experiences with younger students, he isolated himself

because he perceived civilians looking at him as a buzzkill, and he perceived younger students as too inexperienced. These perceptions made him feel like he was in his little bubble.

Although he experienced this isolation in community college, he met his wife while in school and married her during COVID-19. Upon transferring to Greyhound University in Fall 2020, he found it difficult because Jarell and his wife were expecting a child, and he had to navigate his first year online. During their pregnancy, he mentioned that his wife was very sick, and they did not know what was going on.

In addition to her being sick, Jarell endured many other trials too during their pregnancy, including losing three jobs, entering depression, and not being able to secure a home loan. With bills piling up, trying to find new jobs, and trying to take care of everything, he felt too overwhelmed and decided to take a year off from school to focus on one thing at a time. In the Fall of 2022, he returned to Greyhound University, yet he mentioned that he was still dealing with the challenges of family, finances, and depression all the time.

Carrying these stressors back and forth between school and his home life, Jarell viewed school as a means to an end because it was another burden for him. He described it as senioritis too early because everything added more stress. He also mentioned how he just wanted to quit and get out of school already. Furthermore, he explained that even though he had nothing in his tank, he was still pushing through it. Overall, he felt depressed because the stress was too much to handle.

Even though the stress was too much, Jarell described how military culture taught him to push forward even if he had nothing in his tank. He learned that whatever is affecting you, you suppress it and keep pushing forward. He exclaimed, "Suck it up, buttercup and stop crying." He stated how he still carries this mentality from the military because they broke him down and

molded him to be this way. Furthermore, he mentioned how it is hard to go back to who he used to be, so now he just tries to navigate forward with who he became from the military, which does not apply well in civilian life. Jarell stated that civilian life is not severe, restrictive, or structured, whereas the military was all those things. Thus, he felt out of place. He mentioned how the military rewarded him for pushing himself, but in the civilian world, he described how he is not rewarded for pushing himself beyond his limits. Instead, he felt the additional stress with no benefits.

Jarell felt behind because he compared himself to others, including his age, who have a degree, a career, a family, and a home. He described how these thoughts constantly occupy his mind and take him away from his peace. For example, he mentioned how he is always thinking about how he is going to feed his family and provide health insurance and security for them. He also stated that if he suffers, then his family suffers, too, so he has no choice but to finish school.

Chris

Chris is gregarious, intelligent, adventurous, and tends to be a know-it-all. When he tells a story, Chris goes into every detail, including the background of what led to the experience and the aftermath of the situation. His passion for sharing stories can lead him to take up a lot of space in the room and conversation. He willingly admits it, and he struggles with asking others questions. Below, I will share his remarks from the pre-interview.

When Chris transitioned out of the military in January 2017, he missed his community college's registration date and had to wait until the fall semester to enroll in classes. Upon separation, he moved back to his hometown, in Michigan, with his wife. He mentioned that he was four and a half years into his marriage, and when he returned to Michigan, it fell apart. Thus, he moved back in with his mom and returned to where he started before joining the Navy.

Moving back home was not a good feeling for him, so he moved back to where he had separated from the military, Southern California. He moved back to California with just himself and a car full of his belongings and himself. When he arrived in Southern California, Chris crashed on his good friend's couch for two months before community college started. Once community college started in the fall of 2017, he found his place but did not have a bed, so he slept on the floor until he could get a mattress.

Starting his first semester in community college, he quickly learned that not all community colleges were created equal. For example, he attended community college in the past, and felt that it could have been a better experience. However, he described his experience at his new community college, which was close to a military base, as having a tremendous veteran network, and being considered one of the best in the country. He stated that this helped his transition back to California.

He quickly recognized that he had to step it up a notch compared to his high school experience, which led him to relearn math concepts that he struggled with previously. He said he failed his first math test and had a wake-up call. Chris realized he had to find his groove, so he created study habits and applied himself more. Upon finding his groove, he became an A and B student and felt incredibly proud of his accomplishments. Thus, it became easy for him once he focused on just getting the grade and doing the work.

It also became easy for him because he surrounded himself with other veterans. He mentioned that he always sat next to veterans in all his classes because many of them had the same classes. He stated that he made it a point to sit in front of the class to remove distractions, too. Furthermore, the veterans he surrounded himself with also thought the same way. He

described that having those who understood him and had the same work ethic led to positive feedback.

Once he started doing well in school and developed a supportive network organically, Chris did not want to backtrack, and grades became a game to him. He described how halfway through his two years at community college, he attended an academic preparation course at a prestigious four-year private University, and from that point, he was focused on transferring to that same school. Chris stated that he transferred a semester ahead of time, which quickly became an experience he was unprepared for mentally, emotionally, and socially.

Upon transferring to this prestigious four-year private University, he described how different it was compared to community college because everyone was against each other, and it was not friendly. Chris mentioned how he did not feel comfortable chatting with others in this atmosphere and noticed cliques of younger students forming in his classes, too. Although he transferred with other student veterans from his community college who had also attended the academic preparation course, Chris stated that the hardest part for him was feeling uncomfortable in his surroundings in New York City. For example, Chris stated that he faced imposter syndrome because he was 30 years old and was among younger students who were more talented than himself and were no longer around his friends. Being in this hyper-competitive environment without the support network he developed in California made him feel very alone.

Feeling alone in his new location, Chris constantly contacted his support network and girlfriend on the phone to try to work through his experience. To make matters worse, COVID-19 also occurred after his first semester, and he shifted all his classes online. He mentioned that his school was already difficult and how it became even more challenging through his online experience. After his first year of schooling, he discovered they would continue to do an online

environment for another academic year, so he decided to take a gap year. Thankfully, Chris got involved in medical research with his girlfriend's mom for a year and had every intention of returning to the prestigious four-year private school when they returned to in-person classes. However, he realized that he attended this school as more of an accomplishment-oriented idea, saying that he attended a prestigious private four-year University rather than what was best for his professional career and personal life. Thus, he made another change and returned to Southern California in 2022.

Chris's girlfriend recommended that he attend Greyhound University because it resembled similar characteristics to his community college, such as small classroom size and more of a community type of feeling. With Chris' stellar grades, he transferred to Greyhound University in the fall of 2022. Although Chris had a much better experience at Greyhound University than at his previous four-year private university, he still struggled to connect emotionally with people much younger than him. For example, he mentioned how his classmates often do not understand his perspective. Chris stated he would rather focus on his studies than try to form relationships with younger students.

Tim

Tim is quiet, private, reserved, and keeps to himself. When Tim does speak, he often makes self-deprecating remarks or talks down about himself. He is a senior at Greyhound, and this is his last semester. On the first day of the PPA, Tim showed up 15 minutes early and was the first person in the classroom. He was the only person who wore a face mask. I quickly noticed that he wore it for his psychological safety by keeping to himself and not engaging with others.

Before transitioning into Greyhound University, Tim attended community college first because it was cheaper, and he wanted to use a part of his GI Bill to obtain a master's degree in the future. With Tim saving his GI Bill, he did not bother checking to see if his community college had a VRC and was unaware if they did. During his time in community college, he described his experience as rushed because he had no real time to make personal connections.

Tim's experience at Greyhound University was different than his experience at community college because he built relationships with his professors and the Director of the VRC. He mentioned that he did not make friends with his peers because they were much younger than him. However, he felt he could relate more to his professors because he was close in age. Although Tim's experience differed from community college through the relationships cultivated, he still felt alone among his peers at Greyhound University.

Tim described that the most challenging part about transitioning into and navigating through college for him was connecting with the younger generation. Comparing his age with his peers, he felt pretty old and did not want to bother wasting his time trying to connect with someone who did not understand him. Furthermore, he mentioned that it is hard to understand his peers because he did not know what they were talking about half the time. Coming to this conclusion, he did not engage with his peers because he had nothing to talk about unless he had to do a mandatory group project.

Regarding group projects, he still managed to find ways to avoid engaging with his peers by encouraging others to take the lead, and he would follow. He mentioned that he would do whatever they say. Taking the attention off him while having others provide direction sustained his comfort zone with his peers. Having a choice to disengage also led him to not tell anyone

about his experience serving in the military. Although Tim had a choice to sustain his disengagement with his peers, he stated in the military that he did not have that choice.

He described his engagement in the military as a form of survival. He mentioned that he was forced to care about others because they were fellow Americans, and he wanted to stay alive. He learned in the Air Force that to stay alive, Tim had to get others to like him and follow their direction to stay out of trouble. For example, Tim expressed how he still shows up 15 minutes early to everything because he gets anxious if he is on time or late. He also exclaimed that if something annoyed him, Tim learned to keep his mouth shut to avoid burning bridges. Tim looked at this lesson from the military as a positive; however, he also voiced how this lesson turned into a bigger problem for him because he can be apathetic too much.

He defined apathy as not caring to the point of not taking action. He described difficulty connecting emotionally with someone if they tell him about a problem. For example, when he is presented with a problem from someone, Tim's first thought is how can I fix this, but then he also thinks, what is the big deal? He also discussed his thought process toward others' problems by comparing their problems with people who have served in the military, especially if they are male. He acknowledged that this is a terrible thing to think about or to say to someone, so he never says it. Consequently, he mentioned how he is often stuck in his head, contemplating why this person is making such a big deal about this when it is nothing. Thus, he mentioned that he might feel bad for someone or something, but he will not go out of his way to help. He summarized this approach with others as sympathizing but with no action.

Tim also described his experience in the military as producing much anxiety. In boot camp, he mentioned he hated that his sergeant would create arbitrary reasons to hurry up, run, go faster, and march in formation. In his regular job, he observed more arbitrary reasons from his

superiors and exclaimed that something would happen daily. Experiencing this day in and day out, he discussed how he became numb to it and desensitized over time. For example, he voiced that little things kept adding up and learned to ignore them and move on because he could not do anything about it. Consequently, he disclosed that his experiences from the military led him to have a "does not matter mentality."

Even though Tim knows this is a terrible mentality when dealing with people, he admitted that he still does it anyway because people do not bring it up. He described his attitude toward this mentality as, while it may be a negative mindset for him, he does not view it as a problem if it does not hurt anyone else. His "does not matter mentality" also contributes to how he approaches his purpose post-military. He described how he would be satisfied with having a job and going through his life without going to jail or hurting anyone.

William

William is witty, energetic, social, resourceful, peaceful, and enjoys deep conversations. When he entered the room, William was able to get everyone laughing while also asking deep, thoughtful questions to each person. With his energy, William had a lot of trouble sitting still and often stood up throughout the program to move around.

During William's military transition, he was proactive by attending college during his last duty station in the Navy and attending the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) twice. He reached out to a handful of people who transitioned out of the military, and they all told him that their biggest regret was not taking advantage of going to college while serving in the Navy. Thus, William completed his associate degree before leaving the military and began looking at schools throughout the United States. He mentioned using a service that helps service members

and veterans write motivational statements to enter college. Utilizing this service, he was accepted to three colleges in Southern California.

William flew from Maryland to California to take tours of each school. Seeing each school in person led William to narrow it down to two schools, but Greyhound University stood out to him because they were more responsive. In addition to answering his phone calls, Greyhound University offered more money and grants. Therefore, William figured Greyhound University would be the safest transition for him while exiting the military. While it appeared to be the safest transition economically, William quickly discovered the expensive cost of living in Southern California and realized that the post-9/11 GI Bill was prorated. For example, William's education benefits from the Veterans Affairs (VA) covered his school time, but anytime he was not in an academic semester, William would not receive money to help with his cost of living.

Being unfamiliar with Southern California, William contacted some friends he was stationed with in the military from California and those he met from the academic preparation course. They suggested he utilize a veteran service organization to help him find housing, medical, and dental. He was assigned a case manager who led him to a community of veterans with whom he currently resides in a veterans' community. To him, living in this veterans' community was a no-brainer because living there was cheaper than other apartments in the area, and he could focus on his education while saving money.

Although William relocated to Southern California successfully, he mentioned that his most significant issue was being an older student and fitting in. While his experiences in the military matured him more, he was also used to cussing and being around dark senses of humor. For example, he described that what veterans joke about with each other may seem off-putting to civilians. He mentioned how he had to learn to read the room or code-switch his communication

in specific ways. William described how code-switching made him more reserved or modest in communicating with others.

He believed he could connect with various people but mentioned that he needed to learn to connect with younger students. Furthermore, he mentioned that he did not want to hang out with younger students outside the classroom or at his campus job. He felt he needed to fit in with younger students at Greyhound University; however, he became friends with staff members. He described how he identified more with staff members because they were older and had many more life experiences than some of the younger students. William also explained how it was harder to converse with younger students because he needed to know where they were on their journey. Overall, William's feeling of not fitting in led him to avoid participating in the college experience as an undergraduate student, such as a fraternity, because he felt as though he already experienced that in the military.

Victor

Victor is quiet, detail-oriented, service-driven, and honorable, but he tends to hold on to his stress internally. When Victor engaged in conversation, he listened intently and could regurgitate everything that happened throughout the program. Because Victor often put others first, he rarely talked about himself until he felt more comfortable sharing his personal experiences.

Victor began his college journey upon separation from the military at a community college in Southern California. Victor felt excellent about his community experience because the VRC counselor provided him with a roadmap to get his associate degree in film production. He mentioned that he did not have to use his GI Bill at the beginning of school because he saved up so much money from the military. He also lived at his grandmother's house during this

timeframe and stated that she had high support for his education. Furthermore, he had a part-time job at a retail store, which helped him pay for any books or supplies that the Pell Grant did not provide. Victor applied himself for two and a half years in community college to obtain his degree of choice and missed the deadline to apply for Greyhound University upon graduating.

Victor missed the application deadline to apply for Greyhound University upon graduating from his associate's program, but he found another part-time job in the meantime until he was accepted into Greyhound the following year. During this period, Victor described this as the most challenging part of his transition because he had to find something to supplement his income to survive. Upon acceptance to Greyhound, he mentioned that the VRC director took care of his GI Bill payments but later learned that he missed out on grant money during his first year of schooling. Victor mentioned that he was not advised to submit his Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Victor also stated that he hoped to find other veterans attending Greyhound University so he could live with them. However, he did not have a way of connecting with other veterans on campus. Therefore, Victor ended up finding a master's student who was in his program and moved in with him.

Once Victor started his program, he found another student veteran, which made him feel more comfortable sharing old military and other related experiences. Initially, he felt nervous about joining Greyhound because he was much older than the younger students. He stated that putting yourself out there among younger students is rough because they might see you as intimidating. He thought others saw him as being more mature and consistently asked himself if he was going to fit in around younger college students.

For example, he stated that being among the younger generation is a weird transition. He had to be more socially aware and safe about his words because not everyone would take his

words correctly. He mentioned that he consistently apologizes to younger students for what he shares because he did not have to filter himself in the Marines. Victor explained how the younger students around him sometimes make jokes about him for it, but he brushes them off. He explained how naive they can be and how he can let it go because he has perspective from being broken down and built back up from the military.

Victor also described how his main focus right now is his education. He mentioned that failure is not an option; otherwise, he must pay the VA back for his educational benefits. Victor viewed his military experience as a positive because it taught him to put tasks before himself, so when it came to college, he felt like he could prove to others that he could do it. He also looked at school as another mission he needed to complete, so he applied his military training to adapt, improvise, and overcome. However, he stated that the most challenging part about navigating college is having the self-motivation to get up and go to class.

Victor stated that he no longer had someone guiding him or telling him what to do, so it became difficult for him to motivate himself to attend class. For example, sometimes, he decided to sleep in and skip class. He did not understand why he wanted to skip class, but he felt awful because his friends told him their tax dollars were paying him to go to college. Even though it was true, he thought it was funny, but at the same time, he did not want to let them down either. He described that if he does not stay busy, his mind takes over and fights with him. Thus, he tries to focus on why he is at Greyhound, which is to be a filmmaker. To further expound on what each participant was facing and feeling during their continued transition into Greyhound University, the final section discusses the current reality at Greyhound University's VRC.

Detailed Description of Greyhound University's Veteran Resource Center

The Veteran Resource Center (VRC) and the Director position were established in 2018 at Greyhound University to certify benefits of military-connected students and recruit more student veterans. The physical space that was acquired to house the Director is 231 square feet and was not located on the main campus. Since the inception of the VRC and the Director position, the two positions of authority who oversaw the VRC knew this location was unsuited to meet the needs of 113 military-connected students and stated that this location was temporary until a permanent home could be acquired. Furthermore, the two positions of authority also stated that they would hire more staff once the military-connected population increased to over 200. As of 2024, the physical structure and one Director position remained the same, while the military-connected population more than doubled in size to 231.

These 231 military-connected students were known because they were utilizing their VA educational benefits. However, there could be other military-connected students whom Greyhound University did not see in their registry because they may have exhausted their VA educational benefits, may not be aware of different VA educational benefits, or were not currently using them. Thus, the number of the invisible population could be higher than 231. The Director of the VRC mentioned that out of the 231 known military-connected students, 96 of them were student veterans, and the remainder were dependents of veterans. Of those 96 student veterans, 74 were male student veterans, and 22 were female student veterans. Regardless of the amount of military connected students at Greyhound University, the physical space of the VRC could not accommodate their needs.

Being along the external perimeter of Greyhound University, the VRC took over a pool house that was attached to an undergraduate dorm pool. The undergraduate dorm pool and the

VRC shared restrooms and a drinking fountain. Entering the VRC from the shared restrooms area led student veterans into a 231 square foot open space that housed the Director's desk on the right and a small table on the left. Between the small table and the Director's desk was the front door of the VRC. Entering through the front door showed a small extension along the Director's desk leading to a small galley-sized kitchenette.

With its small open space, there was no private space for pre-admission and VA education benefits advising, counseling, certifying benefits, meeting prospective or current military-connected students, having conversations about sensitive topics, or congregating with fellow peers in a lounge or study area. The Director of VRC and student veterans felt private space was needed to maintain confidentiality in each of these situations; otherwise, emotionally charged conversations could be disclosed to others without a need to know. Thus, student veterans did not have a physical space to congregate on campus due to lack of privacy and the size of the physical space. In addition to the lack of privacy and the size of the physical space, the scope of the Director's job did not account for the surplus of students nor their academic or non-academic needs.

