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USING PHOTOVOICE TO UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AS IT IMPACTS TRANSITIONS FOR STUDENT VETERANS

by

Caitlin Gene Dobson

A Thesis Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science

in Occupational Therapy

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

December 2017

ABSTRACT

USING PHOTOVOICE TO UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AS IT IMPACTS TRANSITIONS FOR STUDENT VETERANS

by

Caitlin Gene Dobson

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2017
Under the Supervision of Professor Virginia Stoffel

Student veterans encounter a variety of social pressures that civilian students do not, making the transition from military life to student civilian challenging. The issue of military personnel transitioning to roles as student veterans is one that is relevant to occupational therapy, as the profession promotes *social participation* as a meaningful occupation. It has been found that veterans find social relationships to be a critical challenge in the process of transitioning to the university and the civilian world (Plach & Haertlein Sells, 2013).

Additionally, this issue is important to occupational therapy as a factor in promoting mental health. Mental health disorders are common in the military, despite the stigma against them. Post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, traumatic brain injuries, substance use disorders, and suicide are all major causes of concern within the military population (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008; Pickett et al., 2015; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Epidemiology Program, 2015). Social support has been shown to positively effect these disorders or their symptoms (Kalpakjian, Lam, Toussaint, Hansen Merbitz, 2004; Pietrzak et al., 2009; Southwick, Vythilingham, & Charney, 2005).

This undertaking, the Student Veteran Social Participation Photovoice Project (SVSP3), aimed to provide participants with an opportunity to communicate their needs to the community through photovoice methodology. This methodology necessitates that participants take an active role in the research process, which facilitated self-expression, introspection, and exploration of the transition process. The project provides qualitative data that can be used to enhance the student veteran transition experience (from programs to support services and resources), to expand upon the literature on student veterans, and to promote occupational justice (defined as social change that better supports inclusion and the occupational needs of everyone in society) for the student veteran population (Braveman & Suarez-Balcazar, 2009).

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First, I want to thank the participants. Without you, there would be no project. I am eternally grateful for your time and willingness to share your stories. It is my hope that this project will help transform campuses in ways that positively affect military and student veterans. You are all valued parts of our university community, and I've enjoyed working with each one of you.

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Thanks to my parents, who've always believed in my potential. You never treated my goals as childish dreams, but as real possibilities. No matter what crazy endeavor I chose, you both believed in my ability to not only make it work, but to excel. That belief has been a light in the back of my mind, shining even when things have been dark. You both have my love.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and Operation New Dawn (OND) spanned between 2001 and 2014 (Torreon, 2017). Approximately 2.7 million servicemen and servicewomen served in these operations (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Epidemiology Program, 2015). A variety of challenges await them at the end of service, including reintegration into civilian life. For the veterans who decide to go to college the social challenge is more complex, as student veterans must not only readjust to civilian culture but also learn how to fit into university culture after having acclimated to the unique culture of the military (Romero, Riggs, & Ruggero, 2015). An estimated one third of veterans will take advantage of the GI Bill, which provides educational awards for eligible veterans seeking higher education (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008).

Reintegration into civilian life is relevant to occupational therapists in that the profession recognizes *social participation* as a meaningful occupation. The transition process that occurs when leaving the military changes the way in which veterans engage in *social participation*. Veterans who maintain strong social support networks have better mental health and a stronger ability to adapt academically (Whiteman, Barry, Mroczek, & MacDermid, 2013). *Social participation* is made more complicated for veterans who suffer from mental health disorders, traumatic brain injury, and substance use, and social support has been shown to have buffering effect upon these factors Kalpakjian, Lam, Toussaint, Hansen Merbitz, 2004; Southwick, Vythilingham, & Charney, 2005; Pietrzak et al., 2009).

The aim of this study, the Student Veteran Social Participation Photovoice Project (SVSP3), is to elicit more information about the way in which student veterans experience *social participation*. The project will use photovoice methodology, a participatory action research methodology that allows research participants to guide the research process in order to make sure it adequately represents their points of view.

Research Question

The primary research question is: What information can be gained from OEF/OIF/OND student veterans regarding their experiences with *social participation* and the transition process from military to civilian student life?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background on Military Culture

The five branches of the armed forces are the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard. In general, the military culture emphasizes an attitude of diligence and integrity (Romesser, Head, Richins, Molesky, & Griffiths, 2013). A structured environment is valued, which includes social integration, collectivism rather than individualism, constantly participating in training, respect for rules, and observance of the ranked leadership hierarchy known as the "chain of command" (Bryan, Jennings, Jobe, & Bradley, 2012; Plach & Haertlein Sells, 2013; Redmond et al., 2015; Tomar & Stoffel, 2014). There is a sense of oneness cultivated in the military culture and those who have served feel a bond among one another from their shared experiences and the "warrior ethos," a mindset of adhering to one's duties, refusing to lose, and taking care of fellow servicemen and servicewomen as "battle buddies" (Redmond et al., 2015; Tomar & Stoffel, 2014). Social theorist Roberto Mangabeira Unger (1987) has described this mentality and its qualities of constant vigilance and readiness: "Warfare may seem to require unthinking obedience and ruthless command. … [Troops] must, on the contrary, be ready to identify and exploit the shifting opportunities of the battlefield. But neither can they depend on an unformed trust in one another and in their leaders or in a spontaneous sharing in emotion. For the thrust of battle must be able to continue even at times of despondency and fright" (pp. 158-159). Basic training is a time which solidifies this new mindset through physical and mental punishment, isolation from friends and family, a shared sense of suffering among recruits, and introduction to new dress codes, language, rules, and routines (Redmond et al., 2015). A strong

sense of camaraderie forms between recruits and their new "battle buddies" as they learn that they can all support and depend upon one another (Tomar & Stoffel, 2014).

Incidence of Mental Health Disorders, Substance Use Disorders, and Traumatic Brain Injuries within Civilian and Military Populations

Presenting the image of a dependable ally sometimes comes at the cost of troops' personal well-being. There is a strong stigma against seeking mental health services, with individuals fearing it will jeopardize job opportunities or make them appear less strong to their colleagues (Romero, Riggs, & Ruggero, 2015; True, Rigg, & Butler, 2015). For the large portion of former military personnel who pursue treatment for psychological injuries following their term of service despite the stigma, the Department of Veteran's Affairs is a common resource (Redmond et al., 2015). The category of "Mental Disorders" was among the three most common diagnoses coded at Veteran's Affairs medical centers nationwide, with 685,540 or 57.6% veterans needing mental health services out of 1,189,709 total veterans who are seeking treatment (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Epidemiology Program, 2015). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), other anxiety disorders, and depression are the three most common diagnoses (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Epidemiology Program, 2015; Pickett et al., 2015). It has been estimated that PTSD, traumatic brain injuries (TBI), and major depression impact about one-third of deployed OEF/OIF veterans, with five percent experiencing symptoms of all three conditions (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). Additionally, substance use disorders overlap with TBI and with mental health disorders, especially PTSD and major depressive disorder.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

It has been estimated that 7% to 8% of individuals within the general population will experience PTSD within their lifetimes, and that 11% to 20% of all OIF and OEF veterans

experience PTSD during a given year (National Center for PTSD, 2016). As illustrated by Unger (1987), combat personnel must remain vigilant and aware at all times, continually evaluating the environment around them for threats and opportunities while suppressing fear. This demand in conjunction with exposure to violent and distressing events can cause the body to maintain abnormally low levels of cortisol that are unable to deactivate the sympathetic nervous system's "fight-or-flight," causing PTSD to develop (Grinage, 2003). The Quarterly Report released by the VA in September 2015 reported PTSD as the most commonly diagnosed mental health disorder, making up nearly 32% of all VA diagnoses (see Table 1) (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Epidemiology Program, 2015). PTSD results due to exposure to trauma, with 25% to 30% of individuals who experience a traumatic event developing PTSD symptoms; military combat is one of the most common reasons for males to develop PTSD (Grinage, 2003).

Table 1

Number of Veterans with Mental Disorders among OEF/OIF/OND Veterans Evaluated at VA Facilities: Cumulative Numbers, FY 2002 through Specified Quarter (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Epidemiology Program, 2015)

Specified Quarter	**Qtr3 FY14 Number of OEF/OIF/OND Veterans**	**Qtr4 FY14 Number of OEF/OIF/OND Veterans**	**Qtr1 FY15 Number of OEF/OIF/OND Veterans**	**Qtr2 FY15 Number of OEF/OIF/OND Veterans**
Number with a Possible Mental Disorder	615,922	640,537	662,722	685,540
Diagnosis (ICD-9-CM Codes)				
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (309.81)	337,285	351,422	364,894	378,993
Depressive Disorders (311)	270,005	282,565	294,967	308,336
Neurotic Disorders (300)	254,972	269,151	281,992	295,403
Affective Psychoses (296)	168,747	177,597	185,826	193,886

Alcohol Dependence Syndrome (303)	78,575	82,055	85,256	88.680
Nondependent Abuse of Drugs (305)	60,010	63,205	66,107	69,271
Special Symptoms, Not Elsewhere Classified (307)	50,623	53,196	55,733	58,398
Drug Dependence (304)	45,057	47,374	49,560	51,798
Sexual Deviations and Disorders (302)	38.089	39,185	40,746	43,308
Specific Nonpsychotic Mental Disorder due to Organic Brain Damage (310)	35,118	35,850	36,584	n/a

Depression

Depressive disorders were the second most common mental health diagnosis, making up nearly 26% of all cases within the VA (see Figure 1) (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Epidemiology Program, 2015). In contrast, only 6.6% of noninstitutionalized civilians over 18 had at least one major depressive episode within the past year (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2015). Depression causes individuals to experience a diverse array of symptoms that impact both the mind and the body, causing problems in areas such as weight, psychomotor skills, sleep, energy levels, interest levels, and overall mood (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). For the 16% of troops who deploy at least three times the likelihood of developing depression becomes 27% (Institute of Medicine, 2013; Redmond et al., 2015). In addition, depression overlapping with another psychiatric disorder is extremely common (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). Nearly half of those diagnosed with PTSD have major depression, not including the over 20% diagnosed with dysthymia, a less severe but generally longer lasting form of

depression (Grinage, 2003; Harvard Health Publications, 2000). Veterans with comorbid depression and PTSD have scored lower on measurements of both physical and mental health-related quality of life (Pittman, Goldsmith, Lemmer, Kilmer, & Baker, 2012). Tanielian and Jaycox (2008) found that depression occurs among one third of individuals with TBIs, contributing to heightened risk of suicide and more difficulty with emotional regulation, *social participation*, and coping with stress.

Traumatic Brain Injury

Another condition impacting our current population of veterans is TBI. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) have been a signature threat for deployed troops in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, putting them at higher risk for TBIs (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). It has been estimated that while 12% of combat related casualties in Vietnam were due to TBI, the number has elevated to 22% for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan (Summerall, 2016). Among veterans and individuals currently serving from 2000 to 2016, 347,962 traumatic injuries were reported (Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, 2016). According to the VA's September 2015 Quarterly Report, "Specific Nonpsychotic Mental Disorder due to Organic Brain Damage" made the list of the top 10 most common mental disorders from the third quarter of 2014 to the first quarter of 2015 (see Figure 1) (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Epidemiology Program, 2015). Mental disorders due to organic brain damage occur due to physical injuries like brain hemorrhages, blood clots in the subdural space, and unconsciousness following head trauma, all of which are strongly associated with TBIs (U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2016; Defense Centers of Excellence, 2010).

TBIs result from skull fractures, concussions, cuts in the cerebrum, and brain hemorrhages (Defense Centers of Excellence, 2010; Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center,

2016). They are classified as mild, moderate, severe, and penetrating based upon results of a CT scan, how long one experiences unconsciousness, confusion, disorientation, or memory loss, and whether the scalp, skull, and dura mater have been penetrated (Defense Centers of Excellence, 2010). Mild TBIs (mTBIs) make up approximately 80% of civilian TBIs and 82.3% of military TBIs; however, mTBIs are acquired differently among the military population, usually occurring due to surviving combat-related violence and blasts (Summerall, 2016).

The long-term effects of a TBI can be both cognitive and physical, with issues relevant to *social participation* including problems with memory, attention, learning, executive functioning, and mood disturbances (Sendroy-Terrill, Whiteneck, & Brooks, 2010). Anxiety is likely to be comorbid with TBIs (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). Approximately 10% to 15% of individuals who have experienced a mTBI will experience post-concussive symptoms including headache, tinnitus, insomnia, difficulties in memory and attention, irritability, depression, anxiety and behavioral problems, and these symptoms are likely to persist longer than within veteran populations (Defense Centers of Excellence, 2010; Summerall, 2016). Individuals aging with a TBI show cognitive decline, lower levels of positive behaviors that enhance health and wellness, assessment scores showing dissatisfaction with life and productivity levels, difficulty in areas such as managing stress, and problems with *social participation* in comparison with other individuals with disabilities (Braden, Cuthbert, Brenner, Hawley, Morey, Newman, Staniszewski, & Harrison-Felix, 2012; Sendroy-Terrill, Whiteneck, & Brooks, 2010).

Substance Use Disorders

Substance use disorders are another condition common in the veteran population. Substance use has commonly been reported by veterans as a coping behavior (Gregg, Kitzman, & Shordike, 2016; Plach & Haertlein Sells, 2013). Among the US civilian population in 2014,

20.2 million or 8.4% of adults had a SUD within the past year, 7.9 million of whom also had a mental illness within the past year (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2015). In contrast, the VA reported a total of 209,749 cases (17.6% of all VA cases) of either alcohol dependence syndrome, drug dependence, or nondependent abuse of drugs (see Figure 1) (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Epidemiology Program, 2015). It has been approximated that 21% to 43% of individuals with PTSD will have a substance use disorder, and in studies of veterans with PTSD, alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence has been estimated to be as high as 75% (Schäfer & Najavits, 2007). In a photovoice study by True, Rigg, and Butler (2015), two of the 29 veteran participants expressed concern about coping with drugs—one shared a photo of vodka and ZzzQuil, both of which he found necessary aids for sleep and forgetting traumatic events; the other admitted her fear of being found out as an illegal marijuana user.

Suicide Risk

The types of experiences and medical conditions that impact the veteran population make them particularly vulnerable to suicide. Risk of suicide increases with the severity of symptoms of depression, PTSD, or TBI, presence of a substance use disorder, and combat experience (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). Though a high distress tolerance (DT), or ability to cope with negative events that impact the individual physically or psychologically, can be an asset for military personnel, it is also linked to a higher ability to act on suicidal impulses—individuals with higher DT are more likely to overcome the fear, pain, or other distressing factors associated with attempting suicide (Anestis, Tull, Bagge, & Gratz, 2013). In general, the ability to suppress and avoid emotions is linked to anxiety disorders and suicidal or self-injurious behaviors (Bryan, Jennings, Jobe, & Bradley, 2012). Individuals with a high DT in addition to comorbid substance

abuse and severe PTSD symptoms have a significantly increased risk of attempting suicide (Anestis, Tull, Bagge, & Gratz, 2013).

The phenomenon of military suicide can be further understood from examining the collectivist nature of the military (Bryan, Jennings, Jobe, & Bradley, 2012). In a collectivist group, the individual defines himself or herself in terms of the group rather than their own desires. The well-being of the group takes precedent over the well-being of the individual. A distressed service member may view himself or herself as weak and burdensome to the group, and may think that suicide is a better option than continuing to let his or her perceived weakness hinder the group.

These factors combined make veterans a population particularly vulnerable to suicide. In 2016, the VA released a report on suicides from 2001 through 2014, which included information from all veterans who had served on active duty, who had been activated on reserve duty, or who had served in the national guard. In 2014, suicide risk was 21% higher for veterans than civilians adjusting for age and sex, 18% higher among veteran males than civilian males, and 2.4 times higher among veteran females than civilian females. Veterans ages 18 to 29 had the highest suicide rate by age group (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2016).

Transitioning to Civilian Life and the University

Mental distress represents a significant factor in many veterans' transitions to university student life. However, regardless of trauma or medical diagnosis, relating to civilians on a social level has its own set of challenges. Entering the military, deploying, and returning home all involve transitions through different performance roles and unpredictable circumstances (AOTA 2014; DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008). A study assessing occupational performance of 30 veteran students identified *social participation* as being in the top five self-rated occupational

performance deficits for 77% of participants (Plach & Haertlein Sells, 2013). Another study piloting a life skills program found that veteran students (N = 13) felt they had issues dealing with peers outside of their age range and interacting in a pleasant way, and found the structure of the university did not promote a spirit of camaraderie the way the military did (Gregg, Kitzman, & Shordike, 2016). Some students reported a desire to reenlist due to the loss of camaraderie in the civilian world (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008). It was also reported that non-veteran students do not always relate to veterans' experience, and may not understand that certain questions or comments can be uncomfortable or offensive—some veterans feel uncomfortable being thanked for their service, and asking if a veteran has killed someone is extremely rude (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Gregg, Kitzman, & Shordike, 2016; Plach & Haertlein Sells, 2013). Different political views and policies of the school may also act to create distance between the veteran and his or her classmates and instructors (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008).

In the Plach and Haertlein Sells (2013) study, 70% of student veterans identified the transition from their military roles to student roles as the cause of a variety of occupational performance problems. Concentration problems, acclimating to the less structured university setting, keeping up with the pacing of course material, feeling too experienced for the coursework, feeling unprepared for coursework, and making time for coursework as well as life outside of school are all examples of problems veterans experience when returning to school (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Gregg, Kitzman, & Shordike, 2016; Plach & Haertlein Sells, 2013). Additionally, active-duty students who had to deploy in the middle of a term felt that it was especially difficult to reacclimate to the student role with the same level of focus when returning from deployment (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008).