The Director of VRC mainly focused on certifying benefits of military-connected students and recruiting student veterans from local community colleges because the position reports to the Office of Admissions. Therefore, the Director was ordered to travel to surrounding community colleges frequently to show a presence rather than focusing on the academic needs and non-academic needs of military-connected students already on campus. Thus, when military-connected students needed support with their benefits or other related issues, the Director may have not been present in the VRC, leaving the VRC locked and closed during normal business hours. Even if the Director was present in the VRC or via email, the Director of the VRC and

student veterans felt that one person could not fulfill the standard duty and responsibilities of VRCs, including a School Certifying Official (SCO), a veteran-specific academic advisor, and a veteran-specific mental health professional. Furthermore, with the Director's focus on certifying benefits and recruitment, student veteran recognition and a sense of community on campus were also not apparent.

In addition to not having a space to congregate, student veterans were also not recognized at Greyhound University. For example, Veterans Day was not stated on the academic calendar, and the last time veterans were honored at Greyhound University on any media platform was November 2020. Due to the lack of student veteran recognition at Greyhound University, the sense of community among student veterans was also affected on campus because student veterans were not aware of others who also shared their lived experience in the military.

When student veterans were not aware of other student veterans on campus, they could help each other. For example, Greyhound University's Student Veterans Club was dormant until summer 2023, as described below. Thus, when new student veterans attended Greyhound University and wanted to connect with other student veterans because of their inherent trust among each other, they did not have anyone to share experiences with or exchange best practices. Overall, the structures surrounding the VRC limited the potential of enhanced experience of military-connected students on campus.

Summary

This chapter described the rationale for this research study's chosen methodology and methods. The purpose of this study was to explore whether an adapted Peace Practice Alliance (PPA) program of the integral peace leadership model (McIntyre Miller & Green, 2015; McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022) could potentially help provide skills and behaviors that will

help combat the toxicity culture and aid in transition. To understand the experiences and perspectives of student veterans, an outcomes evaluation design with constructivist grounded theory methods is best suited for this study. Pairing them together could describe relationships observed in the data and how those relationships informed the effectiveness of behavior change, skill development, and knowledge gain through multiple realities. The study design is a program with various data collection points, including pre-interview and post-interview, journals before and during the program, and discussion notes during the program. Participants shared their experiences before, during, and after the program through these data collection points. The program is an adapted four-week hybrid program of Euphrates' PPA. Through constructivist grounded theory coding strategies, each participant's voice from this study was highlighted and acknowledged. As a student veteran and the researcher in this study, my positionality statement addressed my connection to student veterans to bring awareness to how my identities and experiences may have influenced the direction I took in this study. Furthermore, the detailed participant descriptions provide a deeper understanding of what each participant faced and felt while transitioning into higher education, intrapersonally, interpersonally, in the community, and structurally. Next, Chapter Four presents the themes gathered from the constructivist grounded theory analysis.

Chapter 4: Findings

This study revealed that formerly deployed post-9/11 enlisted student veterans found value in addressing preconceived psychological and social barriers individually and collectively in the Peace Practice Alliance (PPA) through the germination of community support for their continued transition into and navigation through college. The unanticipated formation of a strong community transformed the student veteran participants' mindsets toward themselves and others and created a sense of feeling more prepared to interact with others, resulting in collective action toward positive change for student veterans on campus. The constructivist grounded theory analysis revealed five overarching themes from the data, including (1) program learning, (2) the formation of a community for student veterans, (3) a transformed mindset about how they view themselves and others, (4) feeling more prepared to interact with others, and (5) conducting a collective action to seek just change for student veterans on campus. Within these themes was community support regarding matters of integral peace leadership in which student veterans put theory into practice.

To illuminate the germination of the findings above, it is essential to distinguish the difference between what was learned in the (course content) and how it was learned within the (course structure and utilization). What was learned throughout the PPA was new knowledge for each student veteran participant. It was learned through the deliberate practice of peace skills, which resulted in skill development and behavioral changes. Thus, considering these differences, I will first present the first theme: program learning, which will identify the overall knowledge gained from the participants and highlight how practicing peace skills resulted in skill development and behavioral changes. Next, I will present how it was learned through the course structure and utilization, which led to the second theme: the formation of a community for

student veterans. Pairing the outcomes of the overall knowledge gained from participants with the course structure and utilization led to the third and fourth themes: a transformed mindset about how they view themselves and others and feeling more prepared to interact with others. Bringing everything together created positive change beyond the PPA through the newly formed community in the fifth theme: conducting a collective action to seek just change for student veterans on campus.

Program Learning

The program learning discussed in the findings is the perceptions of how and why specific areas of integral peace leadership are related to student veteran participants. These perceptions highlight the knowledge gained, the skill development, and the behavioral changes they experienced in the PPA across all six modules. Among the six modules, participants shared the knowledge they gained related to the first four modules, which included personal peace, interpersonal peace, as well as community and global peace. While each student veteran participant found each of the four modules useful, the knowledge gained differed between the individuals.

There was variance among the participants because some had some previous education in some of the theories and practices presented in the PPA, and for others, such as Victor, "All this stuff is very new to me." Therefore, each veteran student participant had a different understanding of the course content when coming into the program, and all were left with new understandings afterward. As Victor specified, "I feel like we all came out of this program very positively and feel like we've gained a lot of knowledge from the overall experience." Below is an overview of the participants' experiences with the course content, including personal peace,

interpersonal peace, and community and global peace, to indicate the differences within the program learning.

Personal Peace

Student veteran participants shared that personal peace was the most beneficial part of the program because it taught them about peaceful self-awareness, finding peace within themselves first, and opportunities to practice personal peace collectively. Participants learned about personal peace from the program and committed to a personal peace practice for a month, including setting intentions, stating mantras and affirmations, or engaging in meditation or mindfulness. Each of the areas of learning the participants discussed will be outlined in the following subsections.

Increased Peaceful Self-Awareness

In discussing their learning around peaceful self-awareness, the student veteran participants articulated gaining more self-awareness, offering themselves more grace, observing their humanity, providing a sense of peace to make more informed decisions, and developing a sense of gratitude toward their thoughts. Victor discussed, "Personal peace practices were really nice because I was able to learn more about myself, what I like to do, and what keeps me at peace. Also, it gave me some grace and peace and be able to find myself again." Victor continued, "I think the value I got out of the PPA is bringing me down to a human level...because it helped me change my vocabulary." Echoing Victor's response, William described how "this education helps student veterans to see themselves more humanly and offer themselves grace, which I think is an excellent tool." Similarly, according to Jarell, "Inner peace gives you a sense of fulfillment within, a sense of happiness, a sense of peace...it helps you to see things clearly...helps you make better decisions... it's been beneficial." As a result of

learning personal peace practices and enjoying the benefits, Jarell also described different behavioral changes, saying, "It helped me reconcile with myself. It helped me to develop a sense of gratitude for my accomplishment. It helped me point out all those things I have and not focus on the things I don't have."

To provide these benefits, each student veteran participant discovered and mentioned different practices that helped them with their inner peace, including meditation, self-care, breathing activities, being in nature, journaling, setting intentions, drawing, watching the sunset, putting things into perspective, taking a break from social media, not taking anything personally, and not worrying about things you cannot control. Tim said, "I've developed a personalized approach to meditation that works well for me. Engaging in nighttime walks or reading provides profound relaxation and grounding. These activities have proven effective in maintaining my sense of self." Jarell described how he "learned in the PPA that every thought does not deserve a home and how to heal my self-inflicted wounds. I want to keep practicing the things that put my mind at peace—practicing art and practicing my breathing." As a result of practicing personal peace practices, Jarell mentioned how he "felt like my mind is clearer... it's like a gift that keeps on giving, that inner peace." Overall, participants gained more self-awareness, offered themselves more grace, observed their humanity, provided a sense of peace to make more informed decisions, and developed a sense of gratitude toward their thoughts.

Finding Peace in Yourself First

Throughout the personal peace section, student veteran participants learned that, as Chris stated, "If you want peace at all, you just have to find it within yourself first. You have to start with yourself." In consonance with Chris, William stated, "Peace does start with you." Student veteran participants resonated with utilizing personal peace as the starting point over the other

sections because, as Chris expressed, "If you gloss over personal peace and just focus on the other areas, you're missing key elements. It'd be like missing an upgrade early in the video game that makes the rest of the game more difficult."

Chris believed you need to start with personal peace among the other areas because "you have to deal with your thoughts, actions, feelings, and what happened to you. Not everybody else's shit...if you focus on yourself and get things the way you want them to be, that's going to transmit up the chain." Victor mentioned, "If we're not at peace with ourselves, then how are we supposed to spread peace?" According to Jarell, "You have to transcend past the things that are bothering you, the roadblocks you have, to help you rise above it." For example, Victor discussed, "If I ever feel like I'm bogged down by school, I can always go back to my peace practices and do what I like to do." Thus, participants began to see inner peace as the starting point, as Jarell indicated, "Focus on building myself up and sharpening my ax as I've learned in the personal peace section." Student veteran participants also shared that they learned that, as Tim mentioned, "Peace is hard and that it will always be hard, but I internalized it as it will always be worth it." Therefore, participants began to see peace as a lifelong journey, not a destination.

One of the strategies participants learned in personal peace was to apply cognitive behavioral therapy to bring peace to themselves and others. Jarell described this as "recogniz[ing] cognitive distortions in my thinking to prevent my negative thinking. Otherwise, negative thinking takes me away from my peace and having peace with others." Jarell specifically enjoyed this section of personal peace because he was able to "understand why negative thoughts are there, how they work, how they're going to affect me, and how to prevent them because I can do something about it." As a result of learning strategies to apply cognitive

behavioral therapy, Victor shared how he can "spot cognitive distortions when I'm doing it to myself can bring me peace, and I can think about them before I go into another conversation with someone and be able to respect people's space and peace." As per Jarell, "I can now scrutinize those negative thoughts and counter them with positive thoughts. So that's another way it will also help me through college." This idea was particularly salient, as all the learning in the course was conducted collectively.

Collective Personal Peace

Student veteran participants expressed how they enjoyed learning the personal peace practices collectively, in a circle, and sharing our progress as a community. Chris said, "I took a lot from personal peace leadership. That was like the first week when we used it as an opportunity to work on ourselves as part of a community and talk about that openly with each other." Furthermore, Victor commented about our class structure for sharing our personal peace journeys: "I thought the circle was beneficial."

Those who most resonated with personal peace were those student veteran participants who did not have any previous education or knowledge about personal peace. As Jarell discussed, "A lot of information that I was getting from the inner peace segments was information that I was unfamiliar with, whereas I've taken a lot of sociology classes about how to make an impact in the community." Jarell continued, "Before joining the program, I didn't have anything apart from going for a walk when things got too hot. I didn't have a way to think positively, to renew myself. I neglected all my needs." However, after the program, Jarell indicated, "The tools I have gained from this program are mindfulness practices to help me recognize and keep negative thoughts out." As a result of gaining new peace skills, participants

without prior knowledge or education about personal peace practices resonated the most with the program learning.

All but one student veteran participant stated that they value personal peace the most among other sections of the program learning. William, the one participant whose learning was more of a refresher, felt that his prior self-education on mindfulness, meditation, yoga, and other personal peace practices before the PPA had already prepared him to be well-equipped in this area. While he did not value the personal peace learning the most, William still saw the value of the personal peace section because it reminded him to be more mindful, present in class, extend grace to himself, and set daily intentions. Despite differences in learning experience around personal peace, every student veteran observed the value of this section and gained new knowledge. Similarly, participants gained new knowledge in the following area of the curriculum: interpersonal peace.

Interpersonal Peace

Student veteran participants explained how interpersonal peace was beneficial because it taught them about peaceful communication. Participants learned about interpersonal peace from the course, including engaging in conflict transformation practices with others, such as nonviolent communication, listening, dialogue, storytelling, vulnerability, and reconciliation. Moreover, participants practiced interpersonal peace skills throughout the program in a circle. Each of the areas of learning the participants discussed will be outlined in the following subsection.

Increased Peaceful Communication

In discussing their learning around communication, the student veteran participants highlighted gaining more peaceful communication skills through nonviolent communication,

expressed the value of pausing and reflecting on garnering an appropriate response, and provided tools to create peaceful body language through soft eyes. William explained, "Nonviolent communication simply suggests that we state what we see as the facts, apply how it makes us feel, and ask for a course of action to allow us to live in harmony with one another." Student veteran participants mentioned nonviolent communication was the most useful out of all the conflict transformation practices in interpersonal peace because, as William expressed, "It's all about listening and taking time to pause and think about what needs are not being met, but also about being able to be kind to yourself with your communication." William further shared why participants resonated with nonviolent communication most: "It requires us to respond and not react, which is not always natural for us." Consequently, as Chris mentioned, they learned, "Nonviolent communication is always something I have to be conscientious towards." For William, "Nonviolent communication has changed how I communicate with myself and others."

All student veteran participants, except one, learned nonviolent communication for the first time in the PPA. Although William was already familiar with nonviolent communication, he still stated, "One of the greatest things that I feel like we talked about here, which I've heard before, but not as in-depth as we went into here, was nonviolent communication." Overall, student veteran participants valued nonviolent communication the most among other interpersonal peace practices and gained new knowledge about the framework.

One of the interpersonal peace practices the participants mentioned was the importance of pausing and reflecting through observation before engaging in a conflict. As per William, "Making an observation requires us to pause and reflect rather than answer a conflict with a quick-tempered reaction, which largely guarantees an equal and opposite reaction that no one will be pleased with." Tim stated, "After all, one can attract more easily with honey than with

vinegar. Violence only begets more violence, which is the exact opposite of what we want to do." Thus, participants began to be more observant and saw the value in pausing and reflecting to garner an appropriate response to the situation. Victor said, "It taught me to be kinder and more respectful. Being able to be more observant of people's situations. Being able to ask the right type of questions, open-ended questions."

Another interpersonal peace practice that the participants discussed was transitioning from hard to soft eyes to become more approachable around others. They learned that hard eyes are used for inspection, analysis, and judgment, whereas soft eyes are intended for listening, empathizing, and extending grace. To practice this concept, student veteran participants applied soft eyes to observe their partner's feelings and unmet needs during a listening activity. Chris resonated with "transitioning from having hard eyes to soft eyes" because he mentioned that "it will help me be more friendly and approachable." Victor described this activity as "someone listening to me." The final sections of the course content, community and global peace, included some practical applications that became a reality after the PPA.

Community and Global Peace

Student veteran participants described how community and global peace were also helpful parts of the program because it provided them with learning about interconnectedness, opportunities to put system thinking into action, and learning about their sense of purpose. Participants put community and global peace theories into action through asset-based community development practices combined with systems thinking. The participants highlighted each of the areas of learning, which will be outlined in the subsequent subsections.

Increased Sense of Interconnectedness

In discussing their learning around interconnectedness in the community section, the student veteran participants stated that they were gaining an understanding of interconnectedness, which motivated them to get involved in their community. Tim said, "We learned in the community section that we're all interconnected, and if we deny that, we're just doing a disservice to ourselves." Moreover, William mentioned, "The work doesn't end with you. It has to end with the community. It has to lead to something bigger than yourself." Thus, as William described, participants began to see the value in "taking an active role within their community to help people within our community that need help."

During the community section of the PPA, student veteran participants turned a class exercise into reality at Greyhound University. As Victor explained, "We, as veterans, came up with ideas about an ideal VRC [Veterans Resource Center], came up with what's wrong with the current VRC, how these areas all connect, how we get veterans involved, and how we can fix it through a program." Utilizing their voices through a grassroots effort, they collaborated with key stakeholders, including the Director of the VRC and a Veterans Affairs (VA) work-study student, to discuss their perspectives and understand the challenges they are encountering. Holding a space to discuss the challenges from a systemic perspective created many opportunities for student veteran participants to get involved at Greyhound.

Systems Thinking into Action

In the global peace section, student veteran participants mentioned how they enjoyed putting systems thinking into action because they could find areas where they could make a difference. As Chris described, "Building the ideal VRC through systems thinking is what I enjoyed doing. I like finding areas where I can make a difference. Somebody has to start it."

Chris further discussed that "systems thinking...is something you can just extrapolate to everything. I love the feeling of methodically working through something, but with a level of freedom that encourages creativity." As a result of building the ideal VRC through systems thinking, participants found the power within themselves to find areas where they could make a positive difference.

Increased Sense of Purpose

Through the outcomes of implementing community and global peace sections, the student veteran participants discussed ways they increased their sense of purpose. For example, William resonated with the community and global peace practices because he saw how much harm people can produce to themselves or others, which drove his passion to create a healthy community. William mentioned, "My purpose in life is to think about how we can do this to each other before I speak to someone negatively, reminding me of the person's humanity. I want to elevate the community." Chris stated, "My purpose is to create a sense of belonging for student veterans at Greyhound. I can feel myself already moving in that direction, focusing and thinking more about how I will get involved in more community and global peace practices." Although the community and global peace sections did not resonate with everyone the most, they learned the power within themselves to get involved with something greater than themselves to make a positive difference in others and that they could not have done it without their newly formed community of student veterans.

Overview of Program Learning

Each student veteran participant left with new knowledge gained, behavioral changes, and skill development in their program learning. They obtained greater personal peace, interpersonal peace, self-awareness, cultural fluency, systemic awareness, a better sense of

purpose, and a more positive impact on their community peacebuilding practice. Victor described his experience in the program as "an experience that stays with me so I can look back on and be able to think about a time where I felt most peaceful." Regardless of student veteran participants' understanding of the overall body of knowledge, the course structure and utilization of the course content elevated the knowledge gained by practicing peace skills with in-person community support. Chris stated, "I like showing up every day because there's more continuity to the experience. The overall trajectory would be much flatter regarding the camaraderie experience, whereas I felt like ours just went much steeper." Thus, the second theme, the formation of a community for student veterans, will further expound on how the course structure and utilization of the PPA's course content provided skill development and behavioral changes.

Formation of a Community for Student Veterans

As indicated in their detailed descriptions in Chapter 3, the student veteran participants described challenges that prevented them from interacting with civilians on campus at Greyhound University and how the PPA addressed these challenges. These challenges included preconceived psychological barriers, such as feeling misunderstood or isolated, and social barriers, such as being a non-traditional student and having difficulty relating to traditional students. The student veterans thought that the PPA helped them address these challenges as they formed a community with others who had all experienced these same trials.