Implications of Social Connections

Social connections outside of school also have a role in the well-being of the veteran. Social support is connected to resilience (the ability to cope with negative circumstances), which is a quality linked to a lower incidence of PTSD and depression within military and civilian populations (Pietrzak et al., 2009; Southwick, Vythilingham, & Charney, 2005). Decreased social support has been studied in a variety of populations and correlates to higher levels of both physical and mental illnesses (Southwick, Vythilingham, & Charney, 2005). Support from one's military unit has been found to increase resilience, and post-deployment social support was also linked to decreased PTSD and depression (Pietrzak et al., 2009; Southwick, Vythilingham, & Charney, 2005). Both social support and oxytocin, a hormone involved in processing of social behaviors and stress reduction, have been shown to decrease levels of the stress hormone cortisol (Heinrichs, Baumgartner, Kirschbaum, & Ehlert, 2003; Southwick, Vythilingham, & Charney, 2005).

Social support impacts an individual's choice to use problem-focused coping strategies or avoidant coping strategies (Romero, Riggs, & Ruggero, 2015). Avoidant coping is more common among veteran students than civilian students, and can be characterized as taking steps to refocus without encountering the problem, such as using alcohol to suppress emotions (Romero, Riggs, & Ruggero, 2015). Individuals with high levels of social support are less likely to adopt habits like smoking, high alcohol intake, and are more likely to eat healthy foods (Southwick, Vythilingham, & Charney, 2005). Furthermore, avoidant coping is associated with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and PTSD (Romero, Riggs, & Ruggero, 2015). Avoidant coping may have benefits in the military environment, whereas coping strategies that focus on solving stress-related problems are better tailored to college life. Accordingly, problem-focused

coping (in which an individual directly addresses ways to deal with the stress factor) is associated with lower levels of depression, anxiety, and PTSD symptoms. In addition, family social support was positively correlated with problem-focused coping, negatively correlated with depression, anxiety, and PTSD, and had a protective effect which lessened the effects of avoidant coping strategies.

The military lifestyle can present challenges to maintaining social support. Deployments can take a toll on relationships and family lives, and the spouse may observe changes in their sexual relationship, problems with communication, issues with the veteran partner seeming less invested in the relationship, and other changes, especially in cases where the veteran has PTSD or has experienced a TBI (Romesser, Head, Richins, Molesky, & Griffiths, 2013; Redmond et al., 2015). It can be difficult for the veteran to readjust to life within the family environment and reassume the social roles of partner or parent (Redmond et al., 2015). Divorce rates heighten under these conditions (Redmond et al., 2015). Compared to older veterans (71 to 96 years of age), veterans who are younger (21 to 46 years of age) have reported lower levels of perceived social support, fewer close friends and relatives, and feel less integrated into their community (Weiner, Monin, Mota, & Pietrzak, 2016). Those with lower levels of perceived social support reported higher levels of mental health difficulties.

Purpose and the Role of Occupational Therapy

The aim of this study is to elicit stories and images from student veterans with regard to their own social relationships and *social participation* within the context of their daily lives. This will include gaining and analyzing these veterans' perspectives in order to contribute to the larger body of literature on student veterans and veteran *social participation*. *Social participation* is one of the eight domains of *occupation* as described by the third edition of the Occupational

Therapy Practice Framework (OTPF) (AOTA, 2014). It includes interactions with one's community, family, peers, and friends, encompassing interactions in large groups as well as small and covering a wide range of social activity, from spiritual practice to workplace socialization to intimate partnership (AOTA, 2014). *Social participation* continues to be addressed both directly and indirectly throughout other areas of the OTPF. For instance, *client factors* include one's *values, beliefs,* and *spirituality*, all of which are intrinsically tied to one's sociocultural environment. *Performance skills* describes the way in which social-emotional skills impact the individual, such as the ability to initiate and end social contact, to speak fluently, to use eye contact, to use touch, and to express emotion. *Performance roles* describes a *role* as a pattern in behavior linked to an individual's personal identity and the societal expectations set for that individual; the section further explains that occupations chosen by a client match with the *role* he or she sees for him or herself. Within *contexts and environments, social participation* is defined as adhering to one's expectations within specific groups, relationships, and roles; it plays a part in each of this section's subcategories. As pervasive as it is within the domains of the OTPF, *social participation* is inarguably one of the most important parts of human life, equal in value to some of the more fundamental occupations like acts of daily living (ADLs) and being a necessary part of others like instrumental acts of daily living (IADLs), work, and education. For this reason, *social participation* has been chosen as the primary focus of this study, which will be referred to as the Student Veteran Social Participation Photovoice Project (SVSP3).

Much has been written about veterans, but less so about veteran students and even less so about this population's ability to transition into civilian life and maintain strong social supports (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008). The project adheres to the OTPF in its strong client-centered spirit. The intervention process as outlined by the OTPF emphasizes the client-centered

nature of designing OT interventions, with the end goals of health promotion, well-being, and participation. Education and advocacy are both important parts of the process (AOTA, 2014). The SVSP3 aligns with each of these aims by empowering the participant to guide the research process and the intervention through the use of participatory action research (PAR) methodology. As project centered on *social participation*, which touches every domain in the OTPF, the SVSP3 is at its core an effort in research that is true to the profession of occupational therapy. The population of interest for this project, military veterans, can be credited with helping the profession of occupational therapy to emerge in World War I, as therapists administered purposeful interventions to wounded veterans (Tomar, 2012). This project continues the tradition of serving our veteran population.

Student Veteran Social Participation Photovoice Project Methodology

This project focuses on allowing participants an opportunity for self-expression and advocacy for themselves within the university setting; therefore, participatory action research (PAR) methods are the most appropriate for the project. PAR is concerned with taking action, analyzing power structures within a given context, and allowing study participants to share control with researchers (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006). Empowering the participants and their communities through granting them an active part in research is an integral part of this methodology. It values individuals' lived experiences, and seeks to simultaneously stimulate action toward change and inspire individuals to view their contexts more critically. PAR can use both qualitative and quantitative research methods depending on the specific context of the research question. PAR was used predominantly for needs assessments in areas with low access to resources, and has grown in popularity within the field of health research.

As a means of activism, photography is unique in its ability to reach a wide audience. Writer and filmmaker Susan Sontag has described this power in her book on violent imagery in society, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), stating, "In contrast to a written account—which, depending on its complexity … is pitched at a larger or smaller readership—a photograph has only one language and is destined potentially for all" (pp. 13). Photovoice is a PAR method rooted in feminist theory, education methods, the photography community, and the experience of clinicians (Wang & Burris, 1997). It is a unique "needs assessment" in its focus on identification of problems by the affected individuals, visibility for unseen populations, and provision of the camera in order to elicit the perspective of those who might otherwise not have access to resources that would enable self-expression. It is used to collect data on what is important to a particular group, to stimulate discussion and change within communities and among lawmakers, and to provide a level of detail and subjective information in a different manner than traditional research methods.

The key concepts of photovoice as described by Wang (1999) are as follows:

1) Images teach
2) Pictures can influence policy
3) Community people ought to participate in creating and defining the images that shape healthful public policy
4) The process requires that planners bring to the table from the outset policymakers and other influential people to serve as an audience for community people's perspectives
5) Photovoice emphasizes individual and community action

Training on photovoice can be adapted to the group of interest, but should include instruction on how to use the camera, discussing what sort of photographs are ethical, and how the study will

use the photographs (Wang & Burris, 1997). Participants should choose the photographs, explain the meaning behind them, and assist in attaching issues, themes, or theories that may be visible in the photographs.

A 2015 study by True, Rigg, and Butler used photovoice to document the experiences of OEF-OIF veterans receiving mental health services. The study analyzed photographs and interviews from 29 veterans, who reported feeling like they had to constantly stay tough and battle ready, often neglecting their own mental and physical health in the process. It was reported that individuals who have been sexually assaulted, who abuse prescription drugs or illegal substances, or who experience conditions like PTSD, anxiety, or depression often avoid treatment due to the fear of showing weakness or jeopardizing his or her career. Interviewees also reported that interactions with healthcare providers often resulted in feelings of "sanctuary trauma," defined as when one seeks treatment only to feel unsupported and further stigmatized.