To understand how and why the PPA addressed these socialization challenges through the formation of a community for transitioning into and navigating through college, three salient aspects emerged through student veteran participant experiences. First, being around those who understood them provided student veteran participants a space to feel comfortable quickly, speak authentically about their experiences, and trauma bond, and create a support system in which to

be more open with each other. Through these experiences, student veteran participants described the importance of, second, reciprocating vulnerability as the catalyst for cultivating more profound levels of trust, expressing things never shared with others, and releasing pent-up stress. Thus, going below the surface through conversation led student veteran participants to, third, have a common respect for each other without the negative sides of the military by being supportive of each other in a judgment-free zone, implementing peace leadership theory into practice through conversation, humanizing their experience, and making new friends. This first section explores these challenges to illuminate the PPA community space's meaningful impact on the participants.

Challenges that Prevented Interacting with Civilians

As previewed in the detailed descriptions in Chapter 3, student veteran participants discussed challenges that prevented them from interacting with civilians. As Chris described: "A lot of what I still experience, that I attribute to being a veteran and being out of the military for almost seven years, is kind of like the shut-in, on my own, not very interactive, or not very engaging with people who aren't veterans." In other words, a sense of isolation from non-veterans. This isolation defines many challenges preventing student veterans from interacting with civilians. These challenges, including preconceived psychological and social barriers, will be discussed below.

Preconceived Psychological Barriers

Preconceived psychological barriers consisted of how student veteran participants perceived themselves around civilians and how they considered civilians perceiving them. Student veteran participants perceive themselves around civilians as feeling misunderstood,

considering civilians to perceive them as Chris mentioned, "The angry veteran everybody's scared of."

Feeling misunderstood connected with how student veteran participants perceived themselves around civilians, which could lead toward social isolation. As Jarell discussed: "Trying to navigate this whole new environment with people who don't understand you...makes you jaded, makes you feel like you don't belong, makes you feel negative feelings you don't want to feel, and they just put you down in general." Tim said, "Oh, this is nothing compared to the military. I'll push through it. And it was a lot more difficult than I expected, especially when you don't know anyone, and you don't talk to anyone." These perceptions are also influenced by how student veteran participants considered civilians' perceptions of them.

Student veteran participants believed that civilians perceived them negatively, leading them to social isolation. As Jarell explained, "They just think you're negative. They can't understand or get it, making them push you away or stay away from you. That makes you feel isolated...And it's not good for you." Feeling misunderstood or isolated among civilians also connects with the social barriers student veteran participants experience when transitioning into and navigating campus.

Social Barriers

Social barriers consist of how student veteran participants noticed distinct differences between themselves and others around them in college. Distinct differences included being a non-traditional student and having difficulty relating to traditional students. As Chris discussed, "I sit in class...look to my left and look to my right...And as a 34-year-old sitting next to 19- and 20-year-olds, you notice ways of their behavior that you can't believe."

Being a non-traditional student is the most prominent social barrier that is heightened for student veteran participants. Older students, in particular, find it difficult to relate with younger students. Jarell explained, "I'm different from the community I'm in right now. 30-something, right? Surrounded by kids. A veteran experiences what most people on campus will not be aware of. It is not even on their radar." For example, Victor explained, "We've all already gone through big life experiences: divorce, marriage, and losing friends." These distinct differences created social barriers for student veteran participants to refrain from engaging with traditional students.

Coming into social situations as a non-traditional student and having difficulty relating to traditional students also inhibits veteran student participants' interpersonal communication with conventional students. As Chris mentioned, "You have to filter what you're saying and doing around traditional students." Victor also said, "I have to be safe about what I say around traditional students." Overall, before the PPA, participants experienced preconceived psychological and social barriers that prevented them from interacting with traditional students because they felt misunderstood and alone in their lived experience from the military, which led them to filter their conversations. However, as Chris stated, "Being in this space around other people that have that shared common experience, you don't have to have that filter." The student veteran participants were able to connect through these shared experiences and were able to discuss how the PPA helped them to address these challenges by forming a community together.

The Formation of a Community

The PPA addressed these challenges by forming a community or a space where the student veterans could come together with a common experience for social support. Student veteran participants emoted and shared that the community they formed in ways they had not experienced on campus in their past interactions with civilians. Chris mentioned, "I think what

we've done is work to create a community where there is none." Jarell said, "It just felt like a warm, welcoming community. The whole time, I had that support that I never had before...and I feel like that's what the PPA did for me. It gave me a support system." In consonance with Jarell, Tim shared, "I wish I had this when I first started... it's just having that support because I didn't know anyone coming here to Greyhound."

While their past experiences before the program represented preconceived psychological and social barriers, student veterans who participated in the PPA expressed how it evolved into a community for them during and after the program that was void of the preconceived psychological and social barriers previously described. As Victor said:

It was perfect for our community as veterans to come together...We bonded. We trauma-bonded. We went through everything together. We supported one another. It helped us ensure that we didn't feel alone, were present, and felt like we were important here at Greyhound.

To understand how and why the PPA addressed these socialization challenges by forming a community for transitioning into and navigating through college, three salient aspects emerged through student-veteran participant experiences, including being around those who understood them, reciprocating vulnerability, and having a common respect for each other. Thus, the initial step that student veteran participants perceived to alleviate the preconceived psychological and social barriers was being around those who understood them.

Being Around Those Who Understood Them

Student veteran participants discussed the importance of how being around those who understood them played in their experience of forming a community. Jarell described, "It's just being around those who can understand you because, in the PPA, everybody had similar

experiences in the military." Being socialized in the military creates a forging relationship between service members. As Chris described, "It's formative no matter what you say. It's like an all-consuming experience for several years."

For example, Tim mentioned, "We were all treated like shit from time to time, from someone yelling at us to being the lowest in the chain of command as enlisted. We all know what that was like." Thus, as Jarell discussed, "No matter what branch you're coming from, you're going through similar stuff, so we were able to show compassion. There's an understanding between us, and that form of community is uplifting." Yet, as Tim shared, "If they were civilians, I think I would have a harder time connecting. But since we did have our shared experiences, I was like, ah, shit, this could have easily been me."

As Chris described, the shared experiences and connections among student veteran participants also led them to "A place where we just felt comfortable quickly. Not necessarily feel the need to choose your words carefully, as you would if you were around people you didn't know or trust." Tim attributed this level of comfort as a way that provided "safety of sharing and listening," and he realized how much he actually "gave a shit about everyone." Therefore, participants felt comfortable enough not to have to choose their words carefully as they experienced with traditional students before the program.

Speaking authentically to everyone's experience, Tim opened the PPA with a question everyone could relate to, "What was your worst day in the military?" For all, their experiences were notable when sharing their worst day in the military due to, as Victor stated, "the trauma bonding amongst everyone." Moreover, Tim described why the participant's trauma bonded: "shit rolls downhill, and we all felt it. We were all on the bottom. Yeah, experiences like that made me feel more, I suppose you could say, comfortable around other people because they

know what shit is like." As a result of trauma bonding, participants grew more comfortable around each other.

Chris said, "This is even more comfortable than a college classroom because I know everybody here is a veteran, which means they're probably a little older, too." The psychological safety in the room also led Tim to feel comfortable enough to remove his face mask periodically during the first day of the PPA. By the second day of the PPA, he removed his face mask entirely and kept it off the rest of the program. Aside from removing his face mask completely, when Tim was listening to Jarell's story about his life, home situation, family, and kids, he acknowledged, "That could have easily been me. I'm not going to lie; I was pretty close a couple of times to being in that situation. That made me want to sit up and listen. I was like, I want to hear you. Please keep going."

As Jarell mentioned, being around those who understood them also "created a support system to uplift and build you up instead of judging you. I feel like that's what the PPA did for me." Further, he explained why being around those who understood them is essential. Jarell said, "When someone is going through the worst, civilians may not understand how to cope, but because student veterans come from the same experience and understand why they're going through it, they might have found different ways to cope." As a result of being around those who understood them, participants cultivated a support system.

In addition to Jarell, Tim also discussed, "The value the PPA can provide student veterans is a support system of like-minded people with different interests or skills. You know who to go to and ask about different areas because you've been around them." Furthermore, Tim also mentioned how the PPA can benefit most student veterans through: "the connection and support from a group who understands them and helps you talk about different things or being

more vulnerable, especially when they're also willing to share and help everyone." Consequently, being around those who understood them through the formation of a student veteran community provided participants with a space to feel comfortable quickly, speak authentically about their experience and trauma bond, and create a support system to be more open with each other. Being more open with each other through reciprocating vulnerability further alleviated preconceived psychological and social barriers for student veteran participants.

Reciprocating Vulnerability

Student veteran participants also explained the importance of how reciprocating vulnerability played in their experience of forming a community. Reciprocating vulnerability is related to being around others who understand you. Jarell exclaimed, "Reciprocating vulnerability helped us build that connection and support amongst each other and helped us get through the curriculum." Further, he explained how vulnerability was reciprocated and the effects of this practice. Jarell said, "We could lean into these different moments as they popped up. Whether it deviated from the curriculum, it continued to build that trust and support. The most valuable part of this process is building those connections." Thus, being flexible during these moments of vulnerability organically cultivated deeper levels of trust and support.

As the program continued, gradually reciprocating vulnerability led to many breakthroughs as all student veteran participants shared more information about themselves. William stated, "When we come together as a collective to heal and support one another, we are consciously giving one another the acceptance to be brave in space and share their innermost self, flaws, and all." Being more open to sharing vulnerabilities led everyone to process and share different traumas or adversities faced before, during, or after the military together as a

community. For example, Victor described his traumas and adversities while transitioning into and navigating through Greyhound and how it changed him. He said:

I struggled a bit when I was not even in school, trying to find my way at Greyhound. I was dealing with a lot of internal stuff from my past traumas, including the passing of my grandfather, my relationship, and losing a bunch of money through a scam. It really affected me and made me a different person.

In addition to the losses Victor experienced transitioning into and navigating through Greyhound, reciprocating vulnerability enabled participants to feel comfortable talking about the following topics: growing up in poverty, being neglected, being adopted, being a childhood soldier, killing another human being(s); being emotionally, physically, and verbally abused; dealing with an unstable parent; dealing with an absent parent; experiencing the death of comrades, family members, and friends; conducting Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on an infant; experiencing toxic leadership and hostile work environments; experiencing mental health issues such as suicidal ideations, depression, and anxiety; experiencing divorce; experiencing non-judicial punishment; experiencing financial instability; and experiencing toxic relationships. The topics above surfaced in many forms, whether waiting on other student veteran participants to start the program, during check-in questions, during activities, during debrief questions, during discussion questions, during circle questions, during breaks, or after class.

While the depths of sharing varied among participants along with the topics, some student veteran participants shared things they would rather not share with people who would help understanding. As Tim discussed, "These are just things that I'd rather never talk about. I've told you guys things I've never told my family, that I will never tell my family. How would they

understand?" Therefore, reciprocating vulnerability enabled participants to feel comfortable enough to share things never mentioned.

The importance of reciprocating vulnerability appeared particularly salient for student veteran participants because they were not used to having a group of people help each other process their emotions or vulnerabilities. For example, Jarell shared, "We don't talk about the things that we need to do...the military has taught us that we aren't meant to be vulnerable...and if we prevent ourselves from being vulnerable, that's going to build up resentment and pressure." Consequently, as Tim expressed, "I think that most student veterans have this idea that I could just get through it myself, and I think that is wrong or at least making life harder on yourself than it needs to be." Thus, reciprocating vulnerability through forming a community for student veterans is the catalyst for cultivating more profound levels of trust, expressing things never shared with others, and releasing pent-up stress. Student veteran participants attributed reciprocating vulnerability to having a common respect for each other because the PPA created a judgment-free zone.

Having a Common Respect for Each Other

Student veteran participants also described the importance of having a common respect for each other in their experience of forming a community. Having a common respect for each other is interrelated to being around others who understand you and modeling vulnerability. Chris mentioned, "Everything is respected. It represented the military differently. You're relying on each other for something you can't get through on your own...but with none of the negative sides."

Further, he explained how having a common respect for each other was demonstrated: "It's a judgment-free zone like you are who you are, and we're meeting you where you're at." Tim

described the shared respect for everyone as "the best way I can say is knowing that someone has my back," whereas Victor described it as "we got each other." Thus, having a common respect for each other is also interrelated to being around others who understand you because participants supported each other in a judgment-free zone.

Creating mutual respect also led our community to put the peace practices into practice. For example, Victor described how we applied peace practices in our communication. Victor said, "We challenged each other respectfully, asked the right questions, listened attentively, and I feel like we were putting peace practice into practice. We're all using nonviolent communication." As William mentioned, modeling these practices for each other led student veteran participants to see the value of practicing peace practices. He said, "I think that what we were learning, we saw its use or utility. We were able to apply that in our conversations. And yeah, things got deep." Throughout the PPA, student veteran participants had a lot of conversations with Jarell about how he views his childhood and how he is with his kids. During these moments, Chris acknowledged how Jarell "never took anything personally, and I respect him greatly." As a result of sustaining mutual respect, participants applied peace practices to conversations.

Having a common respect for each other also created a buy-in. A couple of student veteran participants provided examples of buy-in and how it led the program to be successful. For instance, William shared, "I think everyone bought into it early. I think the buy-in helped us be successful. And that drove a lot of conversation there." Victor provided another example of the group's buy-in and how he observed everyone's growth from the experience: "We all showed up, we were all present, whatever we were dealing with, we talked about it. Everyone did have a

lot of growth from it." Consequently, participants experienced behavioral changes and skill development because they were bought into the process.

In addition to buy-in, having a common respect for each other also included confidentiality. Student veteran participants knew that things they mentioned in the PPA would not be adversely used against them. For example, Victor stated, "I can talk about whatever's going on, I can be a human being, I can bring myself down to earth, and not carry the weight of the world on me." Thus, participants felt safe to open up and humanize their experience.

Having common respect for each other gave student veteran participants the means to be vulnerable and receptive in ways they would not have before the program. Consequently, the PPA experience led the student veteran participants to create a new friend group on campus. As Chris described, "I've always wanted friends on campus, and now to have that makes me feel better about going to school. It showed me this underlying desire that maybe all veterans want a veteran community and don't want to be isolated." Therefore, going below the surface through conversation led participants to have common respect for each other without the adverse side effects of the military by being supportive of each other in a judgment-free zone, implementing peace leadership theory into practice through conversations, humanizing their experience, and making new friends.

As Victor described, forming a community for student veterans "could be used as a tool for bringing back some positivity into the veteran community." Chris said, "The PPA showed me this underlying desire...which is we want that veteran community. Like we don't want to be isolated, it comes together organically if you get us talking, joking, and laughing in a room." Further, Chris exclaimed, "I have this vision where this is an orientation or when you first come to the school, and this is something that you go through, and then meeting more people in that

community." Moreover, the formation of a community for student veterans appeared in a quote shared by Jarell's experience with the PPA.

I learned much about others, bonded, and created a new community I can use going forward. This community has given me the space needed to contemplate the pressures I place on myself and how using cognitive distortions only digs me into a deeper hole. So, it's been really nice being in the program from beginning to end.

Pairing the outcomes of the overall knowledge gained from participants with the formation of a community for student veterans led to the third and fourth themes: a transformed mindset about how they see themselves and others and feeling more prepared to interact with others.

A Transformed Mindset About How Student Veterans See Themselves and Others

Student veteran participants described how the PPA shifted their mindset for their lives and their interactions in college. As William explained, "I think the program could help veterans to shift their mindset for life...I think it would help them shift their mindset about how they see themselves and the people around them, and being able to give themselves grace." William continued, "I do think that the PPA would help with college as well." When student veteran participants learned about peace practices, they uncovered learned behaviors that they intentionally changed or want to change, as Chris mentioned, "by being peaceful with themselves and others." Chris further discussed that when we are peace with ourselves and others "we consciously permit others to be peaceful with themselves and us." As per William, "The only thing we can control is our actions. The only change is the one we make within ourselves. Thus, we can only make change by being the change we want to see in the world." In this section, participants discussed behaviors they changed during the PPA and behaviors they want to change moving forward.

Behaviors Changed During the PPA

In uncovering their learned behaviors, the student veteran participants voiced behaviors they changed during the PPA, including caring more about others and being more empathetic. For example, Tim explained that when Jarell shared his experiences before, during, and after the military, "I wanted to feel this man's pain, and I wanted to hear him out. I wanted to listen. I learned that I care more than I initially thought about people, which surprised me the most." As a result of supporting each other, Jarell expressed how it "helped me to put things into perspective and help me formulate goals that I need to complete." Chris observed Jarell shifting his perspective toward being more empathetic: "He was okay with not being empathetic on the first day. And by the end of the first week, he saw the need to be that way a little bit more now." Consequently, participants intentionally changed their behavior to be more caring and empathetic.

Behaviors Student Veterans Want to Change Moving Forward

In uncovering their learned behaviors, student veteran participants acknowledged behaviors they want to change moving forward, including incorporating nonviolent communication, taking time to pause, wanting to be more empathetic, understanding, and patient, finding more ways to build connections, and celebrating their accomplishments. As Chris mentioned, "I'm trying to undo 30 years of thinking everybody should be quick with their words because there's too many pussies out there that need to be dealt with harshly in order to build thick skin." Furthermore, Chris explained, "That was my attitude for a very long time, and I want to change my mindset and establish a framework that includes nonviolent communication...so I can limit my analysis or judgment." Like Chris, William revealed, "Having hard conversations has always been difficult because I have already determined the

outcome in my head. Taking time to pause has been something I have been working on, and it has saved me from arguments." Thus, participants articulated how they wanted to change their perspective from jumping to conclusions with others toward pausing by implementing nonviolent communication.

Tim said, "I'm looking to be more empathetic than sympathetic because sympathy helps nobody." Tim also stated, "Having the ability to consider alternative perspectives has always been challenging. I recognize this kind of thinking hinders meaningful conversations and personal growth. Therefore, I want to devote more effort to overcoming this mindset and becoming more open-minded."

In addition to Tim, Jarell acknowledged, "I want to be more patient, more understanding, extend grace towards others and not go automatically to something that would drive anger. It also helps build connections because you're not getting agitated from certain things." Similarly, Chris stated, "Getting rid of the mindset that I'm constantly judging how I stack up against everybody is a high priority. My goal is to stop seeing people as I must compete with them daily to start finding ways to make connections instead." According to Jarell, "Instead of thinking this is just happening to me, and I have no choice, I have agency to do something about it. I hope to switch from feeling like a failure to recognizing and celebrating my accomplishments." Thus, participants gained perspective toward becoming more empathetic, understanding, and patient, finding ways to build connections, and celebrating their accomplishments. Overall, how student veteran participants transformed their mindset about seeing themselves and others is also related to the next theme gathered from the research analysis: feeling more prepared to interact with others.

Feeling More Prepared to Interact with Others

Student veteran participants expressed how the peace practices from the PPA led them to feel more prepared to interact with others outside of the PPA. They identified three communities they felt more ready to engage with, or as Chris mentioned, "I'm going to be engaging more with the student veteran community, traditional student community, and just the greater community." The following subsections will outline each of these communities the participants discussed.

Student Veteran Community

In discussing their preparedness to interact with the student veteran community, the participants voiced being more prepared to come from a place of understanding to help nurture connections and support them with their goals. Tim described, "My main focus for building connections and cultivating relationships lies in connecting with fellow student veterans. I intend to nurture these connections by offering a receptive ear for them to share their thoughts and experiences." Furthermore, Victor expressed, "I want to be involved more in the student veteran community and keep myself busy with projects from the VRC. I know now that we will achieve our goals and dreams with support." Thus, participants felt more prepared to come from a place of understanding to help nurture connections with fellow student veterans and support them with their goals. Chris described, "I believe the best way to support a student veteran is by having a group like our PPA group who holds each other accountable and understands that we are all trying our best."

Traditional Student Community

In discussing their preparedness to interact with the traditional student community, the student veteran participants articulated being more prepared to rationalize their experience to interact with traditional students, to reframe their perspective to collaborate with them, and to

spread peace to traditional students. William expressed, "Going through this course would prepare me to interact with traditional students...because I think it would have given me the confidence I needed and would help me rationalize what this experience will look like before stepping onto a college campus." While William shared how the PPA would have prepared him when first coming to college with traditional students, Victor expressed how the PPA helped him moving forward: "I feel like I'll be able to know how to communicate with traditional students very effectively." Consequently, participants raised their confidence to rationalize their experience to prepare to interact with traditional students.

Chris also acknowledged, "The PPA puts me in a frame of mind where I feel more comfortable engaging on campus with traditional students. I've reframed this rather than existing in our worlds, like maybe merging to expand our understanding." Furthermore, Chris provided an example of collaborating with traditional students: "I don't have to present myself as I know what I'm talking about all the time. I can admit I'm struggling too. Let's grab a coffee and work through this quickly so we both understand it better." Therefore, participants know how to reframe their perspective of being self-reliant to humbling themselves about their struggles to humanize their experience with traditional students to collaborate with them. Feeling more prepared to interact with others also provided student veteran participants with the opportunity to, as Victor expressed, "spread messages in a very peaceful manner to my familia in the Latinx Club. I feel like I will be able to talk to people, listen to them, and hear them." Thus, participants know how to be at peace with themselves to spread peace to traditional students.

Greater Community

In discussing their preparedness to interact with the greater community, the student veteran participants described being more prepared to be there for their friends by lending an ear

and being a voice of reason. Victor expressed, "Being able to be there for my friends if they ever need anything from me. Be that an ear, a voice of reason, and I feel I could get them out of that funk." Thus, participants felt more prepared to be for their friends by lending an ear and being a voice of reason.

Feeling more prepared to interact with others is also related to the previous themes, the formation of a community for student veterans and a transformed mindset about how they view themselves and others. First, the unanticipated formation of the community during and after the program and feeling more prepared to interact with traditional students could help or helped student veteran participants feel like they could remove preconceived psychological and social barriers. Second, both a transformed mindset about how they see themselves and others and a feeling more prepared to interact with others helped, as Victor discussed, "I feel like the biggest thing out of the peace practice, being able to help ourselves, and once we're able to help ourselves and become at peace with ourselves, we're able to help our friends, and then the community." Feeling more prepared to interact with others and the three previous themes created a positive change beyond the PPA through the newly formed community in the fifth theme: conducting a collective action to seek just change for student veterans on campus.

Conducting a Collective Action to Seek Just Change for Student Veterans

As aforementioned, the student veteran participants turned a PPA assignment into a collective action after the program, further solidified their relationships. The collective action to seek just change for student veterans on campus provided participants a platform to find their voice because they used the space from the PPA to brainstorm the challenges student veterans were facing and vocalize solutions to address these challenges through a network of like-minded folks to seek equity and justice for student veterans on campus. Student veteran participants

mentioned two overarching challenges that prevent student veteran engagement: a sense of community for student veterans and student veteran recognition. They also disclosed solutions to overcome these obstacles, including a Student Veterans Club, a well-sized space for student veterans and military-connected students marketing, and veteran-specific support services. Although plenty of work still needs to be done, some participants communicated through key stakeholders, such as the University administration and Student Veterans of America (SVA) headquarters on and off campus and through different media platforms, to address the challenges mentioned above through sustainable solutions and a workaround. This last section explores the participants' steps to vocalize and address these challenges.

Platform to Find Their Voice

After student veteran participants completed the PPA, they found their platform to find their voice because the assignment from PPA provided them a space to name the challenges student veterans were facing. The assignment from the PPA also provided them to vocalize solutions to address these challenges with a network of like-minded folks to seek equity and justice for student veterans on campus. Applying what they had learned from the community and global peace sections, student veteran participants voiced the need to change a deficient system. According to Victor, "Being a leader is to make a change to a community you belong to. We all reached that breaking point, and we need to change a system that is not working to achieve a better society." Consequently, participants set priorities to vocalize their community's challenges on campus and address them with sustainable solutions and a workaround. As Jarell mentioned, "We used a bottom-up approach instead of a top-down one, which highlights building trust and allowing others to be the arbiters of their metamorphosis." Following the challenges section, the solutions section will be discussed.

Challenges

Looking at the challenges from a systemic perspective, student veteran participants discovered two overarching themes interconnected with the lack of student veteran engagement on campus, including a sense of community for student veterans and student veteran recognition. Participants found these overarching themes through the asset mapping activity conducted in the PPA. They connected these overarching themes with many issues they experienced on campus or suspected other student veterans were facing. Each of the challenges discussed will be outlined in the subsequent subsections.

A Sense of Community. In discussing a sense of community for student veterans, participants articulated the need for a physical space to congregate with those who understand you and provide resources to help student veterans succeed. As Jarell described, "My community college had a veteran center that was always filled with veterans to shoot the shit and just let off some stress. You had a place where you could go to relate, but not at Greyhound." Victor discussed, "There should be a safe space for us to congregate, shoot the shit or collaborate, learn what everyone's doing, and be able to have the resources there to help us succeed at Greyhound." Participants discovered this need through their experience in the PPA. Tim explained, "The value the PPA can provide student veterans is a support system of like-minded people with different interests or skills. You know who to go to and ask about different areas because you've been around them." Consequently, participants prioritized obtaining a physical safe space to congregate and provide resources to help student veterans succeed.

Student Veteran Recognition. Student veteran participants mentioned the need for student veteran recognition because most participants felt recognized at their previous community colleges. Jarell exclaimed, "At my community college, they reward you for your

hard work through scholarships. Once a year, they held a scholarship symposium and honored those who received it." Jarell continued, "You received help, aid, and recognition. You were able to celebrate with your family and friends. At Greyhound, it does not seem like they care about creating that atmosphere." Chris said, "My community college connected me to an academic preparation program at an elite, private four-year University and recognized me for transferring there with a high GPA." Consequently, participants created their second priority for student veteran recognition to create an atmosphere where people care about you and your accomplishments. Understanding why the sense of community for student veterans and student veteran recognition was non-existent at Greyhound University led participants to vocalize solutions to address these challenges.

Solutions

Student veteran participants imagined solutions to overcome these obstacles through a network of like-minded folks seeking equity and justice for student veterans on campus, including a Student Veterans Club, a well-sized space for veterans and military-connected students, marketing, and veteran-specific support services. Participants discovered these solutions through an ideal VRC activity in the PPA and learned to leverage their networks to create a collective change. Thus, following the ideal VRC activity and after student veteran participants graduated from the PPA, some participants communicated with key stakeholders on and off campus and through different media platforms to address the solutions. Although participants felt at the time of writing that there was still plenty of work to be done, some participants were able to solidify sustainable solutions and a temporary Student Veterans Lounge in the meantime. Each of the solutions discussed will be outlined in the subsequent subsections.

Student Veterans Club. Collaborating with like-minded folks in their network, one student veteran participant coordinated with the VA work-study student worker to resurrect the Student Veterans Club on campus. They both conducted high-level discussions with key stakeholders, such as the University administration and Student Veterans of America (SVA) headquarters, to address the sense of community challenge by shifting the SVA chapter from inactive to active. Following its registration with the student organizations on campus and the SVA headquarters, they conducted elections for executive committee positions. Three of the five PPA participants were voted by their peers to become executive members of the resurrected Student Veterans Club. Thus, student veteran participants felt empowered to make a just change.

Well-sized Space for Student Veterans and Military-Connected Students.

Connecting with like-minded folks in their network, three student veteran participants organized high-level discussions with institution stakeholders, such as University administration, faculty, and staff, to address the need for a well-sized space for student veterans and military-connected students. For example, they voiced the issues stated above regarding a sense of community and student veteran recognition to the person who oversees the VRC, Vice President of Admissions, however, these issues were not resolved through their direct chain of command. Therefore, participants reached out to other staff members at Greyhound University.

In addition to the Vice President of Admissions, participants spoke to the Director of the Greyhound Center and germinated a partnership with them. The collaboration with the Director of the Greyhound Center led to the acquisition of a 180-foot Student Veterans Lounge, which was separate from the VRC. The Student Veterans Lounge is a safe space where student veterans can congregate, study, and be authentic while advancing the SVA Chapter's program. The space also houses the SVA's executive committee's weekly meetings. Although student veteran

participants could not obtain a well-sized space for veterans and military-connected students through their direct chain of command, they could get a temporary Student Veterans Lounge in the meantime.

In support of their priority for a well-sized space for student veterans and military-connected students, the three elected student veteran participants sought equity and justice for student veterans through different media platforms. Eight months after finishing the PPA, the participants have now been featured on all of Greyhound's media platforms, such as Greyhound News Broadcasting, The Greyhound Newspaper, Greyhound Radio, and The Greyhound Podcast, to spread the word across campus of the challenges to students, staff, faculty, and the administration. According to Victor, "Being a leader is to make a change to a community you belong to. We all reached that breaking point, and we need to change a system that is not working to achieve a better society." Publishing these challenges to Greyhound University educated the campus on the needs of student veterans, including a sense of community and student veteran recognition.

The most recent story published addressing the need for a well-sized space for student veterans and military-connected students was on Greyhound News Broadcasting when one participant went to SVA's Washington Week during the first week of March. Chris addressed the need for a well-sized space with two California Senators and two California representatives. The United States representative for California's 40th congressional district decided to visit Greyhound University during the following month to tour the VRC and speak to Greyhound's leadership. Chris also contacted local community colleges, VRC staff, and student veterans about joining this tour. Even though participants are still waiting for a well-sized space for student

veterans and military-connected students, they have been taking concrete steps to create a just change.

Marketing. The three elected student veteran participants addressed both challenges, a sense of community and student veteran recognition, through marketing. They provided a club presence through table events on campus and communicating on social-media platforms, such as Instagram and LinkedIn, and Greyhound communication systems, such as Canvas and email. Through the steadfast drive of orchestrating 20 table events on campus and communicating through social media and Greyhound communication systems, participants advertised six community-building events for Veterans Week 2023. During Veterans Week 2023, participants hosted an open house of the VRC to show the campus community the challenges student veterans face. They also collaborated with Greyhound's local American Legion to host a Taco Tuesday and Karaoke event. Following a yoga with veteran activity on Wednesday, they passed out free burritos to military-connected students, staff, and faculty on Thursday. Finishing the week off in celebrating Veterans Week 2023, they hosted a bonfire on Friday and gathered with new club members on Saturday to observe Veterans Day for dinner. As a result of Veterans Week 2023, participants helped student veterans shift away from, as Victor described, "just a veteran coming to school, doing their classes, and just doing that the whole time in and out" to building a sense of community and being recognized for their military service.

Marketing for Veterans Week 2023 alone increased the chapter membership from the executive team of nine members to 45 members. Out of these 45 members, participants reported that half of them consistently joined student veteran meetings or community gatherings. Since Veterans Week 2023, participants have advertised seven additional events or programs to

continue building community and providing student veterans recognition. These events will be addressed in the final subsection: veteran-specific support services.

Veteran-Specific Support Services. The three elected student veteran participants addressed both challenges, a sense of community and recognition for student veterans, by offering veteran-specific support services on campus. These included free certification preparation courses through Udemy, student veteran-specific and military-connected students VA benefits orientation, mentorship program, mental health and reintegration counseling, veterans benefits and legal support, disability compensation support, and financial counseling. Participants collaborated with Greyhound's Udemy database administrator to obtain 100 non-business military-connected students to access a Udemy licensee. Udemy licensees provide military-connected students with free courses, certification preparation classes, and certificates to help them build their resumes to secure post-college employment.

Next, participants hosted its first veteran-specific and military-connected students VA benefits orientation for incoming transfer students in Spring 2024. Participants gained a spot on the Orientation Schedule through strategic conversations and proposals with the Vice President of Enrollment and the Orientation Department. They helped incoming students navigate their VA benefits and financial aid. At the orientation, they also hosted Veteran Service Organizations (VSO) to address veteran-specific support services. As a result of the first student veteran-specific and military-connected students VA benefits orientation, 12 incoming and 15 current student veterans came together and discovered veteran-specific support services they still need to address.

Two participants also created Greyhound University's first mentorship program to facilitate a smooth transition for the incoming Spring 2024 student veterans. Each incoming

student veteran was paired with a current student veteran to help navigate their new surroundings on campus and form a community. For example, Victor was a mentor for one of the incoming student veterans and explained, "I want to nourish the minds of incoming student veterans to feel that Greyhound is a safe and nice place to attend school."

Three student veteran participants also coordinated with VSOs to attend Student Veterans Club meetings to provide veteran-specific support services after the orientation. Participants provided these veteran-specific support services in four individual SVA meetings to address different veteran-specific needs. During these events, participants also shared their experiences before, during, and after the PPA among new club members to share why they are conducting a collective action to seek just change for student veterans on campus. According to Victor, "Being a part of a community is human. We seek it, love it, and want to see change. We are the stepping stones that we want to achieve, leave a legacy behind, say we are important, have a voice to share, and can be heard from broken systems."

Summary

This chapter presented the experiences of the five participants of this study. Their stories revealed that formerly deployed post-9/11 enlisted student veterans found value in addressing preconceived psychological and social barriers individually and collectively in the Peace Practice Alliance (PPA) through the germination of community support for their continued transition into and navigation through college. The unanticipated formation of a community transformed student veteran participants' mindsets toward themselves and others and created a sense of feeling more prepared to interact with others, resulting in collective action toward a positive change for student veterans on campus. They obtained greater personal peace, interpersonal peace, self-awareness, cultural fluency, systemic awareness, a better sense of purpose, and a

more positive impact on their community peacebuilding practice. Common themes were identified across the participants' experiences with the PPA. Chapter Five explains how the participants' experiences with the PPA address the research questions of this study, connect to the theoretical framework of this study and current research, and describes implications and recommendations, limitations, and areas for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The present study aimed to contribute to the literature on student veterans and integral peace leadership (McIntyre Miller & Green, 2015; McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022). A literature review on military culture and student veteran literature revealed a dearth of research surrounding comprehensive models that individually and collectively address the spectrum of student veteran socialization challenges between military and civilian cultures when transitioning into and navigating college. While previous research studies have predominantly focused on the student veteran experience transitioning into and navigating through college, there is a need for more work exploring the usefulness of an integral peace leadership framework-based program to help enlisted student veterans integrate into college. The present study utilized an outcomes evaluation methodology and constructivist grounded theory methods to explore the effectiveness of an integral peace leadership program to address this gap in the research and contribute to knowledge related to the student veterans' perceptions of how they may or may not find value in integral peace leadership for their transition into and navigation through college and life.

The study revealed that formerly deployed post-9/11 enlisted student veterans found value in addressing preconceived psychological and social barriers individually and collectively in the Peace Practice Alliance (PPA) through the germination of community support for their continued transition into and navigation through college. The unanticipated formation of a community transformed student veteran participants' mindsets toward themselves and others and created a sense of feeling more prepared to interact with others, resulting in collective action toward a positive change for student veterans on campus. The constructivist grounded theory analysis revealed five overarching themes from the data, including (1) program learning, (2) the formation of a community for student veterans, (3) a transformed mindset about how they view

themselves and others, (4) feeling more prepared to interact with others, and (5) conducting a collective action to seek just change for student veterans on campus. Within these themes was community support regarding matters of integral peace leadership in which student veteran participants put theory into practice.

The participants' commitment to in-person community support provided the impetus to put theory into practice. Participants expressed the safety of authentically sharing one's truth through storytelling without judgment and heartfelt listening through observation and understanding, which cultivated a strong bond between all participants—these moments of building trust also appeared to compel student veteran participants to feel comfortable enough to share things never mentioned because they had a space to process experiences before, during, and after the military. Taking this time to humanize their experience through integral peace leadership practices in a forum collectively led student veteran participants to make a positive change in their community. The forms of community support uncovered in the previous chapter are more fully explored in this chapter. Following a review of the research questions, this chapter reviews the findings and presents implications and recommendations, future research, limitations, and reiteration of the study's significance.

Review of Research Questions

This study was framed using the following research question and sub-questions:

1. In what ways might formerly deployed Post 9/11 enlisted student veterans find value in an integral peace leadership program for transitioning into and navigating through college?
 1. What are the specific areas of integral peace leadership areas that student veterans relate to and why?