Understanding the origins of photovoice and the interviews collected by True, Rigg, and Butler (2015) underscores the need for an additional, participatory component of analysis within the SVSP3. It is important that in developing this project the needs of the population are taken into account; additionally, it has been shown that health care professionals do not always foster a culture of trust with their veteran patients. A participatory method will help to shift the power into the hands of those who are volunteering to participate, rather than putting ourselves into an authoritative position as researchers. As stated by Sontag (2003), photographs make events seem more real and are inherently both objective and subjective—objective because the camera, a machine, creates the image, and subjective because a human chose to record the image. By using photovoice, it is hoped that the veteran experience will become more real to viewers, and be seen for both the actual image it features, as well as the veteran's personal perspective behind it.

Occupational Constructs

The concept of occupational justice is linked to the central goals of the SVSP3. Occupational justice refers to the idea that societies are inherently responsible for making meaningful occupational opportunities for their people (Braveman & Suarez-Balcazar, 2009). The concept of occupational justice is naturally aligned with the concept of social justice, which examines issues such as power relationships and the distribution of resources and opportunities among societies (Braveman & Suarez-Balcazar, 2009). The occupational therapy profession is particularly concerned with examining social justice through the lens of occupational opportunities, identifying instances in which individuals with functional limitations are deprived from engaging in certain occupations, and advocating for social change that will better support the occupational needs of every individual within a society (Braveman & Suarez-Balcazar, 2009; Townsend & Wilcock, 2004). Townsend and Wilcock theorize that the overall wellness of an individual or community hinges upon fulfillment of occupational needs, and further describe occupational justice as a way of facilitating equality, fairness, and opportunity for individuals and communities in their pursuits of different occupations through being non-discriminatory, and endorsing accessibility and universal design. Part of occupational justice is the idea of occupational freedom, defined as "the opportunity and ability to choose and participate in activities that are meaningful to an individual" (Plach & Haertlein Sells, 2013).

Lack of occupational justice and occupational freedom manifests in a variety of forms, and can be seen in student veteran populations. Occupational alienation refers to experiencing a social state where one feels a distinct separation from others in their community or struggles with issues of personal identity, and is common when individuals find themselves separated from their cultural setting and the occupations that are linked to it, or when their opportunities for

occupation lack meaning (Townsend & Wilcock, 2004). For student veterans who are forced to shift social and cultural roles, occupational alienation can easily occur within the social sphere. It may be difficult to find a sense of social belonging in one's university, home life, or new job if the only people encountered are far removed from the veteran's familiar military culture.

Lastly, occupational balance and imbalance describe how satisfied an individual is with the occupations in their life (Creek and Lougher, 2008, pp. 47-48). Individuals can experience occupational imbalance through being under-occupied, or lacking in meaningful occupations. Conversely, they may experience occupational imbalance through being over-occupied, or involved in too many meaningful occupations. Occupational imbalance may also occur if certain meaningful occupations are making it difficult to engage in others. For military and student veterans, *social participation* may be subject to occupational imbalance due to mental health conditions, difficulty in bonding with civilians, demands of the university, and a range of other factors to be identified by participants in the SVSP3.

Summary

In this chapter, existing literature was reviewed to justify the needs of military and veteran students in regard to the occupation of *social participation* within the context of transitioning from the military to the university. Factors like mental health difficulties and adapting to the university culture can present as obstacles. As *social participation* is an invaluable part of the OTPF, this research question is relevant to the profession of occupational therapy. It stands to reason that the research question is justified.

SPECIFIC AIMS

1) To describe how student veterans experience the transition process from military to civilian student life.

2) To learn how student veterans' *social participation* is impacted by the transition process from military to civilian student.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question of this project is: What information can be gained from OEF/OIF/OND student veterans regarding their experiences with *social participation* and the transition process from military to civilian student life?

Research questions that will help further the study include:

1) What are the contexts in which student veterans take photographs to illustrate *social participation*?
2) What consequences arise from transitioning from military to civilian student life?
3) How does *social participation* impact or become impacted by the transition process from military to civilian student life?
4) What expectations do student veterans have for the university in terms of creating an environment that promotes *social participation*?

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Design

The SVSP3 used photovoice, a PAR strategy emphasizing lived experiences. Social participation and how it relates to participants' experience in the university setting were the foci of data collection. During the first session, participants and researchers discussed the intent of the study. Participants completed the Informed Consent (Appendix A) and Demographic Form (Appendix B), and were provided with the Mental Health and Community Resources for Military and Student Veterans (Appendix C), should their participation result in any distress. During the last session, participants signed a photo release form. Others used in the workshop sessions can be viewed in Appendices D-O.

Participants were educated on the purpose of the research project, photovoice methodology, photography ethics, and writing narratives, which will be explained later in this paper. Each participant was required to either bring a device with photography capabilities, or contact the researchers for one. All participants chose to use their personal cell phones. In each session, approximately 30-60 minutes was devoted to taking pictures, while the rest of the time was used for education of participants, writing, and group discussion. This time allotment varied based on how many participants were present and whether a participant was being oriented to the photovoice process for the first time, or had already attended a session. Participants were encouraged to attend as many sessions as they wanted to refine their writing, and to create as many photovoice pieces as they wished to complete.

Data collection took place in July and August 2017 over the course of five sessions. Participants and researchers met for sessions when participants indicated that they were

available. All sessions were audio recorded, and fieldnotes were taken by the student PI during the sessions.

Participants

Participants were recruited (N = 7) from UW-Milwaukee. For participation in the study, the following inclusion criteria needed to be met:

1. Military or veteran
2. Student or alumnus/alumna enrolled in classes on campus at UW-Milwaukee within the past 12 months
3. Have served in one or more of the following military operations: Operation Enduring Freedom (October 7, 2001 – present), Operation Freedom's Sentinel (January 1, 2015 – present), Operation Iraqi Freedom (March 20, 2003 – December 18, 2011), and/or Operation New Dawn (September 1, 2010 – December 18, 2011)
4. English-speaking

Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited primarily through flyers beginning in June 2017 and ending in July 2017. Flyers were posted on the UW-Milwaukee campus in areas of high student traffic, such as the library and student union, as well as in or near locations frequented by military and veteran students including the Military Education Benefit Office (MEBO), Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) office, the Military & Veteran Resource Center (MAVRC), and the office of the VetSuccess counselor. Flyers were also distributed via email through a listserv for military and student veterans. In addition, the student PI engaged in in-person recruiting in MAVRC by speaking to students in the center, who offered their email addresses if they were interested in the project. Interested participants corresponded with the student PI via email. Participants were

encouraged to invite other students with military backgrounds who might be interested, and several followed through on this suggestion.

One challenge was the fact that recruitment took place during the summer months, when fewer military and veteran students were on campus. As a result, the number of responses to recruitment efforts was modest. For those who did respond, issues of scheduling and time commitment became barriers. It was the goal of the researchers to hold workshop sessions with more than one participant, which presented the challenge of getting multiple participants to synchronize schedules. Participants were asked to RSVP, which yielded inconsistent results—sometimes participants who had not RSVPed would show up, and sometimes participants who had RSVPed would not show up. Prospective participants stated that a six-hour time commitment was a large expectation, even when spread across two days. Some participants attended one session, but did not attend the second session.

An incentive was offered in part to increase participant retention and discourage dropouts. Participants were informed that they would receive a $50 Amazon gift card for attending both sessions, but would not receive the gift card until both sessions had been completed. However, three out of seven participants did not return for the second session. It is unclear if the incentive had an effect upon attendance.

The location of the workshop sessions was in MAVRC, where veterans often meet. This proved to be helpful in recruiting, as participants who attended MAVRC for social reasons were more likely to drop in on one of the scheduled sessions.

Sample

Seven student veterans gave consent to participate in the SVSP3. All participants were male and current students. Six identified as Caucasian. One identified as both African-American

and Hispanic/Latino. One participant was a graduate student; all others were undergraduates. Two participants lived with their partners: one participant was engaged and had a two-and-a-half-year-old son, while the other participant was married with a three-year-old son and another child on the way. One participant had served the Army, both in the Reserves and in active duty. Four out of seven participants had deployed, with a minimum deployment length of six months and a maximum deployment length of 10 months. One participant felt comfortable sharing a history of mental health treatment.

Demographic Form

The demographic form (Appendix B) was a self-report measure modified with permission from an existing form used by Plach and Haertlein Sells (2013) and Tomar and Stoffel (2014). The purpose of the form was to collect information related to participants' backgrounds in the military, as well as basic information about their personal lives. This information is intended to let the researchers gain a more complete picture of the factors impacting participants' social lives and is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Participant Demographics

Characteristic	**Number of Participants (*N*=7)**
Age (years)	
30	2
28	1
26	1
23	2
22	1

Age When Entering Military (years)		
	18	3
	20	3
	22	1
Relationship Status		
	Single	4
	Married	1
	Engaged	1
	Divorced	1
Living Status		
	Alone	2
	With roommate(s)	2
	With parents	1
	With spouse/significant other	2
Employment Status		
	Part-time	3
	Not working	4
Military Branch (active status)		
	Army (active duty)	1
	Army (both active duty and reserves)	1
	Navy (active duty)	1
	Marines (active duty)	4
Tobacco Use		

Smoker	1
Non-Smoker	5
Chewing Tobacco	1
Deployments	
3 times	2
1 times	2
Did not deploy	3

Photovoice Workshop

The focus of the SVSP3—social participation—was based on previous work by Plach and Haertlein Sells (2013), in which social participation was identified as a topic of concern for student veterans. Additionally, this study builds on a study by Tomar and Stoffel (2014), which used photovoice methodology to elicit narratives about how students experience the transition from the military to civilian student life. Therefore, this study used photovoice as a means of exploring social participation to better understand the process of transition. Participants attended photovoice workshops that provided education on understanding PAR, and how to take pictures and write narratives to tell stories others may not be aware of. Before sending participants to create their own photovoice pieces, researchers and participants discussed how advocacy is intrinsic to this methodology, potential audiences, and generated examples of important stories as they planned for their photo mission.