2. In what ways, if any, do student veterans view an integral peace leadership program as a tool to foster college transition and navigation?
3. How do student veterans see an integral peace leadership program contributing to the college transition experience?
4. How do student veterans see themselves applying their integral peace leadership program learning to navigate their college and life experiences?

The review of findings provides answers to these questions based on the themes that emerged from the data analysis. When the previously stated themes are discussed in conjunction with the body of knowledge covered during the literature review, the persistence of community support across the ways in which student veterans understand integral peace leadership and put it into practice becomes apparent.

Review of the Findings

Throughout the themes, the student veteran participants discussed several ways the involvement of community support helped them understand integral peace leadership and put all quadrants into practice. Community support emerged as the student veteran participants found themselves in a space where they felt understood quickly among those who shared similar experiences rather than feeling misunderstood around traditional students. Among the campus community, the student veteran participants did not feel a sense of belonging and felt alone in their lived experience. Furthermore, participants did not have a space to come together collectively on campus to share their struggles and validate each other's experiences.

However, when participants were provided a space to congregate around fellow student veterans and provided with peace practices to facilitate conversation, they felt more comfortable than in college classrooms and humanized their experiences. By humanizing their lived

experiences in a safe space, participants obtained greater personal peace, interpersonal peace, self-awareness, cultural fluency, systemic awareness, a better sense of purpose, and a more positive impact on their community peacebuilding practice in their program learning. As a result of the program learning, they demonstrated a multi-layered understanding of integral peace leadership by sharing things never mentioned and transcending past things that were bothering them individually and collectively through shared respect to help rise above them. Taking this time to process, heal, and move forward peacefully individually and collectively transformed their thinking about themselves and others and helped them feel more prepared to interact with others outside the program. Consequently, these acts of peacebuilding amongst each other cultivated a collective action for positive just change among student veterans on campus after the PPA, and doing this project further solidified relationships among those involved.

The collective action to seek just change for student veterans on campus provided participants a platform to find their voice because they used the space from the PPA to brainstorm the challenges student veterans were facing and vocalize solutions to address these challenges through a network of like-minded folks to seek equity and justice for student veterans on campus. Looking at the challenges from a systemic perspective, student veteran participants discovered two overarching themes interconnected with the lack of student veteran engagement on campus. These themes included a sense of community for student veterans and student veteran recognition. Some participants communicated these challenges with key stakeholders on and off campus and through different media platforms to address the following solutions: a Student Veterans Club, a well-sized space for veterans and military-connected students, marketing, and veteran-specific support services. Thus, the evolvement of community support

led participants to understand integral peace leadership and put all quadrants into practice, which is further examined in the themes below.

Program Learning

In the program learning findings, the student veteran participants shared how they related to specific areas of integral peace leadership. These perceptions highlight the knowledge gained, skill development, and behavioral changes they experienced in personal peace, interpersonal peace, and community and global peace. There was variance among the participants because some had some previous education in the theories and practices presented in the PPA; for others, it was very new. Therefore, each veteran student participant had a different understanding of the course content when coming into the program, and all were left with new understandings afterward. Below is an analysis of the participants' experiences with the course content, including personal peace, interpersonal peace, and community and global peace, to indicate the differences within the program learning.

Personal Peace

Student veteran participants shared that personal peace was the most beneficial part of the program because it taught them about peaceful self-awareness, finding peace within themselves first, and opportunities to practice personal peace collectively. The program learning from the personal peace section aligns with the first program evaluation study of the PPA (Atwi et al., 2022). For example, Atwi and colleagues (2022) discovered that participants also found personal peace to be the most beneficial part of the curriculum.

In discussing their learning around peaceful self-awareness, the student veteran participants articulated gaining more self-awareness, offering themselves more grace, observing their humanity, providing a sense of peace to make more informed decisions, and developing a

sense of gratitude toward their thoughts. These transformative experiences, as a result of learning personal peace practices and enjoying the benefits, developed personal peace skills to help them reconcile with their lives. This aligns with how McIntyre Miller and Green (2015) discussed innerwork as the process of introspectively conducting a moral inventory on approaching themselves and others through peace. By conducting this moral inventory on approaching themselves and others through peace, participants also experienced a greater sense of inner peace and improved self-care (Atwi et al., 2022).

To provide these benefits of a more significant sense of inner peace and improved self-care, each student veteran participant discovered and mentioned different practices that helped them with their inner peace, including meditation, self-care, breathing activities, being in nature, journaling, setting intentions, drawing, watching the sunset, putting things into perspective, taking a break from social media, not taking anything personally, and not worrying about things you cannot control. As described in Amaladas and Bryne's (2018) edited book, *Peace Leadership: The Quest for Connectedness*, peace leaders must transform inner and external blockages toward peace by caring for themselves through meditation and self-awareness. Thus, participants cultivated inner peace practices during the study, aligned with the authors' approach toward peace through meditation and self-awareness. In addition to meditation and self-awareness, the study also indicated personal peace activities that helped participants see the good in bad situations and make good choices that inspire others to follow (Amaladas & Bryne, 2018).

In describing their learning around finding peace within themselves, student veteran participants mentioned how they began to see inner peace as the starting point and a lifelong journey, not a destination. As a result of learning that peace starts with them, they changed their behavior by transcending past the things that were bothering them and rising above them. This

finding can add to the literature as Bodrog et al. (2018) discovered that student veterans who deployed to a combat zone had more negative views of themselves in school than those not deployed to a combat zone and experienced a greater sense of social connectedness with classmates. These negative views of oneself were also addressed in the study because participants gained tools from the program to scrutinize those negative thoughts and counter them with positive thoughts to help navigate through college through cognitive behavioral therapy.

In mentioning their learning around collective personal peace, the student veteran participants said they enjoyed learning personal peace practices collectively, in a circle, and sharing our progress as a community. Thus, the study strongly suggests that the campus community offer student veterans the time to learn what keeps them at peace and how to practice it to take critical care for themselves so they can critically care for others, including traditional students, through compassion, empathy, and a healing capacity to humanize relationships (Amaladas & Bryne, 2018).

All but one student veteran participant stated that they value personal peace the most among other sections of the program learning. Those who most resonated with personal peace were those student veteran participants who did not have any previous education or knowledge about personal peace. Despite differences in learning experience around personal peace, every student veteran observed the value of this section and gained new knowledge. Similarly, Atwi and colleagues (2022) also discovered that those who most resonated with personal peace were new to the material and experienced positive impacts after applying the lessons to their personal lives. Thus, the findings from the program learning further support personal peace being the most beneficial because applying the lessons learned from this section impacts participants positively,

especially those new to the material. Likewise, participants gained new knowledge in the following area of the curriculum as well: interpersonal peace.

Interpersonal Peace

In the findings, student veteran participants explained how interpersonal peace also provided beneficial learning, especially around peaceful communication. In discussing their learning around communication, the student veteran participants highlighted gaining more peaceful communication skills through nonviolent communication, expressed the value of pausing and reflecting on garnering an appropriate response, and provided tools to create peaceful body language through soft eyes. First, student veteran participants mentioned that nonviolent communication was the most useful out of all the conflict transformation practices in interpersonal peace because it is all about listening and taking time to pause and think about what needs are not being met. Consequently, student veteran participants changed how they look at communicating with themselves and others by being more conscientious toward applying nonviolent communication. This aligns with McIntyre Miller and Green's (2015) description of the knowledge quadrant, where the individual moves away from their identified self externally toward creating peace with others, resulting in peacebuilding. With participants learning and practicing these practices from the knowledge quadrants, they put the innerwork practices in motion through personal and collective safety and security (McIntyre Miller & Green, 2015).

The first interpersonal peace practice the participants described was learning nonviolent communication. All student veteran participants learned nonviolent communication for the first time, except one. Although this participant was already familiar with nonviolent communication, he resonated with the depth of our discussion on nonviolent communication. Overall, student veteran participants valued nonviolent communication the most among other interpersonal peace

practices and gained new knowledge about the framework. These findings confirm with participants from Atwi and colleagues' (2022) study, who also noted nonviolent communication as a very useful part of the curriculum because they could put lessons into practice.

The second interpersonal peace practice the participants mentioned was the importance of pausing and reflecting through observation before engaging in a conflict. Through this learning, participants became more observant and saw the value in pausing and reflecting to garner an appropriate response to the situation. Being more observant and seeing the value in pausing and reflecting to garner an appropriate response aligns with how peace leaders showcase individualized consideration through mediation, relational skills, and wisdom (McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022). It also aligns with Atwi and colleagues' (2022) findings with improvements in how their participants approach situations in their work or personal lives, such as being less reactive and a better listener.

The third interpersonal peace practice the participants discussed was transitioning from hard to soft eyes to become more approachable around others. As a result of practicing soft eyes with each other, they mentioned how they felt like someone was listening to them. Aligning with Ercolano's (2017) study, whose participants also felt they acknowledged the whole person rather than just their appearance through soft eyes. Creating this peaceful body language through soft eyes also connects with how student veteran participants engaged in the community and global peace sections.

Community and Global Peace

Student veteran participants described how community and global peace were also helpful parts of the program because it provided them with learning about interconnectedness, opportunities to put system thinking into action, and learning about their sense of purpose. In

discussing their learning around interconnectedness in the community section, the student veteran participants stated that they were gaining a sense of interconnectedness, which motivated them to get involved in their community. Student veteran participants also discussed how if they denied their interconnectedness, they are doing ourselves a disservice. Consequently, they began to see the value of actively participating in their communities. Seeing this value of taking an active role in their communities, participants prioritized more engagement with diverse stakeholders, as was also discussed in Atwi and colleagues' (2022) study.

Participants' applied learning from the community and global peace section also aligns with the term Shields and her colleague, Joseph Soeters (2016), produced: peaceweaving.

We see peaceweaving as a way to build the fabric of peace by "emphasizing relationships. These positive relationships are built by working on practical problems, engaging people widely with sympathetic understanding, while recognizing that progress is measured by the welfare of the vulnerable." (Shields & Soeters, 2016, p. 30)

In the global peace section, student veteran participants mentioned how they enjoyed putting systems thinking into action because they could find areas where they could make a difference. As a result of building the VRC through systems thinking, participants found the power within themselves to make a positive difference. These findings confirm those of participants from Atwi and colleagues' (2022) study, who also noted systems thinking to be a very useful part of the curriculum because they were able to put lessons into practice.

Through the outcomes of implementing community and global peace sections, student veteran participants discussed ways they increased their sense of purpose. For example, William resonated with the community and global peace practices because he saw how much harm people can produce for themselves or others, which drove his passion to create a healthy community. On

the other hand, Chris developed a passion to create a sense of belonging for student veterans at Greyhound. The examples the participants provided directly correlate with the difference that Atwi and colleagues (2022) found after their study: many participants changed their leadership approach.

Although the community and global peace sections did not resonate with everyone the most, they learned the power within themselves to get involved with something greater than themselves to make a positive difference in others and that they could not have done it without their newly formed community of student veterans. Thus, participants also applied the act of peaceweaving (Shields & Soeters, 2016) rather than creating an appearance of inclusion to attract student veterans that does not make them feel included (Kinchen & DeVita, 2018). The actions they took to embody the definition of peaceweaving and implement forms of inclusion to create a sense of belonging for student veterans will be further reviewed in the final theme, but first, the applied learning from all of the sections is further reviewed.

Overview of Program Learning

The findings revealed that each student veteran participant left with new knowledge gained, behavioral changes, and skill development in their program learning. They obtained greater personal peace, interpersonal peace, self-awareness, cultural fluency, systemic awareness, a better sense of purpose, and a more positive impact on their community peacebuilding practice. This study aligns with Atwi and colleagues' (2022) findings that participants developed and deepened their peace leadership skills and practices. This study also adds to the practical applications of peace leadership skills and explains how this also drove behavioral changes with in-person community support, as shown in the next section.

Formation of Community for Student Veterans

The student veteran participants felt that the PPA helped them address preconceived psychological and social barriers as they formed a community of others who had all experienced similar trials. These challenges included preconceived psychological barriers, such as feeling misunderstood or isolated, and social barriers, such as being a non-traditional student and having difficulty relating to traditional students. Essentially, participants needed a forum to build collectively on campus before the study or toward integral peace leadership principles. Before the PPA, participants experienced preconceived psychological and social barriers that prevented them from interacting with traditional students because they felt misunderstood and alone in their lived experience from the military, which led them to filter their conversations.

Preconceived Psychological Barriers

Student veteran participants perceived themselves around civilians as feeling misunderstood or isolated. Morris and colleagues (2019) also stated that student veterans feel misunderstood or isolated due to their invisible identities and wounds. Certain student veteran participants also thought that they can push through college alone without help; yet, as they stated, it is more difficult when they do not know anyone or talk to anyone. When student veterans greatly emphasize self-reliance to accomplish the mission, or in this case, a college degree, it creates a side effect: high pressure on avoiding negative stigmas of becoming the weakest link (Institute of Medicine, 2013). This high pressure of weak link avoidance (Vacchi & Berger, 2013) was shown in the study when student veterans considered civilians perceiving them as angry or hostile and how this led them to alienate themselves (Elliott et al., 2011). Those who live up to the false expectation of weak link avoidance in higher education perpetuate the

self-reliant socialization of the military and can jeopardize their ability to get the help they need (Vacchi & Berger, 2013).

Student veterans will generally not admit their difficulties when navigating through civilian institutions because it is often viewed as a sign of weakness in military culture (Brown et al., 2011; Warner et al., 2011; Vacchi, 2012). This military socialization hinders student veterans' needs by not burdening others (Vacchi, 2012) and reactivates weak link avoidance (Vacchi & Berger, 2013). With student veterans being used to putting others or the mission first through the warrior ethos (Wong, 2005), they are not used to addressing their personal needs and may feel guilty for doing so. Thus, the study infers that the campus community offers student veterans opportunities for personal growth to integrate into higher education due to the culture clash between military and civilian cultures (Glasser et al., 2009), including a class (Osborne, 2016) or orientation (DiRamio et al., 2008; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010).

Social Barriers

In addition to preconceived psychological barriers, student veterans discussed distinct differences between themselves and others around them in college. Distinct differences included being a non-traditional student and having difficulty relating to traditional students. These findings align with how student veterans noticed social barriers in their social environment (DiRamio et al., 2008) because their perceptions of student norms are heightened being a nontraditional student (Gregg et al., 2016; Iverson et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2019; Olsen et al., 2014) or having difficulty relating to civilians (DiRamio et al., 2008; Gregg et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2019). The literature confirmed the student veteran experiences as nontraditional student attributes among student veterans include any of the following examples: being older (Gregg et al., 2016; Iverson et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2019; Olsen et al., 2014), being around civilians

(Morris et al., 2019; Olsen et al., 2014), being a parent and spouse, having world-view or combat experiences, having responsibilities, living off-campus (Gregg et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2019; Olsen et al., 2014), and being mentally or physically disabled (Morris et al., 2019).

Morris and colleagues (2019) reported forty responses in their survey relating to the difficulty of interacting with traditional students due to age, sense of entitlement, lack of commonality around stress and responsibilities, and lack of concern and understanding of service-connected injuries. In contrast, Gregg et al. (2016) found that veteran students have difficulty relating their life-story experiences to traditional students. Thus, aligning with the study, these distinct differences created social barriers for veteran student participants to refrain from engaging with traditional students.

Coming into social situations as a nontraditional student and having difficulty relating to traditional students also inhibits veteran student participants' interpersonal communication with traditional students. This aligns with Olsen and colleagues' (2014) finding that civilians could perceive student veterans as rude or aggressive in college. Thus, student veterans must consider what they say around traditional students, which can lead to filtering communication because they experience a lack of a sense of belonging in college (Livingston et al., 2011). Filtering communication can cause student veterans to second guess or question their veteran identity, which can contribute toward social isolation, too. Thus, the student veteran participants connected with each other through these shared experiences and discussed how the PPA helped them address these challenges by forming a community together.

The Formation of a Community

The PPA addressed these challenges by forming a community or a space where the student veterans could come together with a common experience for social support. Student

veteran participants emoted and shared about the community they formed in ways they had not experienced on campus in their past interactions with civilians. Similarly, Elliott (2015) found that social support among other student veterans who could validate each other's lived experiences was one of the critical factors associated with fewer symptoms of depression, PTSD, and negative experiences on campus for student veterans.

Student veterans who participated in the PPA expressed how it evolved into a community for them during and after the program, void of the preconceived psychological and social barriers previously described. The three aspects that emerged through student veteran participants' experiences from the study to form a community: being around those who understood them, reciprocating vulnerability, and having a common respect for each other. These three salient aspects also align with a quote from Ackerman and colleagues' (2009) study: " You just can't relate unless you have been there" (p. 11). Thus, these three salient aspects will be analyzed in the subsections below.

Being Around Others Who Understood Them. Student veteran participants discussed the importance of how being around those who understood them played in their experience of forming a community. Being socialized in the military creates a forging relationship between service members. These findings align with the camaraderie gained from military experiences, forming a tight-knit bond, emotional closeness, and social support unlikely to occur elsewhere (Koenig et al., 2014).

Being around those who understand their experiences provided student veteran participants a space to feel comfortable quickly, speak authentically about their experience and trauma bond, and create a support system to be more open with each other. These findings align with several studies that suggested student veteran peer mentorship programs or a transition

coach when integrating into college (DiRamio et al., 2008; Glasser et al., 2009; Summerlot et al., 2009). These findings also show how the knowledge section of integral peace leadership was implemented through the interactions of the innerwork practices in motion through personal and collective safety and security (McIntyre Miller & Green, 2015). Thus, coupling integral peace leadership skills and peer-to-peer mentoring can help integrate into college.

As a result of being around those who understand them, participants cultivated a support system to be more open with each other. The support system participants formed aligns with the recommended best practices of peer-to-peer mentoring from the California Community College (CCC) Veterans Resource Center (VRC) minimum standards (Veterans Resource Center Minimum Standards, 2024). Although these recommended best practices of peer-to-peer mentoring are a part of CCC VRC's minimum standards, the need for support systems is still warranted in public or private institutions.