A significant change in this version of the workshop format was the condensed time limit. The format previously used by Tomar and Stoffel (2014) required participants to attend seven workshop sessions lasting from one and a half to two hours. The purpose of piloting a

workshop format with less of a time demand was first due to feedback that student veterans often do not have a lot of free time and might be more likely to participate in a shorter process; secondly, if successful, a shorter data collection period could be an asset to future photovoice studies.

Each session lasted approximately three hours and took place in MAVRC on campus. The location was chosen because it was a familiar, comfortable environment to many military and student veterans.

There was no cost for the participants in this study. Printed information on photovoice and snacks were provided to participants free of charge. A $50 Amazon gift card was offered to participants who completed two workshop sessions. In each session, participants were encouraged to share their social experiences pertaining to what it was like to transition from life in the military to life as a student among civilians. The student PI and the primary PI were present during all sessions to facilitate group discussion and prompt participants with questions in the form of recorded, unstructured interviews.

Session 1

The first workshop session was held on Wednesday, July 13th, 2017. Three participants attended. All participants began their first session by completing the informed consent form, confirming their schedules, and being introduced to photovoice methodology. As a means of preparing them to write narratives, the SHOWED method (Table 3) was introduced, and participants engaged in a writing exercise to apply the method. A photograph was presented to the group, and all participants (along with the PI and student PI) wrote what they saw according to the SHOWED guidelines. These sample writings were shared with the group, and participants were encouraged to discuss and ask questions about the process.

Table 3
Description of Acronym SHOWED (Tomar, 2012; Wang & Burris, 1997)

SHOWED
What do you *See* here?
What is really *Happening* here?
How does this relate to *Our* lives?
Why does this problem or strength exist?
How could this image *Educate* the community or policy makers?
What can we *Do* about it?

Participants were asked to consider the intended audience for their work, ethics of photography, and possible photographs that could help tell their stories. Researchers and participants discussed the role of advocacy in the photovoice process, and who participants wanted to influence and inform by sharing their experiences related to social participation and the transition process. Participants were informed of ways in which previous photovoice studies had changed government, institutional, and local policies. For instance, policies in China were influenced by a photovoice study of the life experiences of Chinese village women (Wang, Burris, & Ping, 1996). Their photo-narratives resulted in the following policy changes: 1) Daycare centers were developed in response to one photo-narrative depicting infants laying outside as their mothers worked heavy manual labor jobs, and another photo-narrative describing the drowning of one mother's unsupervised child; 2) Midwife training programs were developed after a photo-narrative addressed the sanitation risks that result from inaccessible skilled medical

services for mothers in labor; 3) Scholarships were made available so that low-income and high-achieving female students would be more likely to attend school. On the UWM campus, studies by Plach and Haertlein Sells (2013) and Tomar and Stoffel (2014) were influential in the development and improvement of MAVRC.

Researchers explained photovoice ethics and guidelines to participants, and offered suggestions of how to take photographs that have literal and symbolic meaning, and which represent the interests of the individual participant as well as military and student veterans as a community. Consent forms for individuals photographed by participants were distributed to participants after discussion of how to ethically take photographs of others (Appendix E).

Participants were then sent out on a "photo mission" on campus for approximately 30 minutes with the instruction to take pictures of things that resonated with them. Participants returned with their photographs and spent time reviewing the photographs, sharing with the group, discussing different perspectives, writing, giving feedback, and revising their narratives. Participants were given the option of sending the student PI their narratives to edit for mechanics, or to edit them at home.

At the end of the first session, participants were encouraged to send photographs and narratives to the student PI via email. They were informed that they could edit their narratives outside of the workshop, or wait until the next session.

Session 2

The second workshop session was held on Thursday, July 14th, 2017. Two participants from the first session were in attendance. The session opened with reviewing participants' progress, discussing images and narratives, and addressing any questions or challenges in the process of taking photos and developing narratives. Participants were sent on a second "photo

mission." One participant needed to leave early and agreed to return for an additional session. The other participant stayed to continue editing; at the end of the session, he signed the photo release form (Appendix D) and received the incentive as thanks for contributing to the study.

Session 3

The third workshop session was held on Friday, July 21st, 2017. Three new participants were in attendance, along with the participant who had attended the previous two sessions for the full time. The format of this session was the same as that of Session 1. The participant who had already completed two sessions joined the group after an hour (after briefing on the project, its methodology, and its guidelines were complete) so he could take part in the group discussion and edit his photovoice pieces further in the workshop environment.

Session 4

The fourth workshop session was held on Friday, July 28th, 2017. One participant from Session 3 was attending his second session, and was joined by a new participant and the participant who had left early during Session 2. The primary PI gave the new participant the standard introduction, while the student PI engaged the other participants in discussion and editing. In the interest of time, the two repeat-participants dictated narratives to the student PI, who typed, formatted, and edited them. At the end of the session, these participants signed photo release forms and received incentives.

Session 5

The fifth session was held on Wednesday, August 2nd, 2017. The new participant from the previous session was attending his second session. No other participants were in attendance. The session proceeded like other workshop sessions with discussion between the participant and

PIs, writing, editing, photography, and generation of photovoice pieces. At the end of the session, this participant signed a photo release form and received an incentive.

Triangulation of Data

This study involved multiple forms of data collection. This practice is known as triangulation, and increases the reliability of conclusions drawn by the researchers (Portney & Watkins, 2015, pp. 312). Photovoice pieces generated by the participants provided one set of data for this study. Participants' handwritten drafts of photovoice narratives were also obtained. The audio recordings of the sessions also act as a major source of data, offering perspectives from individuals who may have only attended one session, and providing discussion pieces that did not ultimately become photovoice pieces. Transcripts of these recorded discussions were instrumental in developing codes and themes. The student PI took general field notes to record her impressions, identify interesting or recurring concepts in the discussions, and to guide the development of codes and themes. The process of generating themes required both the primary PI and the student PI to come to agreement upon interpretations of the data. Having two different data analysts served to reduce bias in interpretation.

Data Analysis

The first part of data analysis occurred within the workshop as participants developed their photovoice pieces. This is consistent with the photovoice methodology outlined by Wang and Burris (1997), which suggests that participants go through three stages in the analysis process. Participants went through the first stage of *selecting* their photos as they made decisions on what photographs were the most meaningful to them and could elicit meaningful stories. The second stage, *contextualizing,* involves applying that sense of meaning to the photograph and discussing them in a group to gain a greater understanding of that meaning. The third stage,

codifying, involves identifying issues, themes, or theories within the material. All participants agreed to the researchers' proposed topic of *social participation.*

Themes were then developed based on a seven-step procedure first attributed to Colaizzi (Creswell, 1998, pp. 280):

1. First, participants' statements were read. Content and emotional context was noted.
2. The most significant statements—those that created patterns throughout the data and that concerned *social participation*—were transcribed into a separate Word document.
3. An interpretation of meaning was attributed to each significant statement.
4. Statements with similar meanings began to form themes. The themes were compared to the raw data to verify their accuracy and consistency. Statements were discarded if their meaning was determined not to match the raw data.
5. From this process, a picture of the phenomenon (the *social participation* experiences of military and veteran students in the transition process to university life) emerged.
6. This picture of the phenomenon consisted of information that was unambiguous and undeniable, as it was taken directly from the lived experiences of participants.
7. Participants should have the opportunity to review the themes and confirm or deny their validity. Two participants reviewed the themes and subthemes, and both expressed approval of the researchers' interpretation of the data.

Role of the Researcher

Because the SVSP3 is a qualitative study, the role of the researcher should be defined in order to illuminate any assumptions or experiences influencing data interpretation. This research project was developed by a graduate student in the Master of Science in Occupational Therapy

program, and her advisor. The content of the project was influenced by the required OCCTHPY 880 course, a master's project intended to help students fulfill the accreditation requirements for demonstrated research skills competency—this project was also focused on military and veteran student well-being and *social participation*.