The sooner student veterans can come together after transitioning into and navigating college, the sooner they can form a community and build connections with others who understand them. Establishing this sense of community is particularly important for student veterans because they are not prepared to find new sources of support, structure, guidance, and a sense of purpose (Whitworth et al., 2020). They need to establish these new sources of support, structure, guidance, and a sense of purpose among student veterans to demonstrate the socialization challenges mentioned above and treat college transactionally by only attending classes and then going home. While it is crucial to connect with those who understand you, it is also imperative to implement nonviolent transformations within the space to reciprocate vulnerability among each other, as shown in the next section, including democratic practices and processes, organizational capacity building, fostering diversity, creating relationships; building

coalitions; fostering human and social capital, building trust, and utilizing adaptive leadership practices (McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022). Being more open with each other through reciprocating vulnerability further alleviated preconceived psychological and social barriers for student veteran participants.

Reciprocating Vulnerability. Student veteran participants explained how reciprocating vulnerability through the formation of a community for student veterans was the catalyst for cultivating more profound levels of trust, expressing things never shared with others, and releasing pent-up stress. Being more open to sharing vulnerabilities led everyone to process and share different traumas or adversities faced before, during, or after the military together as a community, including growing up in poverty, being neglected, being adopted, being a childhood soldier, killing another human being(s); being emotionally, physically, and verbally abused; dealing with an unstable parent; dealing with an absent parent; experiencing the death of comrades, family members, and friends; conducting Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on an infant; experiencing toxic leadership and hostile work environments; experiencing mental health issues such as suicidal ideations, depression, and anxiety; experiencing divorce; experiencing non-judicial punishment; experiencing financial instability; and experiencing toxic relationships.

This is also reflected in Osborne's (2016) study, which found the importance of authentic engagement among 21 first-year male student veterans around discussions related to feeling out of place on campus or non-academic issues such as facing a divorce, parenthood, loss of a loved one, inadequacy as a man, and combat or military-related stress. The participants felt that a safe environment to process these topics provided a forum for student veterans to humanize their experience with others who understand them, which could ultimately help them integrate into college. Thus, this study implies that the campus community provides a space where student

veterans can congregate with those who understand them so they can open up quickly and build trust through reciprocating vulnerability.

The importance of reciprocating vulnerability appeared particularly salient for student veteran participants because they were not used to having a group of people help each other process their emotions or vulnerabilities. They shared how service members are conditioned in the military and how they can revert to their military socialization as student veterans due to the differences between military and civilian cultures. This aligns with Alfred et al. (2014), who suggested that the military's conforming to masculine norms in civilian higher education settings led to a weaker sense of purpose, autonomy, and psychological well-being among 117 male student veterans. Military's conforming masculine norms include emotional stoicism, self-reliance, toughness, aggressiveness, and respect for authority (Barrett, 2008; Brooks, 2001; Green et al., 2010; Higate, 2007). Integrating into a highly structured and institutionally oriented military culture is deliberate, whereas transitioning into college is considered organized anarchy (Vacchi & Berger, 2013).

This notion intersects with student veterans reverting to their conforming masculine norms from the military because transitioning into and navigating through college is vastly different from their socialization in the military. In that regard, student veterans require structure, support, guidance, and a sense of purpose from veteran-specific support staff or academic community members who understand their socialization from the military to help them unlearn conforming masculine norms that no longer serve them within a college culture. Providing student veterans an opportunity to heal through processing their experience also requires having a common respect for each other to get below the surface in conversation.

Having a Common Respect for Each Other. Student veteran participants also described the importance of having a common respect for each other in their experience of forming a community. Respect is interrelated to being around others who understand you and modeling vulnerability. Thus, going below the surface through conversation led student veteran participants to have common respect for each other without the negative sides of the military by supporting each other in a judgment-free zone, implementing peace leadership theory into practice through conversation, humanizing their experience, and making new friends. Participants' applied learning from this section aligns with sympathetic understanding, which is the ability to suspend judgment and put themselves into others' shoes to create an openness to listen (Hamington, 2009).

Creating mutual respect also led our community to put the peace practices into practice. As a result of demonstrating peace leadership theory into practice, participants' applied learning also aligns with McIntyre Miller and colleagues (under review) findings that PPA participants felt optimistic about the "step-by-step" progression of learning peace skills from the integral peace leadership framework, both theoretically and through practical application.

Having a common respect for each other also created a buy-in. Participants experienced behavioral changes and skill development because they were bought into the process. Participants' buy-in into the program aligns with what Jane Addams called a "community of inquiry" (Shields & Soeters, 2016, p. 27). This provides an opportunity to transcend ideological divides and invite new possibilities to enlighten each other's understanding or collaborate on passions together. The PPA experience led the student veteran participants to create a new friend group on campus, too. Similarly, Livingston et al. (2011) found that student veterans are likelier to connect with fellow veterans for social support.

Ultimately, the three salient aspects of community formation provided student veteran participants a forum to practice the first three quadrants, innerwork, community, and knowledge, of integral peace leadership together. Although these three salient aspects of community formation do not demonstrate the environment quadrant, the analysis of the final theme shows how all the quadrants come together in action. "Peace leadership is truly present when work is being done within each of the quadrants" (McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022, p. 7). Before presenting the final theme, the following two themes will show examples of the first three quadrants in practice.

A Transformed Mindset About How Student Veterans See Themselves and Others

Student veteran participants described how the PPA shifted their mindset for their lives and their interactions in college. When student veteran participants learned about peace practices, they uncovered learned behaviors that they intentionally changed or want to change by being peaceful with themselves and others. In covering their learned behaviors, the student veteran participants voiced behaviors they changed during the PPA, including caring more about others and being more empathetic. They also acknowledged behaviors that they want to change moving forward, such as incorporating nonviolent communication, taking time to pause, wanting to be more empathetic, understanding, and patient, finding more ways to build connections, and celebrating their accomplishments.

Similarly, Atwi and colleagues (2022) also found that their participants experienced a transformational process with their PPA participants due to the course content, delivery, and space provided to engage individually and collectively. The only difference among studies in course delivery was their online community engagement via Zoom; however, this study did follow one of their recommendations of more space for small groups (Atwi et al., 2022). The

transformative experience participants encountered in the PPA also aligns with recommendations from several studies for a separate cultural transition program designed explicitly for incoming student veterans to assist their transition (DiRamio et al., 2008; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Kirchner, 2015; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010) and is also related to the next theme gathered from the research analysis: feeling more prepared to interact with others.

Feeling More Prepared to Interact with Others

Student veteran participants expressed how the peace practices from the PPA led them to feel more prepared to interact with others outside of the PPA. Student veteran participants identified three communities they felt more prepared to engage with: the student veteran community, the traditional student community, and the greater community. Within the veteran community, the student veteran participants voiced being more prepared to come from a place of understanding to help nurture connections and support them with their goals. This aligns with Wheeler's (2014) findings that "most veterans associate with other veterans based on their shared experience and inherent trust in others who have served" (p. 783) and how they can serve as "counselors" for each other (p. 784).

The peace practices also led to a significant shift in the student veterans' perspectives toward the traditional student community. They reported feeling more confident in articulating their experiences, which prepared them to interact with traditional students. They also reframed their self-reliance as a willingness to share their struggles, humanizing their experiences and fostering collaboration with traditional students. This transformation in their approach has prepared them to spread peace to the traditional student community. This aligns with Olsen and colleagues' (2014) suggestion of being more intentional in interacting with traditional students,

and the student veterans felt more prepared to humanize their experience with traditional students through sympathetic understanding (Hamington, 2009).

The peace practices also equipped the student veterans with a readiness to engage with the greater community. They expressed a willingness to support their friends by lending an ear and being a voice of reason. This aligns with the knowledge quadrant of integral peace leadership, where individuals move away from their identified self externally toward creating peace with others, resulting in peacebuilding (McIntyre Miller & Green, 2015). This also aligns with the integral peace leadership model in the knowledge quadrant, including conflict transformation skills and effective dialogue and communication (McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022). This readiness to interact with others, combined with the three previous themes, has led to a positive change beyond the PPA: a collective action to seek just change for student veterans on campus.

Conducting a Collective Action to Seek Just Change for Student Veterans

The last section of the findings demonstrated that student veteran participants turned a PPA assignment into a collective action after the PPA, and doing this project further solidified relationships among those involved. The collective action to seek just change for student veterans on campus provided participants a platform to find their voice because they used the space from the PPA to brainstorm the challenges student veterans were facing and vocalize solutions to address these challenges through a network of like-minded folks to seek equity and justice for student veterans on campus. As shown in peace movements, leaders must also build relationships and construct sustainable solutions to challenge power (Ganz, 2010; Irwin et al., 2022; McIntyre Miller, 2016). Looking at the challenges from a systemic perspective, student veteran participants discovered two overarching themes interconnected with the lack of student

veteran engagement on campus, including a sense of community for student veterans and student veteran recognition.

Challenges

These challenges connect with the current reality at Greyhound University: having one point person, the Veterans Resource Center (VRC) director, who serves as the School Certifying Official (SCO) and conducts additional duties beyond this position, including addressing the academic and non-academic needs of 231 known military-connected students. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) revised their policy effective December 5, 2023, recommending one SCO full-time employee for every 125 GI Bill students and/or dependents enrolled in their institution (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2024). Furthermore, the VA stated, "This change was created due to the increased complexity of monitoring and reporting GI Bill students. This number should be adjusted as appropriate by the educational institution when the SCO's duties are expanded beyond certifying GI Bill beneficiaries' enrollments" (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2024, School Responsibilities para. 2). With the increased demands of a SCO, the Director has limited time and opportunities to expand their role on behalf of student veterans (Summerlot et al., 2009).

Several studies also suggested that a specific point person may advocate and rectify the issues student veterans experience on campus rather than just be a certifying official (Griffin & Gilbert, 2014; Kirchner, 2015; Vance & Miller, 2009). Although Greyhound is a private University, the California Community College (CCC) VRC minimum standards require the minimum staff members: SCO, VRC Coordinator and/or Director - separate from the SCO, and a veteran-specific academic counselor (Veterans Resource Center Minimum Standards, 2024). With the current reality of Greyhound University, participants took it into their own hands to

advocate and rectify their issues, including a sense of community and student veteran recognition.

A Sense of Community. In discussing a sense of community for student veterans, participants articulated the need for a physical space to congregate with those who understand them and provide resources to help student veterans succeed. The findings align with several other studies that reported a significant variation in the quality of services among different VRCs while expressing the need for improved and increased VRC services (DiRamio et al., 2008; Glasser et al., 2009; Jones, 2013). Consequently, participants prioritized obtaining a physical safe space to congregate and provide resources to help student veterans succeed.

The participants' priority aligns with several studies that student veterans want a veteran-friendly space on campus that may serve as a safe haven for mentorship programs and support groups (Elliott et al., 2011; Griffin & Gilbert, 2014; Rumann & Hamrick, 2009; Vance & Miller, 2009). A safe haven is considered a "place of refuge from stressors" (Hass et al., 2014, p. 391). This safe haven is considered the VRC.

While Greyhound University is a private school, the current VRC does meet the CCC VRC minimum standards as they require VRCs to have private space for counseling and certifying benefits (Veterans Resource Center Minimum Standards, 2024). They also recommend a lounge area and/or study area with access to printers, copiers, and computers to support accessibility, which the current VRC does not support. With most student veterans attending public community college first (Vacchi & Berger, 2013), the study implies California private and public four-year universities offer a comparable VRC to replicate their formative experience at a community college by continuing to provide required minimum standards and recommended

best practices. The following challenge student veteran participants discovered was student veteran recognition.

Student Veteran Recognition. Student veteran participants mentioned the need for student veteran recognition because most participants felt recognized at their previous community colleges. Their experiences at community college align with Vance & Miller's (2009) study, where they found that student veterans prefer to attend community colleges close to military bases because they are more helpful in assisting/supporting them with financial, academic, and disability accommodation and credit transfer issues. Consequently, participants made their second priority for student veteran recognition to create an atmosphere where people care about them and their accomplishments because veteran holidays and community are not recognized at Greyhound University.

Veterans Day is not stated on the academic calendar, and the last time veterans were honored at Greyhound University on any media platform was November 10th, 2020, through the Community Builder. Rumann and Hamrick (2009) asserted that most colleges have good intentions in honoring military culture despite their few or no first-hand experiences with military culture. Consequently, participants understood why student veteran recognition was lacking on campus through different media and social media platforms. Livingston and colleagues (2011) also reported that student veterans experience a lack of military recognition on campus. Understanding why the sense of community for student veterans and student veteran recognition was non-existent at Greyhound University led participants to vocalize solutions to address these challenges.

Solutions

Participants discovered these solutions through the PPA activity of envisioning an ideal VRC and learned to leverage their networks to create a collective change. Thus, following the ideal VRC activity and after student veteran participants graduated from the PPA, some participants communicated with key stakeholders on and off campus and through different media platforms to address the following solutions: a Student Veterans Club, a well-sized space for student veterans and military-connected students, marketing, and veteran-specific support services. Although there is still plenty of work to be done, some participants were able to solidify sustainable solutions and a temporary Student Veterans Lounge in the meantime.

Student Veterans Club. Collaborating with like-minded folks in their network, one student veteran participant coordinated with the VA work-study student worker to resurrect the Student Veterans Club on campus. Their actions of resurrecting the SVA aligned with several studies' recommendations (Kirchner, 2015; Rumann & Hamrick, 2009; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). Three of the five PPA participants were voted by their peers to become executive members of the resurrected Student Veterans Club. Thus, student veteran participants felt empowered to make a just change. Participants applied the belief that peace is only sustainable by "building peace from the bottom up" (Schellhammer, 2022, p. 3) and created a positive impact through a culture of peace among student veterans within their University that did not exist before, which led to the following solution: a well-sized space for student veterans and military-connected students.

Well-Sized Space for Student Veterans and Military-Connected Students.

Connecting with like-minded folks in their network, three student veteran participants organized high-level discussions with institution stakeholders, such as University administration, faculty,

and staff, to address the need for a well-sized space for student veterans and military-connected students. In several studies, student veterans expressed their college's lack of expertise and knowledge to assist their needs (Flink, 2017; Glasser et al., 2009; Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2017; Vance & Miller, 2009). In line with this, the participants voiced similar issues stated regarding a sense of community and student veteran recognition to the person who oversees the VRC, the Vice President of Admissions, however, these issues were not resolved through their direct chain of command. Although they have yet to hear or see a corrective action for a well-sized space for student veterans and military-connected students, participants continued to reach out to other institution stakeholders.

In addition to the Vice President of Admissions, participants spoke to the Director of the Greyhound Center and germinated a partnership with them. The partnership with the Director of the Greyhound Center led to the acquisition of a 180-foot Student Veterans Lounge. Until the three participants address their priority of a well-sized space for student veterans and military-connected students, they are determined to seek equity and justice through different media platforms. Over the last five months, participants have been featured on all of Greyhound's media platforms, such as Greyhound News Broadcasting, The Greyhound Newspaper, Greyhound Radio, and The Greyhound Podcast, to spread the word across campus of the challenges to students, staff, faculty, and the administration. Publishing these challenges to Greyhound University educated the campus on the needs of student veterans, including a sense of community and student veteran recognition.

Educating the campus on student veterans' needs aligns with different studies' recommendations. Persky and Oliver (2010) found that college staff often were not sufficiently knowledgeable concerning veteran-related issues and benefits. Several studies suggested

professional development opportunities for staff and faculty to understand student veterans' needs and ways to approach them (DiRamio et al., 2008; Kirchner, 2015; Osborne, 2016; Persky & Oliver, 2010). Thus, participants educated staff, faculty, and students through marketing to address challenges, a sense of community, and student veteran recognition.

Marketing. Three student veteran participants addressed both challenges through marketing by providing a club presence through table events on campus and communicating on social media platforms, such as Instagram and LinkedIn, and Greyhound communication systems, such as Canvas and email. Through the steadfast drive of orchestrating 20 table events on campus and communicating through social media and Greyhound communication systems, participants advertised six community-building events for Veterans Week 2023. Marketing for Veterans Week 2023 alone increased the chapter membership from the executive team of nine members to 45 members. As a result of Veterans Week 2023, participants helped student veterans shift away from just coming to school to building a sense of community and being recognized for their military service. These student veteran participants' marketing approach aligns with the importance of developing outreach strategies to attract student veterans (DiRamio et al., 2008; Vance & Miller, 2009). Aside from building a sense of community and recognizing student veterans, participants also provided veteran-specific support services.

Veteran-Specific Support Services. The three elected student veteran participants addressed both challenges, a sense of community and recognition for student veterans, by offering veteran-specific support services on campus. These included free certification preparation courses through Udemy, student veteran-specific and military-connected students VA benefits orientation, mentorship program, mental health and reintegration counseling, veterans benefits and legal support, disability compensation support, and financial counseling.

Although the CCC VRC minimum standards are for VRCs, participants' offerings from the SVA chapter aligned with their recommended best practices, such as outreach materials, events, support services, and peer-to-peer mentoring through their club events (Veterans Resource Center Minimum Standards, 2024). For example, participants hosted its first student veteran-specific and military-connected students VA benefits orientation for incoming transfer students in Spring 2024. They helped incoming students navigate their VA benefits and financial aid. At the orientation, they also hosted Veteran Service Organizations (VSO) to address veteran-specific support services. As a result of the first student veteran-specific and military-connected students VA benefits orientation, 12 incoming and 15 current student veterans came together and discovered veteran-specific support services they still need to address.

Participants' efforts to help GI Bill beneficiaries align with several student veteran responses among studies that found college orientation programs and transition seminars could have been more helpful because they focused more on traditional students (Olsen et al., 2014; Wheeler, 2012). Thus, the study suggests that higher education institutions create conditions to remove the absence of positive peace structurally by addressing the root causes of conflict, a sense of community, and student veteran recognition when they could (Bangura, 2016). "Both require systems literacy and an authentic life-long learning orientation at both the individual and collective levels" (Satterwhite et al., 2015, p. 69). With this in mind, the following section will introduce the implications and recommendations.

Implications and Recommendations

This study examined the experiences of student veterans by centering their voices. The findings of this study identified the usefulness of implementing a PPA program that student veteran participants experienced during their transition into and navigation through college.

Additionally, findings revealed the support system they received as they formed a community together. Their drive for equity was also highlighted through their experiences after the PPA. These findings have implications and recommendations for Veteran Resource Centers (VRC) and higher education and peace leadership as a field.

Implications and Recommendations for VRCs and Higher Education

The findings of this study identified several implications for VRCs and higher education, including adequate space; services and activities; staff augmentation; organizational relocation within institutions of higher education for VRCs to be housed with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) program; and student veteran recognition on campus. Each of these findings is discussed in detail below, and many reflect the recommendations of California Community College (CCC) VRC minimum standards (Veterans Resource Center Minimum Standards, 2024).

Adequate Space

The findings of this study suggest the need for an adequate space that is known, visible, and accessible to student veterans on campuses nationwide to provide a veteran-friendly forum for them to form community and work through challenges privately. Participants' descriptions of their previous community college experience revealed the need for a comparable structure in public and private four-year university settings to congregate with others who understand them. With VRCs varying from school to school, student veterans' experiences at VRCs may differ. Therefore, staff and administration might consider holding conversations with their student veterans to ensure VRCs are meeting their needs.

It is recommended that institutions of higher education provide adequate space for VRCs that is aligned with their population in accordance with CCC VRC minimum standards (Veterans

Resource Center Minimum Standards, 2024). This is important to provide privacy for individual meetings and sessions and a space for student veterans to congregate or study, as previously discussed. Therefore, institutes of higher education may consider ways to raise funds in order to support student veterans, such as through grants or donations.

Services and Activities

The findings of this study suggest the need for services and activities that bring student veterans together through a community-facilitated cultural change program, orientation, or class, such as the PPA, so that they can help themselves and each other succeed in their transition into and navigation through college. Coupling modeled peace practices with structured peer-to-peer mentoring in a program can help them meet each other where they are in their continued transition and get them the support they need to integrate into and navigate college and life successfully. That way, they can find those experiencing similar things, learn how to be peaceful with themselves and others through reconciliation, discover their new mission outside of the military, and feel prepared to interact with others who are not student veterans. Thus, the sooner the academic community can provide a cultural transition program, orientation, or class for student veterans, such as the PPA, the sooner they can integrate into and navigate college and life effectively.

This study also showcased how every student veteran increased their capacity to reconcile with and change their thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and lives by conducting a moral inventory on how they want to approach themselves and others through peace practices. Therefore, it is also recommended that institutions of higher education provide enhanced mental health and wellness services to student veterans, too. This is important to provide adequate mental health services to student veterans because they can learn how to be peaceful with

themselves and others through reconciliation, discover their new purpose outside of the military, and feel prepared to interact with others who are not student veterans. Therefore, institutes of higher education may consider ways to collaborate with their mental health centers on campus or external mental health partnerships to develop ways to support student veterans through individual and group support.

Staff Augmentation

The findings of this study revealed the need for staff augmentation for institutes of higher education that compile multiple roles and responsibilities to one point person or limited personnel. Participants' descriptions of not being fully supported for their academic and non-academic needs is a reflection of the understaffed representation at Greyhound University's VRC. With Greyhound University's one point person responsible for 231 known military-connected students, the Director does not have enough time or bandwidth to meet the special needs of student veterans. Therefore, institutes of higher education should consider hiring additional staff to adequately serve military-connected students' needs.

VRCs to be Under the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Programs

The findings of this study revealed the need for organizational relocation within institutions of higher education for VRCs to be housed with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs. Participants' descriptions of instilling positive peace structurally offers opportunities for VRCs to understand whether there is an equity gap among other underrepresented groups on campus, including nontraditional students, international students, first-generation students, students of color, LBGTQI+ students, and students with disabilities. For example, VRCs can collaborate with these different underrepresented groups on campus and share best practices to meet the needs of multiple populations. These discussions can continue to

create a positive ripple effect across all underrepresented communities and shed light on the intersections student veterans share with these underrepresented groups. Therefore, institutions of higher education may consider relocating their VRC under the DEI program.

Student Veteran Recognition on Campus

The findings of this study suggested the need for student veteran recognition on campus. Participants' descriptions of how they experienced underrepresentation at Greyhound University and how they addressed this challenge offers opportunities for institutions of higher education to promote student veteran recognition. For example, the academic community can include voices of student veterans in their decision making process across higher levels in the university. That way, important holidays, such as Veterans Day, can represent the student veteran population on campus authentically to their lived experience in the military. Therefore, institutes of higher education may consider finding ways to identify veteran staff, faculty, administrators, and students to ensure veteran voices are a part of campus-wide decisions. The final subsection further examines the implications and recommendations of peace leadership.

Implications and Recommendations for Peace Leadership as a Field

The study demonstrates a beginning understanding of the nature of putting integral peace leadership into practice and the impact of its work in a real-time setting. Putting integral peace leadership into practice transformed the minds of student veterans to enact new traits, characteristics, and practices in making peace internally and externally to help combat toxicity culture and aid in their transition. It also influenced the interactions among students as a community during the PPA, the actions among student veterans to feel more prepared to interact with others outside the PPA, and the actions among student veterans as a community after the PPA. With this evidence, those in the peace leadership field could aim to expand access to these

types of programs and might want to continue to embark on this work with various groups of likeminded and diverse stakeholders. The need for expanding access to these types of programs is also further examined in the recommendations for future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

In the next section, I discuss recommendations for future research based on both findings and implications from the study to inform future research. This study began to fill the gap in the literature on comprehensive programs that address military socialization behaviors in a collegiate culture. However, it was one pilot study; therefore, additional such studies should be completed.

First, the program holds much promise for continued research broader than one medium-sized private University. Therefore, expanding the conversation with other institutions of higher education, geographic locations, larger sample sizes, and more diversity in gender, branches of service, and rank (officers) can explore the impact of the integral peace leadership in real-time with more campus communities nationwide to see if the positive results are transferable. Second, noteworthy observations of the program suggested that the program takes place during orientation or as a college course. Thus, evaluating different program structures can determine which program is more conducive to a positive transition into and navigation through college. Lastly, with the program having positive results with student veterans, future research could also tailor the program for other underrepresented groups on campus, including nontraditional students, international students, first-generation students, students of color, LBGTQI+ students, and students with disabilities. A common theme among these groups is that they feel misunderstood on campus, too; therefore, a community-based environment may also be helpful for groups to integrate onto campus.

Limitations

There were several limitations in this study. These include a small population in a limited geographic area, the characteristics of the sample, and the researcher's positionality. The first limitation is that the study was conducted with a small number of student veterans from one medium-sized private institution in Southern California. The data, limited to five participants due to the in-depth nature of the experience, was appropriate for the sample size but further emphasized the study's narrow scope. These limitations underscore the need for caution when applying the findings to institutions of higher education nationwide, although these findings may be transferable to other, similar institutions.

Second, the characteristics of the participants who volunteered for the study were limited due to the disproportionate amount of qualified male student veterans. When the study took place, there were 60 eligible candidates who met the inclusion criteria at Greyhound University. Of those 60 qualified candidates, six of them were women student veterans. Furthermore, eight male candidates volunteered for the study and five of those male candidates met the inclusion criteria for the study. The five male participants were asked if they knew any women student veterans on campus and one male participant did. He asked one of the six eligible candidates; however, she was unavailable to participate due to summer school. Therefore, this study was unable to include women student veteran voices.

The characteristics of the participants who volunteered for the study were also limited due to the time of the year recruitment and interviews occurred and the time commitment of the study. With the recruitment and interviews occurring in the summer and the study being up to 80 hours long, this limited the sample's gender to all males too, and the military branches of service included the Air Force, Navy, and Marines. Although the sample was all males, the in-depth

nature of the experience also benefitted the men involved because vulnerability is typically not modeled among other men. Thus, it permitted them to be vulnerable. Also, the military service branches would not have changed the study results because everyone quickly understood each other and shared experiences.

The final limitation was that the researcher's positionality as a student veteran could create a potential bias toward the veteran population. As a retired US Navy veteran, a high degree of loyalty for military veterans may lead to more positive bias and advocacy. During the study, I had to decide when to sit back or be a part of the group as an observer and when to be a participant. I did my best to give participants space to process and organically build trust by modeling peacebuilding practices in my role as a facilitator, too. There might be ways I could have done it better, but participants appreciated the conversation's flexibility to feel each other's support.

Reiteration of Significance

The study revealed that formerly deployed post-9/11 enlisted student veterans found value in addressing preconceived psychological and social barriers individually and collectively in the Peace Practice Alliance (PPA) through the germination of community support for their continued transition into and navigation through college. The unanticipated formation of a community transformed student veteran participants' mindsets toward themselves and others and created a sense of feeling more prepared to interact with others, resulting in collective action toward a positive change for student veterans on campus. By humanizing their lived experiences in a safe space, participants obtained greater personal peace, interpersonal peace, self-awareness, cultural fluency, systemic awareness, a better sense of purpose, and a more positive impact on their community peacebuilding practice without the negative side effects of the military.

As a result of the program learning, they demonstrated a multi-layered understanding of integral peace leadership by sharing things never mentioned and transcending past things that were bothering them individually and collectively through shared respect to help rise above them. Taking this time to process, heal, and move forward peacefully individually and collectively led some participants to address two overarching themes interconnected with the lack of student veteran engagement on campus, including a sense of community and student veteran recognition. Communicating these challenges with key stakeholders on and off campus and through different media platforms addressed the following solutions: a Student Veterans Club, a well-sized space for student veterans and military-connected students, marketing, and veteran-specific support services. These understandings led to knowledge that helped frame a program experience to better yield a positive transition and navigation experience into a private four-year University.

The findings contributed to peace leadership as a field. The results put integral peace leadership into practice and helped understand integral peace leadership theory as it relates to student veterans. Putting integral peace leadership into practice transformed the minds of student veterans to enact new traits, characteristics, and practices in making peace internally and externally to help combat toxicity culture and aid in their transition. It also influenced student interactions as a community, leading participants to understand integral peace leadership and put all quadrants into practice. In addition to advancing the emergent theory with empirical evidence, the study is also helpful for stakeholders involved during the life cycle of student veterans by shedding light on contributing factors and ways to overcome them.

VRCs and institutes of higher education need to implement standards across the board that reflect the needs of student veterans' voices and data points to ensure those standards are

being met or re-examined to address equity gaps. That way, student veterans do not fall through the cracks and can enjoy their journey through college rather than viewing it as a means to an end. Thus, when student veterans receive consistent quality services across multiple VRCs and institutes of higher education, the need for a continued transition into different colleges can end. They can transfer the positive experiences they have modeled from their campus community to their communities as productive citizens.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Program

Program description:

Develops peace leadership practices (inner peace, interpersonal peace, community peace, and global peace) for intentional personal and collective change. Interactive work with classmates enhances ability to relate to, collaborate with and potentially lead positive peace practices for groups of diverse individuals. Topics include nonviolent communication, meditation, self-care, dialogue, listening, social change, positive peace, systems thinking, activism, adaptive leadership, and community transformation.

Program objectives:

1. Understand and practice the following components of peace leadership: inner peace, interpersonal peace, community peace, and global peace. Deepening your knowledge and awareness on these dimensions is important for integrating your leadership practice for social change and understanding your impact on and interconnectedness to peace practice on a global level.
2. Learn and integrate methods for practicing and cultivating personal peace. You will personally apply this insight and re-visit your practices to sustain positive peace habits.
3. Learn theories and processes for peacefully interacting with others of diverse backgrounds and viewpoints. Learn and practice nonviolent communication processes. Being able to develop, nurture and sustain positive peace in relationships is a hallmark of highly effective professionals.

4. Expand and deepen understanding and practice of building and sustaining a courageous, connected, and creative community. Understanding and practicing effective communication, giving, and receiving feedback and appreciating differences in others are key factors in working well with others.
5. Identify current strengths in community practice, areas for growth, and practices that will enhance your personal and professional endeavors.
6. Expand and deepen awareness and understanding of systems that support and hinder positive peace and how to address them. Gaining insight on these parameters will guide you on ways to create sustainable change.

Journal prompts:

Pre-program

- ☐ What value or values do I bring to this student veteran community?
- ☐ What areas of my life (personally, interpersonally, in communities, and with systems) do I want to focus on in this peace leadership program?
- ☐ What do I look forward to cultivating together in this diverse cohort of student veterans?
- ☐ What bonds do I wish to nurture in this student veteran community?
- ☐ What am I looking forward to learning from this student veteran community?
- ☐ What am I going to contribute to strengthen this student veteran community?

Program Calendar

| <u>Week 1</u> | | |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| <u>Day and time</u> | <u>Synchronous Agenda</u> | <u>Asynchronous objectives</u> |
| Monday 10:00AM - 1:00PM | Introduction to Peace Leadership | M1 Starting Point Day 1: Foundation of Personal Peace |
| Tuesday 12:00PM - 3:00PM | Guest Speaker, Sally Mahé, on personal peace practices; Conduct discussion questions session 1 day 2 during the video | M1 Transform Day 2: Your Personal Peace Practices; M1 Inspire Day 2: Letter to Self |
| Wednesday 10:00AM - 1:00PM | Guest speaker, Jenny Canau, on regulating our nervous system with personal peace practices Part 1; Conduct discussion questions session 2 day 3 during the video | M1 Inform Day 3: Connecting with Ourselves; M1 Inspire Day 3: Radical Self Care |
| Thursday 12:00PM - 3:00PM | Guest speaker, Jenny Canau, on regulating our nervous system with personal peace practices Part 2 | M1 Inform Day 4: Self Care in Community; M1 Inspire Day 4: Seeing the beauty between desire and duty |
| Friday 10:00AM - 1:00PM | Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT); Artistic Expression of Personal Peace; Conduct discussion session 3 day 5 | M1 Reflect Day 5: River of Learning; M2 Starting Point Day 5: Interpersonal Peace Practice; M2 Inform Day 5: Nonviolent Communication |
| <u>Week 2</u> | | |
| <u>Day and time</u> | <u>Synchronous Agenda</u> | <u>Asynchronous objectives</u> |

| <u>Day and time</u> | <u>Synchronous Agenda</u> | <u>Asynchronous objectives</u> |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Monday 10:00AM - 1:00PM | Define interpersonal Peace; Guest speaker, Jim Manske, on Nonviolent Communication; Conduct discussion questions session 4 day 6 during the video | M2 Inform Day 6: Constructive Conversations; M2 Inspire Day 6: Where the wounds are, the gift lies |
| Tuesday 12:00PM - 3:00PM | Conduct discussion questions session 5 day 7 | M2 Inform Day 7: Types of Listening |
| Wednesday 10:00AM - 1:00PM | 360 interview exercise; artistic expression | M2 Inform Day 8: Setting Space and Criteria for Interpersonal Practice and Dialogue; M2 Inspire Day 8: Through my Enemy's Eyes |
| Thursday 12:00PM - 3:00PM | Conduct discussion questions session 6 day 9 | M2 Reflect Day 9: River of Learning; M3 Starting Point Day 9: Setting Our Definitions and Intentions |
| Friday 10:00AM - 1:00PM | Guest speaker, Fran Faraz, on Asset Based Community Development | M3 Inform Day 10: Community Healing; M3 Inspire Day 10: Thirteen Ways of Looking at Community |

Week 3

| <u>Day and time</u> | <u>Synchronous Agenda</u> | <u>Asynchronous objectives</u> |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Monday 10:00AM - 1:00PM | Importance of Community Ownership; Conduct discussion questions session 7 day 11 | M3 Inspire Day 11: Inviting Leadership; M3 Inspire Day 11: Ubuntu |
| Tuesday 12:00PM - 3:00PM | Building Community Ownership; Relationship Approach to Systems Thinking in Peacebuilding | M3 Inspire Day 12: Five Habits of the Heart; Day 12: Module 3 River of Learning; M4 Starting Point Day 12: Grounding Global Peace Practice |

| <u>Day and time</u> | <u>Synchronous Agenda</u> | <u>Asynchronous objectives</u> |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Wednesday 10:00AM - 1:00PM | Guest Speaker, Amjad Saleem, on Building Trust as Systems Thinking; Conduct discussion questions session 8 day 13 | M4 Inform Day 13: Relational Work of Systems Change; M4 Inspire Day 13: Dr. Karambu Ringera & Utu |
| Thursday 12:00PM-3:00PM | Local to Global Change; Understanding Emergence; Community of Practice | M4 Inform Day 14: Social Networks and Nonviolent Action; M4 Inspire Day 14: What Are You For? |
| Friday 10:00AM-1:00PM | Day of Reflection and Celebration | M4 Inspire Day 15: Ten Love Letters to the Earth; Reflect Day 15: M4 River of Learning; M5 Starting Point Day 15: Peace Leadership in Action |
| <u>Week 4</u> | | |
| <u>Day and time</u> | <u>Synchronous Agenda</u> | <u>Asynchronous objectives</u> |
| Monday 10:00AM-1:00PM | The Social Change Ecosystem Map; Characteristics; Self Reflection; Conduct discussion questions session 9 day 16 | M5 Inform Day 16: Intentional Adaptation; M5 Inspire Day 16: Making Peace Personal |
| Tuesday 12:00PM-3:00PM | Peace Leadership Integration Part 1 pg. 1-7 | M5 Inspire Day 17: Leading Peace Together; M5 Inspire Day 17: Evolution of Trust |
| Wednesday 10:00AM-1:00PM | Peace Leadership Integration Part 2 pg. 8-13; Conduct discussion questions session 10 day 18 | M5 Reflect Day 18: River of Learning |
| Thursday 12:00PM-3:00PM | Love in Action; Conduct discussion questions session 11 day 19 | M6 Reflection in Action Day 19: Equip; M6 Reflection in Action Day 19: Connect; M6 Reflection in Action Day 19: Uplift |

| <u>Day and time</u> | <u>Synchronous Agenda</u> | <u>Asynchronous objectives</u> |
|----------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Friday 10:00AM-1:00PM | Opening Ceremony; Graduation; Closing Ceremony | |

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APPENDIX B

Flier



The flier is titled "2023 STUDENT VETERAN PEACE PRACTICE ALLIANCE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM". It features a central section with three logos: a heart with hands, a circular wreath with the word "EUPHRATES", and a geometric butterfly. Below these are three numbered points: 1. **Connect** student veterans around Chapman University in a heart-centered environment to build an inclusive, resourceful, and supportive community; 2. **Equip** student veterans with an understanding of peace leadership in a peer-learning environment; 3. **Practice** peace leadership within ourselves, in our relationships with each other, and in our communities.