The primary researcher is female and in her 60s. She has lived in Wisconsin for over 30 years, and has strong ties to the local mental health and veteran communities. She has practiced as an occupational therapist in mental health settings, and also holds a degree in counseling. She has extensive experience and training in leadership, and has both taught in higher education and served in leadership roles in OT professional organizations for decades. Her writing and research has examined mental health disorders, substance use disorders, and military and veteran students' lived experiences through the use of photovoice methodology. She is the mother of three sons, one of whom is a veteran.

The graduate researcher is a female who was born in Wisconsin and has lived in Georgia and Oregon. She completed her Bachelor of Arts in 2010 with a major in English Literature and Composition, and a minor in Studio Art. She completed prerequisites for entrance to the Occupational Therapy program as a post-baccalaureate student, and entered the program in 2015. She is 30 years old, has the experience of rebuilding one's qualifications after changing fields of study, and has worked in numerous jobs unrelated to either field of study. She has had several friends and coworkers who were OEF/OIF veterans, and completed a Level I mental health fieldwork experience at the Milwaukee VA.

The primary researcher's experience with this population and the methodology is an asset to the study, and the graduate researcher's educational background in textual analysis of visual and written work provides a solid foundation for work with the photovoice methodology. The

primary researcher has advanced skills in communication through her roles in clinical practice, academia, and participation in professional organizations; as the mother of a veteran, she is also familiar with many aspects of military life on a personal level. The graduate researcher's familiarity with veteran communication styles, age (similar to or older than that of participants), experience in transitioning fields, experience living in different states with different cultural and political values, and work experience outside of the university environment are qualities that might facilitate communication with participants (who expressed difficulty with relating to young, inexperienced students). However, it is worth noting that both the primary researcher and graduate researcher are women and all participants were male, which could also impact communication due to socialized differences in cross-gender communication. Assumptions may be introduced into the analysis due to any of the aforementioned factors.

The graduate student's main role as a researcher was to recruit participants, help participants develop photovoice pieces, to collect and analyze data, and to present findings. To off-set bias, the data was discussed and analyzed with the research advisor. The research advisor has developed numerous photovoice studies, and was uniquely qualified to mentor this study and ensure trustworthiness of data analysis.

Despite aiming for objectivity in this study, we believe that the role of the researcher in a photovoice study inherently entails a deliberate awareness of the message being sent to the public, and supporting our participants. It should be noted that findings are presented with the intent of respecting participants' voices and perspectives. Indeed, there were instances in which participants said things the researchers did not agree with. For example, in the photovoice piece "Milwaukee Transportation" a participant writes, "I could trust military men and women because, when it comes down to it, they will have my back—and civilians will stab you in the

back the moment you trust them." This feeling of disconnection and distrust toward civilians was echoed by others. Another notable instance occurred during the recorded discussions, when one participant expressed his view that the university has a negative response to displaying patriotic posters or flyers, stating,

> …if you want to put up something that says, "Hey, I love America, I love my country," you'll literally have students and faculty tearing the posters down… You'll get a letter from, I won't say the dean, but you'll get like a letter saying, "Hey, tear that down you can't have that."

Naturally, as researchers on a project designed to offer support to veterans, we believe these sorts of generalization toward civilians and campus attitudes toward patriotism are factually inaccurate. Nevertheless, the emotional intensity behind these statements reveals the extent to which participants feel a barrier to *social participation* in the university setting, and even feel like those in the university stand in deliberate opposition to them. We believe this to be a significant finding. Thus, we have kept these sentiments intact in order to accurately represent the truth of participants' perceptions and lived experiences, even though they do not represent the personal beliefs of the researchers.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methods used in the study and described how analysis took place. It introduced the graduate student PI, and ways in which objectivity of analysis was maintained. Research findings are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Workshop Sessions

In this study, there were seven participants total, with one to four participants per session. Both researchers were always present. There was a total of five sessions, each approximately three hours in length, with approximately 30-60 minutes devoted to taking photographs. Discussions that occurred across the five sessions between the participants and researchers formed the groundwork for the participants' written narratives. Through distillation of the content in the discussions and writings, the final photovoice pieces were developed.

Recorded Discussions and Photovoice Findings

The discussions elicited from the workshop sessions provided a substantial amount of data for analysis. Audio recordings were transcribed by the graduate researcher. Special attention was paid to statements where a participant noted how he felt, as well as the emotional inflection in each participant's voice; where appropriate, the emotional nature of the statement was noted. Their analysis was guided by field notes. Participant-generated photovoice pieces served as more polished forms of what was discussed in the workshop and ultimately reinforced information gained from the transcripts.

Analysis began by thorough examination of both the photovoice pieces and the transcripts. Statements that conveyed a participant's attitude about *social participation* in the transition process from the military to the university environment were extracted. Statements with similar meaning were clustered together to form themes. The PI and graduate researcher compared the themes to the original transcript to ensure that all significant information from the

transcripts and photovoice pieces appeared in the themes, and that the themes did not reflect anything that was not in the transcripts or photovoice pieces.

Themes

Five themes were extracted from the data, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Phenomenological Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
Camaraderie	Comfort, Shared Experiences, Accepting Adversity
Alienation	Age and Maturity, Social Expectations, Perceived Negative Attitude Toward Veterans, Unapproachability, Returning to Civilian Life with Disturbing Experiences
Identifying Challenges	Independent Living without Guidance, Loss of Value in Academic Life, Perceptions of Safety, Conceptualizing How to Begin a New Future in the University, Procedural Challenges in the University
Rising to the Challenge	Accepting New Responsibilities and Roles, Envisioning Change to Help Other Veterans and Students
Diversity and Military and Veteran Students	Diversity and MAVRC, Diversity and Civilians vs. Military

Camaraderie

Student veterans described their experience in the military as one that bonded them to friends, family, and strangers. Both positive and negative aspects of the military were mentioned, but fellow service members were spoken about positively and as one unified group. Within the

idea of camaraderie, participants discussed feelings of comfort simply being around other veterans, having shared experiences with other veterans, and having gone through the same hardships as other veterans.

Comfort. Most participants expressed feeling at ease and an automatic sense of belonging when in the company of other veterans. Participants made the following statements:

"Honestly, I'm always comfortable around veterans. It helps."

"It's nice to have a spot where you know you can go and just be surrounded by military."

"You come in here [MAVRC] and you're golden. You can do whatever you want, talk about whatever you want. Everything's good."

One participant wrote about his preference for the company of veterans in the following photovoice piece:

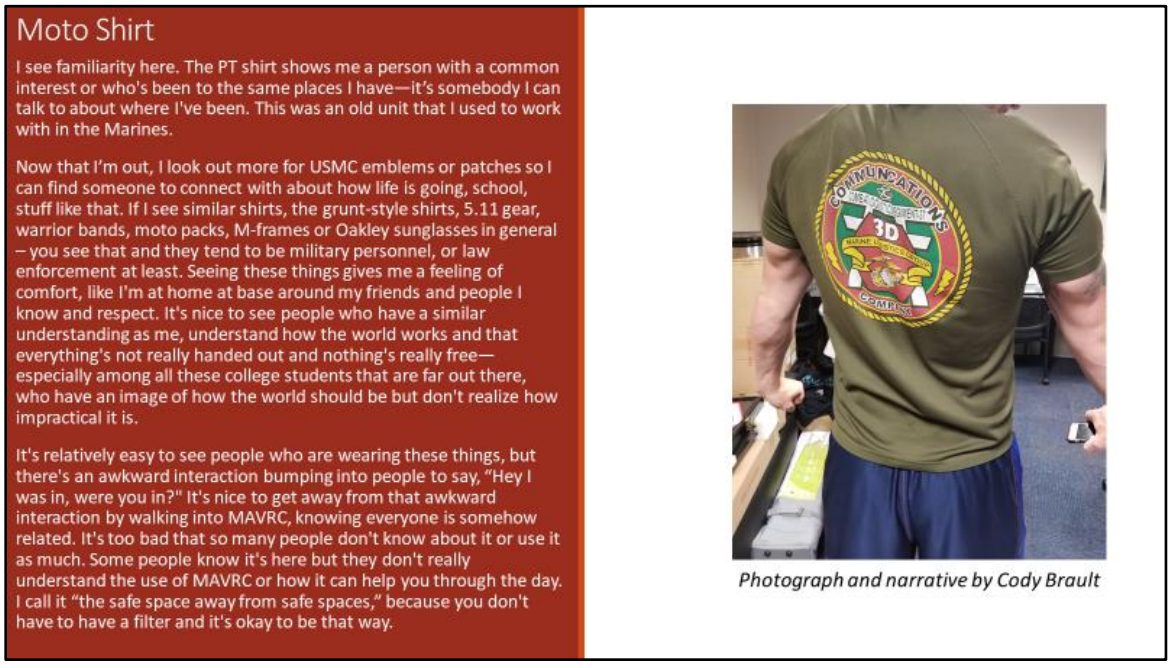

Figure 1: Photovoice Piece 1. "Moto Shirt"

Shared Experiences. Participants expressed that they felt more understood by other veterans than civilians. One participant stated,

> If you run into another veteran you always have something to talk about … A lot of people outside looking in don't understand really why that is, but it's just from all the similar shared experiences.