Program Logistics
The peace practice alliance is a five-week hybrid certification program that takes place on Chapman University and through a virtual platform from July 10th - July 28th and resumes August 7th - August 18th. We will meet in-person Monday through Friday for one to three hours to learn how to transfer internal and external blockages toward peace through different peace practices that can address the culture clash challenge of transitioning into and navigating college as a student veteran. Learning to balance self-care and initiative, the virtual platform offers a range of peace references and reflection prompts to engage in purposeful online discussion.

Program interest
If you are interested in receiving a free certification that can bring peace inwardly and outwardly to your self, relationships, communities, and a new mission or purpose, click the QR code and fill out the google form.

Questions
Contact Nick Irwin at nirwin@chapman.edu

The bottom right section is divided into four colored areas, each representing a different level of peace practice:

- GLOBAL PEACE PRACTICE**
THE SYSTEMS SPACE
We build and share collective knowledge to engage and amplify a diverse realm of practices, support, and collaboration.
- COMMUNITY PEACE PRACTICE**
THE COMMUNITY SPACE
We understand systems and structures in place around the world impacting peace and how we interact with, navigate through, and collectively change them.
- INTERPERSONAL PEACE PRACTICE**
THE RELATIONSHIP SPACE
We understand theories and cultivate processes to effectively and nonviolently interact with others in our work towards peace.
- PERSONAL PEACE PRACTICE**
THE INDIVIDUAL SPACE
We learn and practice skills to honor one's self, to grow as an artisan of peace, and to develop internal practices for empathy, mindfulness, courage, forgiveness, reflection, and self-love.

A QR code is located at the bottom center of the flier.

Appendix C

Email

Dear Student Veteran Peace Practice Alliance Certification Program Enrollee,

Thank you for signing up for the Peace Practice Alliance program. The program guides participants through the integral peace leadership model and how to apply it in our work, college, and personal lives. This includes personal peace, interpersonal peace, community peace, global peace, integrating peace leadership, and reflection in action. Following a model of inform, inspire, and transform, participants will have opportunities in each module to gain knowledge and skills, actively engage and apply learnings in their own lives, and deeply reflect. Materials will be delivered through a hybrid model with readings, discussions, and assigned activities, as well as in-person meetings and discussions.

The in-person sessions will take place at Chapman University at Reeves Hall Room 111 from July 10th – July 28th and resume August 7th – August 18th at 10:00 AM. These in-person sessions will range from one to three hours depending on the content and discussion. Times outside Chapman University will be spent in an online community where participants will be able to learn different peace references and reflect on their learnings through journal prompts. These times outside class should take no more than one hour daily.

To obtain the certification, you complete the following requirements:

1. **Inform Activities:** Each module of the PPA has 3-5 inform activities. Each of these will have a brief prompt or reflection space provided at the end of the action. You must complete each inform activity - including a written response – for each of the 5 modules.
2. **Transform Activities:** Each module of the PPA has 1 transform activity. Each of these will have a brief prompt or reflection space provided at the end of the action. You must

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complete each transform activity - including a written response - for each of the 5 modules.

3. **River of Learning Reflections:** Each module of the PPA has 1 River of Learning reflection. This is a space to share lessons learned and/or reflections at the end of each module. You must complete each River of Learning reflection for each of the 5 modules.
4. **In-person session:** You must attend all in-person sessions throughout the five weeks of the PPA. Participants are allowed to miss at most 2 in-person without it affecting certification.

In addition to the program, you also can participate in a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the integral peace leadership model in addressing conflicting military socialization behaviors in college culture. This study is completely optional and will not affect the evaluation of your work during the program or toward your certification. The study will include the following additions to the program:

1. **Adult informed consent form (five to fifteen minutes)**
2. **Demographic information questionnaire (five to fifteen minutes)**
3. **Pre-interview (no more than one hour)**
4. **Post-interview (up to one and a half hours)**

If you are interested in participating in the study in addition to the program, email me your interest so we can complete the first three steps before the program commences.

Again, this study is completely optional.

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Appendix D

Demographic Information Questionnaire

Title of Study: Peacing it Together: An Outcomes Evaluation on Student Veterans' Perspectives of Integral Peace Leadership

Members of the Research Team

Lead Researcher: Nick Irwin, MLD Cell Phone: (619) 770-9618

Demographic Information Questionnaire

You are being asked to fill out the demographic information questionnaire below to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. A member of the research team will explain the study to you and will answer any questions you might have. You should take your time in deciding whether you want to participate.

Demographic Information Questionnaire

Age:

Race:

Ethnicity/Ethnicities:

Gender:

Sexual orientation:

Relationship status (e.g., single, married, divorced, or separated):

Degree pursuing (e.g., bachelor, masters, doctorate, etc.):

Major:

Branch of Service:

Age joined:

Years and months of service:

Separated, retired, or medically retired rank (E1-E9):

Date of separation or retirement:

Type of discharge:

Primary occupation in service (e.g., combat arms, special operations, electronics/electrical repair, health care, aviation, supply, engineering, deck, information systems, administration, intelligence, etc.):

Duty stations:

Number and locations of deployments:

Wars and/or operations supported during service:

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix E



ADULT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: Peacing it Together: A Program Evaluation on Student Veterans' Perspectives of Integral Peace Leadership

Members of the Research Team

Principal Investigator: Whitney McIntyre Miller, Ph.D. Cell Phone: (619) 829-4141

Key information

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. A member of the research team will explain the study to you and will answer any questions you might have. You should take your time in deciding whether you want to participate.

If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve

- Post 9/11 enlisted veterans who served a minimum of four years of service in the United States military, conducted a minimum of one deployment, not currently serving in Active, Reserve or Guard status, enrolled in the program, and are a student
- Procedures will include pre-interview, journal entries, discussions, and post-interview
- There are two number of visits
- These visits will take 1- 1 and a half hours in total
- There are no risks associated with this study that exceed what would typically be encountered in daily life
- You will not be paid for your participation
- You will be provided a copy of this consent form

Invitation

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you are a Post 9/11 enlisted veteran who served a minimum of 4 years of service in the United States military, conducted a minimum of one deployment, not currently serving in Active, Reserve or Guard status, and are a student.

What is the reason for doing this research study?

Student veterans experience transition difficulties when entering higher education because of the differences in socialization and culture between military and higher education (Pascarella et al., 1986; Tinto, 1988; Vacchi & Berger, 2014). Presently, there is a paucity of a comprehensive model that addresses the transition difficulties of joining and navigating an academic community among student veterans (Vacchi & Berger, 2014). The purpose of this research is to explore whether an adapted PPA model of integral peace leadership (McIntyre

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Miller & Green, 2015; McIntyre Miller & Alomair, 2022) can potentially address conflicting military socialization behaviors in a college culture by learning peace practices to create a positive change in student veterans' lives. Integral peace leadership is a concept that is "a proactive, intentional approach of individual and collective action built through the interconnected development of skills and practices in order to challenge violence and aggression and create positive, just change" (McIntyre Miller, 2022). This study will provide one of the first opportunities to evaluate the real-world value and implications of integral peace leadership work with student veterans.

What will be done during this research study?

You will be asked to fill out a demographic information questionnaire, participate in a pre-interview via Zoom or in person, and conduct journal entry before starting a five-week Integral Peace Leadership curriculum. During the interview, you will be asked about your transition into college and some of the challenges you have faced navigating into college as a student veteran. Then, you will be asked to attend and interact in a five-week hybrid integral peace leadership curriculum where you will be asked to co-create an understanding of peace practices with other enlisted student veterans in personal, interpersonal, community, and global peace. When you are not in class, you will be asked to conduct weekly modules and write reflection journals online about your insights relating to the peace practice under study. (Note: conducting all in-person sessions and modules earns an endorsed certificate from Euphrates Institute). Upon finishing the five-week hybrid integral peace leadership curriculum, you will be asked to participate in a post-interview via Zoom or in person about your learning, peace leadership, and its contributions to your transition and navigation in your college experience.

How will my [data/samples/images] be used?

Data from your interviews, discussions, and journals will be used by the researchers to further understand peace leadership and its contributions toward your transition into and navigation through college. All answers will be kept confidential and identifiable information will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team.

What are your possible risks of being in this research study?

As with any study involving the collection of data, there is the possibility of a breach of confidentiality of data. Other risks in this research include possible emotional and/or psychological distress because the interviews may involve sensitive questions about your transition.

What are the possible benefits to you?

Potential benefits to the subjects of this study may help with their transition into and navigation through college by obtaining greater personal peace, interpersonal peace, self-awareness, a better sense of purpose, stronger peace leadership potential, and a more positive impact on their community peacebuilding practice. However, you may not get any benefit from being in this research study.

What are the possible benefits to other people?

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By increasing peace leadership potential in student veterans, there can be an increase in the collective peace leadership practices within their communities in larger systems and structures. As peace leadership theory has been largely abstract at this point, another potential scientific benefit of this study would be a greater operational understanding of how peace leadership can be cultivated in community settings.

What are the alternatives to being in this research study?

Instead of being in this research study, you can choose not to participate.

When will participating in the study cost you?

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

Will you be compensated for being in this research study?

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research study.

What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?

Your welfare is the major concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in the study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

How will information about you be protected?

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The data will be stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study. The only people who will have access to your research records are the members of the research team, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. Information from this study will be published in a dissertation and may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as a group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

What are your rights as a research subject?

You may ask any questions about this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in the study or during the study.

For study-related questions, please contact the investigator listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research, contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (714) 628-2833 or irb@chapman.edu.

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study (i.e., “withdraw”) at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Chapman University. You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

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Documentation of informed consent

You are voluntarily deciding whether to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered, and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

VIDEO RECORDING:

I have received an adequate description of the purpose and procedures for video recording sessions during the proposed research. I give my consent to allow myself to be video recorded during participation in this study, and for those records to be reviewed by persons involved in the study, as well as other professional purposes as described to me.

_____ **Yes**, I agree to allow the research team to **video record** my participation.

_____ **No**, I do not wish to have my participation **video recorded**.

Signature of Participant

Date

Investigator certification:

My signature certifies that all elements of informed consent described on this consent form have been explained fully to the subject. In my judgment, the participant possesses the capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research and is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent to participate.

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

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Appendix F

Pre-Interview

Introduction

Thank you for participating in my research study and agreeing to discuss the life-changing events you experienced during and after military service. Throughout our time together today, I will ask you some questions and then listen and make notes about your transition experiences. Please take as much time as you are willing to share. Please know that if any questions could cause distress, you can forgo answering those. I will now ask you questions about your military and civilian experience.

1. Can you tell me about your transition into college from the military as a civilian?
2. How does military culture influence your transition into and navigation through college?
3. What has been the most challenging thing about transitioning into and navigating through college?
 - a. In what ways do these adversities impact your experience on campus, off campus, in communities, in jobs, in interests, in relationships, and within your family?
 - b. Can you please tell me if these adversities have impacted your ability to access your intuition, creativity, and ability to connect with yourself and others emotionally and if so, how?
 - c. How do these adversities impact your ability to find purpose and meaning in the civilian world?

- d. What do these adversities mean to you?
- e. Knowing what you know now about these adversities, what areas do you want to work on in the integral peace leadership program?

Closing

Thank you so much again for sharing your transition experience as a service member and for advising on how to help student veterans. I will be creating a transcript of our conversation and conducting an analysis to find common themes. I will contact you once my research is complete to verify my interpretation speaks truth to your experience. Your thoughts, ideas, and experiences you shared with me today will help many other student veterans in the future. Thank you again for your time and efforts.

Appendix G

Post-Interview

Introduction

Thank you for participating in my research study and agreeing to discuss your peace leadership curriculum experience. Throughout our time together today, I will ask you some questions and then listen and make notes about your peace leadership curriculum experience. Please take as much time as you are willing to share. Please know that if any questions could cause distress, you can forgo answering those. I will now ask you questions about your peace leadership curriculum experience.

1. First, can you tell me about your experience with the integral peace leadership program from start to finish?
2. What are the specific areas of integral peace leadership that resonate with you most?
 - a. Why did you choose these specific areas of integral peace leadership over others?
 - b. What do these specific areas of integral peace leadership mean to you?
3. Overall, how do you view the integral peace leadership program as a tool to foster college transition and navigation?
4. In either your opinion or your experience, in what ways, if any, does the integral peace leadership program provide value for transitioning into and navigating through college?
 - a. How do you see integral peace leadership contributing to your college transition experience?

- b. Why do you feel integral peace leadership contributes to your college transition experience?
 - c. How do you see yourself applying integral peace leadership learning to navigate your college experience?
5. Knowing what you know now about integral peace leadership, what changes have you made in your life or looking to change?

Closing

Thank you so much again for sharing your peace leadership curriculum experience. I will be creating a transcript of our conversation and conducting an analysis to find common themes. I will contact you once my research is complete to verify my interpretation speaks truth to your experience. Your thoughts, ideas, and experiences you shared with me today will help many other student veterans in the future. Thank you again for your time and efforts.

Appendix H

Group Discussion Questions

Session 1 Day 2

Part 1

1. What kinds of peace practices are working for you now?
2. What is working for you to find calm in the “Heat of the Moment”?
3. How would you describe your sense of inner peace?
4. What level of commitment are you bringing to include personal peace practices in your life?
5. What do you imagine being able to do differently?
6. Did you notice any differences between hard eyes and soft eyes? If so, what were they and why?
7. How can you notice if you are using hard eyes when you are trying to connect or respect others with soft eyes?
8. In the military, we were often stuck in hard eyes because we see another person or situation with judgment, nervousness, anger, or intensity. How do you envision yourself using soft eyes in situations where you want to have empathy or connect with others?

Session 2 Day 3

1. Looking over these trauma responses, please provide some examples of how these stress responses showed up in your military experience?
2. In what ways do these stress responses still show up in your life as a student veteran outside of the military?

3. Knowing what you know now about these trauma responses, how do you envision yourself using your personal peace practice to navigate your college experience?
4. Looking over these feel-good hormones, how did you prioritize these hormones in your military experience?
5. In what ways do you prioritize feel good hormones in your life today?
6. Knowing what you know now about these feel-good hormones, how do you envision yourself prioritizing feel good hormones as a tool for your life today?

Session 3 Day 5

1. What are the key concepts and skills learned that you will take with you?
2. How have you changed? How would you describe personal learnings that are important for you?
3. What are life-long learnings for you? What are the essences of peacebuilding and learning that you want to keep for a lifetime?

Session 4 Day 6

1. What do you notice in your body right now?
2. What was this exercise like for you? Perhaps you can say what your role was like as a speaker, listener, or detective.
3. What did someone specifically do to make your life more wonderful?
4. What need or needs did that action contribute to or what needs of yours were satisfied by the actions of the other person?
5. How do you feel right now?
6. How would describe your way to savor gratitude in this feeling?
7. What did you do to help make this action possible?

8. How does receiving this gift affect your life or your well-being?
9. If you were to share this gratitude with a person, would you have a request?

Session 5 Day 7

1. How did it feel to share from the heart uninterrupted? How did it feel to share for that long? Is it rare for you to have that kind of time to talk?
2. How did it feel to listen for that long? Was it hard to not interject? Did you find yourself getting curious or staying in your own story/head?
3. How was it different from a usual talking exchange with others? What did you learn about yourself in the process?
4. After 1 week of engaging in your new personal peace practice, how is your practice going?
5. What are you noticing?
6. What has been challenging for you in this practice, what has been enriching?
7. How can this community support you to continue your personal peace practice?

Session 6 Day 9

1. Can you think of other times when you sit in a Circle either at home or with your friends?
Can you tell us about these times?
2. What do you think it means to speak from your heart?
3. If you were in an argument with a loved one – someone very important in your life – what value would you want to guide you in listening and talking to them?
4. Is it easy to commit to these values in practice? Why or why not?
5. What are the key concepts and skills learned that you will take with you?

6. How have you changed? How would you describe personal learnings that are important for you?
7. What are life-long learnings for you? What are the essences of peacebuilding and learning that you want to keep for a lifetime?

Session 7 Day 11

1. What emerged for you while creating the cluster map?
2. What emerged for you as we discussed the relational approach of systems thinking?
3. What emerged for you when creating the program?
4. How can you utilize and apply relational approaches to systems thinking in your efforts forward?
5. What are the key concepts and skills learned that you will take with you?
6. How have you changed? How would you describe personal learnings that are important for you?
7. What are life-long learnings for you? What are the essences of peacebuilding and learning that you want to keep for a lifetime?

Session 8 Day 13

1. What struck you most about the cycles?
2. What are the steps of taking responsibility?
3. What are the main steps of the system of trust?

Session 9 Day 16

1. What social change model roles call to you?

2. What role(s) do you feel comfortable and natural playing, and why? What role(s) make you come alive, and why? Are there any differences between these two responses for you to explore?
3. What is the impact of playing these roles on you – physically, energetically, emotionally, or spiritually? What/who sustains you?
4. In your role(s), how often do you vision and dream? What is the effect of repetition and redundancy, or compromise and sacrifice in the roles you play?
5. What story emerges about you when you review the map and your reflections?

Session 10 Day 18

1. Choose one word to symbolize your intention for your peace leadership practice. You can return to this word anytime you need a boost of energy, a centering of self, or simply to pause and set intention.
2. In all that you've learned since the start of the PPA, what most speaks to your heart?
3. What are three profound lessons I have learned from others in my PPA community?
4. What is my personal theory of change? How do I see change happening in the world?
5. When in my life has a small act rippled beyond expectations? When in my life has my individual action(s) impacted the whole?
6. What does inner transformation mean? When in my life have I experienced it? What transformational, if any, has happened for me in the last three weeks?
7. How does my own transformation affect and impact my relationships, my community, and the world?

Session 11 Day 19

1. What are my specific leadership strengths?

2. What capacities and competencies do I want to grow in my peace leadership practice?
3. My personal peace leadership mantra is?
4. To me, practicing peace leadership means...