Another participant spoke about the meaning of the flag as service members view it:

> … it represents our country, our way of life. We all enlisted under that flag. We all carried that on our uniform everywhere we went. I wore that on my shoulder for three years, so it has a special meaning for me. People are buried with that flag, too, so it has an even stronger meaning…

Another participant talked about the effect of joining the Marines on his relationship with a family member:

> I was never super close to him at all and … he actually flew out for my boot camp graduation, and on Family Day we were just sitting there talking. I'm like, "Oh yeah, I'm up in that squad bay right there," and he's like, "Wait, that one?" and I go, "Yeah," and he goes, "That's the one I stayed in 30 years ago when I was there." So, I just like the idea of it kinda bridging the generations.

Accepting Adversity. Part of joining the military means embracing hardship. As stated by the participant who grew closer with his uncle after joining the Marines,

> My uncle was in the Marines before me and he was the person that, when I talked to my parents about going, it's like, "Oh, talk to Uncle John first, he'll probably try to dissuade you because the Marines sucks." I mean, it's great, but it sucks. Life sucks.

Another participant echoed this sentiment:

> They told me not to do it, they told me not to join … and then I started feeling, like, this sense of patriotism.

He went on to describe the lack of support offered by the military as an institution:

> You get instilled in you that you're this alpha male and you're the best, and the minute you're done, you're done and they'll discard you.

One participant created the following photovoice piece entitled "Pugil Sticks," which shows a poster depicting two students competing in a game of pugil sticks—a game that is also a combat training exercise in the military. The photovoice piece illustrates how this game may carry a playful connotation in the civilian world, while in the military it was expected and accepted to be at that level of adversity:

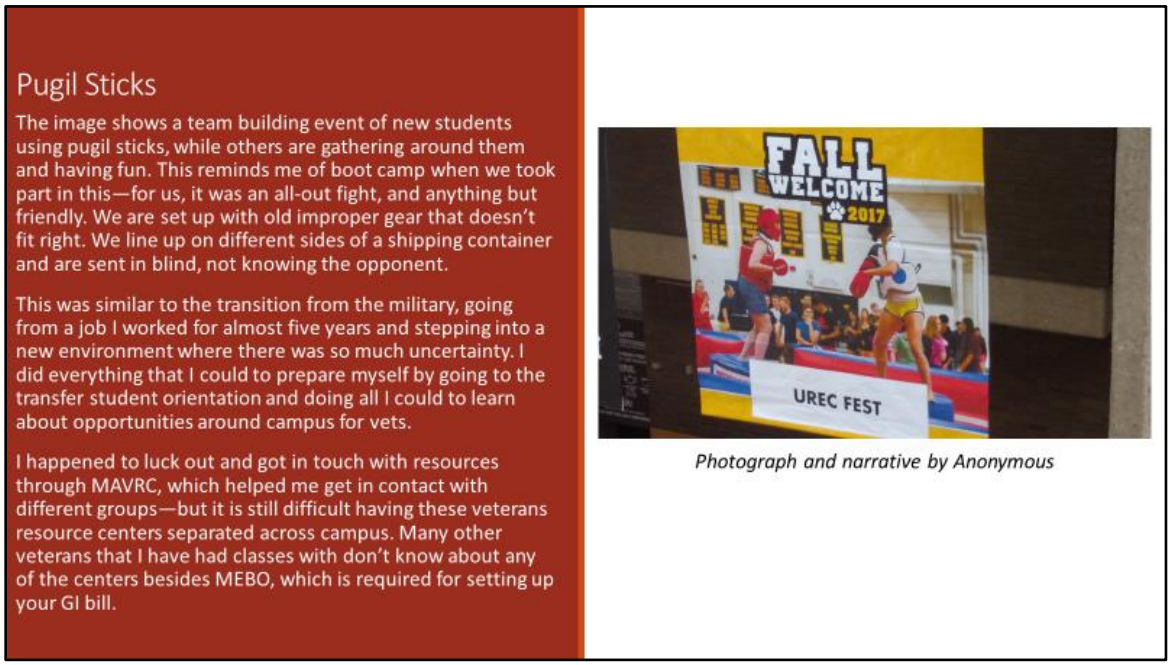

Figure 2: Photovoice Piece 2. "Pugil Sticks"

Alienation

Participants identified a range of factors that contributed to feeling alienated in the university setting. These factors included differences in age and maturity from participants and their fellow students, differing social expectations between civilians and veterans, feeling as though they were viewed negatively for serving, feeling like they were viewed as

unapproachable for serving, and living with the aftermath of surviving disturbing experiences in the military.

Age and Maturity. Participants expressed not feeling comfortable with younger students. One participant's photovoice piece, "Dorms," showed photographs of dormitories on the UWM campus. He wrote about his feelings of disconnection from younger classmates:

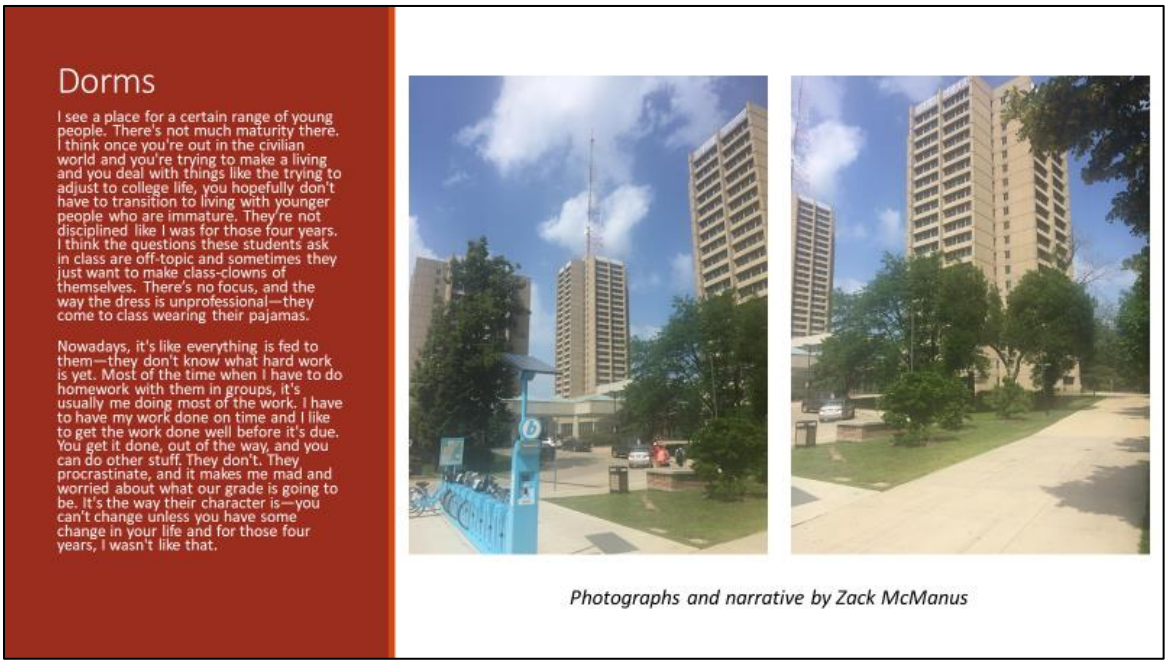

Figure 3: Photovoice Piece 3. "Dorms"

During a workshop discussion, the same participant stated,

> I don't like living with 18-year-olds. It's more of when you first come here … it's a hard transition. When you have older people in the vet center, like this, you have more people your own age and they're more mature.

Another participant agreed and responded,

> Yeah, it's a good thing that coming in we don't have to stay in the dorms, 'cause I would've been miserable.

Another participant, speaking about wishing he could apply his military job experience toward mentoring incoming students, stated,

> …There's really no way to do that unless it's just me meeting new people, which is kind of hard for us anyways. The age gap's kind of big.

Social Expectations. One complaint among participants was that civilians did not understand appropriate boundaries when asking questions about service experiences. According to one participant,

> Obviously, military people have that kind of understanding, knowing what they've gone through and stuff like that … A lot of civilians are not understanding, and have wild accusations. I mean, how many times have you gotten asked if you killed somebody? It's a common question … It's ridiculous.

Another participant corroborated this with a story about a band he wore around his wrist:

> People ask me what this band is all the time. I'm like, "Oh, that's just some friends that never got to make it back." They want to know stories … That's something for me and my other friends on the band. Like, that's something personal to us … People don't understand, like, that's my family and they're no longer here, so it's like, I won't talk about your, like, dead mother or something like that … There's certain things you just don't want to talk about or share, but people ask those questions the most.

In a photovoice piece, "Fishbowl," a different participant wrote about how the lack of camaraderie in the civilian world makes it difficult to know how to speak to strangers:

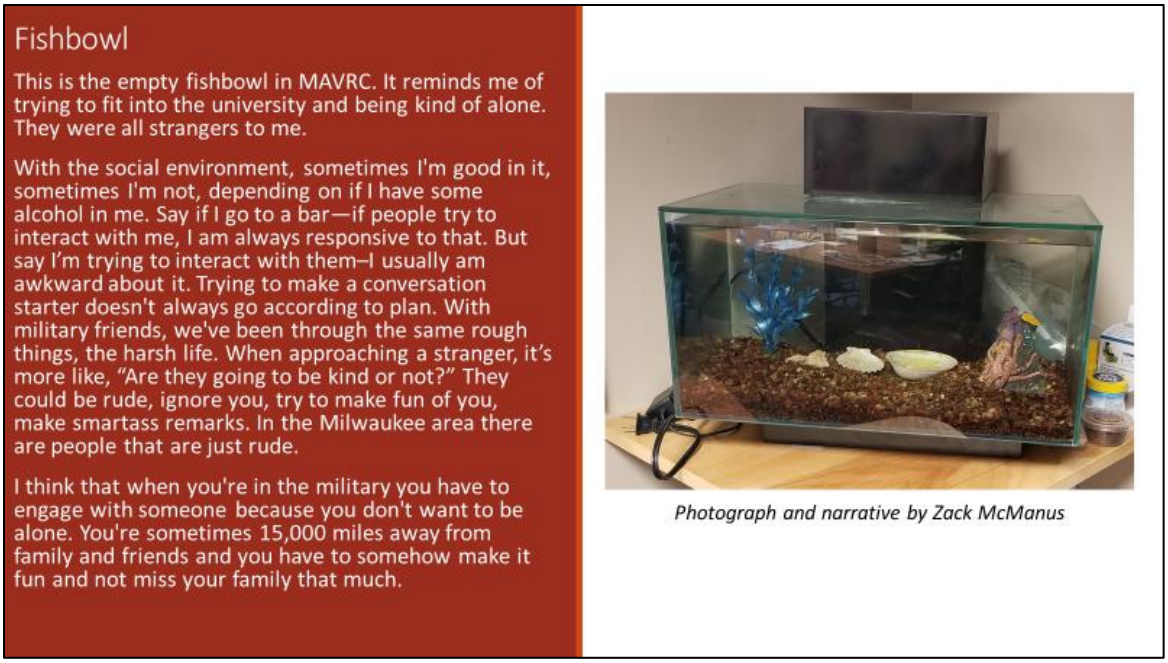

Figure 4: Photovoice Piece 4. "Fishbowl"

Another participant's photovoice piece, paired with images of boats on the water, echoed this sentiment, but emphasized the importance of reaching out to others:

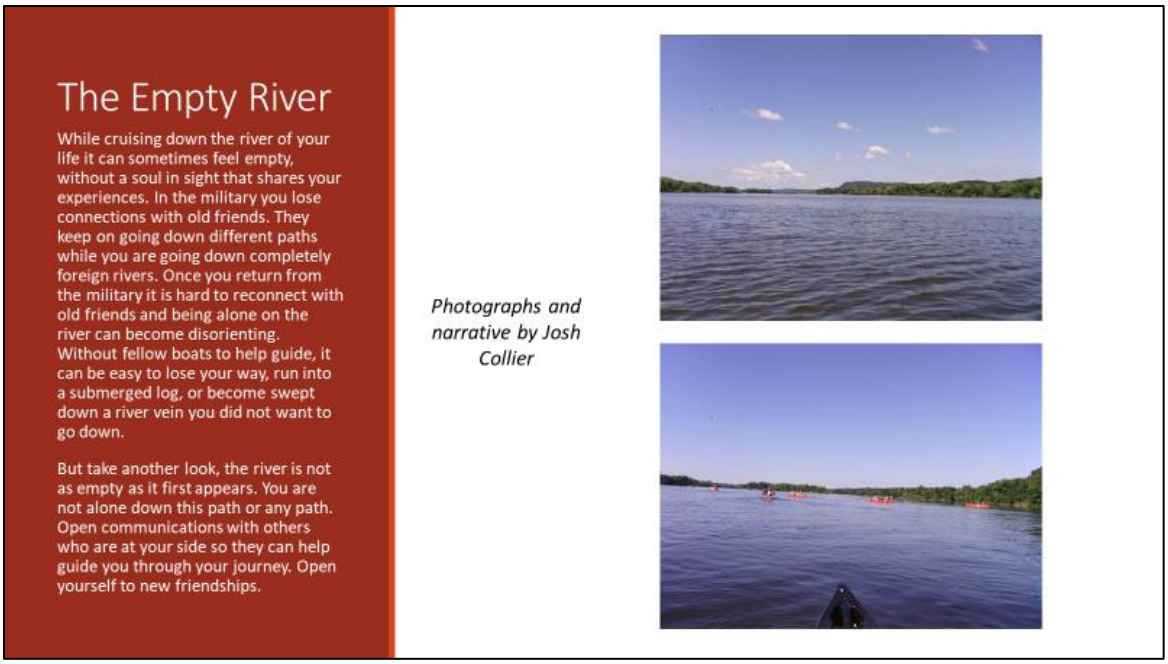

Figure 5: *Photovoice Piece 5. "The Empty River"*

Perceived Negative Attitude Toward Veterans. Participants all expressed a feeling that civilians would misinterpret them or challenge their beliefs. Some participants felt that there were civilians around them who actively disliked military personnel. One participant spoke about how this perception made him feel in class:

> …I luckily haven't had it too, too much, but I've heard of some other people who have … the professors that are very set … not necessarily, like, anti-military or something, but along those lines and … try to sway their students one way or another, and you're sitting in this class and you have to kind of buy into it in some points, because … they're writing your grade … I had one professor that had that [attitude]… in one of my hard classes, but luckily none of it came down to any papers we had to write on that subject…

Another participant stated,

> A lot of people I know don't like identifying themselves [as veterans] … They don't want to be singled out because of how it is at this school, usually. If you're singled out as a veteran people will treat you very differently, it seems like.

A different participant corroborated these viewpoints by saying,

> A lot of people don't see past that point of "veteran,'" and that's it ... I'm only seeing part of you and the rest is full of assumptions.

One participant mentioned problems with the campus tour guides, who show potential students and their families around the university and tell them about university and community resources. The participant said that MAVRC had been disrespectfully portrayed by some tour guides, while others did not understand what purpose MAVRC serves:

> So, the tour guides here … they misrepresented us when they were talking about us. So, they thought we were this big scary group [and told potential students], "You don't wanna go in here," or … "This here is basically like your recruiting place."

Some participants expressed their perception that their pride in patriotic symbols further alienated them from civilians in the university environment; they felt that the university did not share their respect for patriotic symbols, and would actively prevent displays of patriotism. One participant stated,

> You can't have anything that's patriotic … If you want to put up something that says, "Hey, I love America, I love my country," you'll literally have students and faculty tearing the posters down. …God forbid you put up something that just says, "Hey, I'm a veteran, I'm glad I served, I'm patriotic." … You'll get a letter from, I won't say the dean, but you'll get like a letter saying, "Hey, tear that down, you can't have that."

Other participants explained that MAVRC offered them a space to express themselves without feeling like they might be inadvertently offending someone and be censored. One stated,

> …It's like you come in here and you're golden. You can do whatever you want, talk about whatever you want, and everything's good. But then you go out there, you kinda really gotta be careful. And you should be careful, to a degree.

Another student agreed, saying,

> I call it "the safe space away from safe spaces," because you don't have to have a filter and it's okay to be that way.

Unapproachability. Several participants said that the way veterans are popularly portrayed sets them apart from civilian students in a way that makes them seem unapproachable.

Participants mentioned that civilians would often thank them for their military service upon finding out that the participants had served. According to one participant,

> It almost puts us … almost on a pedestal? … Like, you talk to a veteran, you should be like "Wow… thanks for your service"… I mean, you can just talk to us.

Another participant agreed, saying,

> It can be extremely awkward because … like he said, you don't wanna put ourselves up on a pedestal, but it's like, maybe what you're thinking I may have done is not at all what [I] did…

It was mentioned in the discussion that Vietnam veterans were met with poor treatment upon their return, to which one participant stated, "And that's the main reason why I don't wanna tell [civilians], 'Just don't go out and thank,' because there are some people who absolutely deserve it."

One participant took a picture of Spaights Plaza on the UWM Campus, a popular space for student organizations to set up tables and represent themselves, and wrote in his photovoice piece entitled "Plaza,"

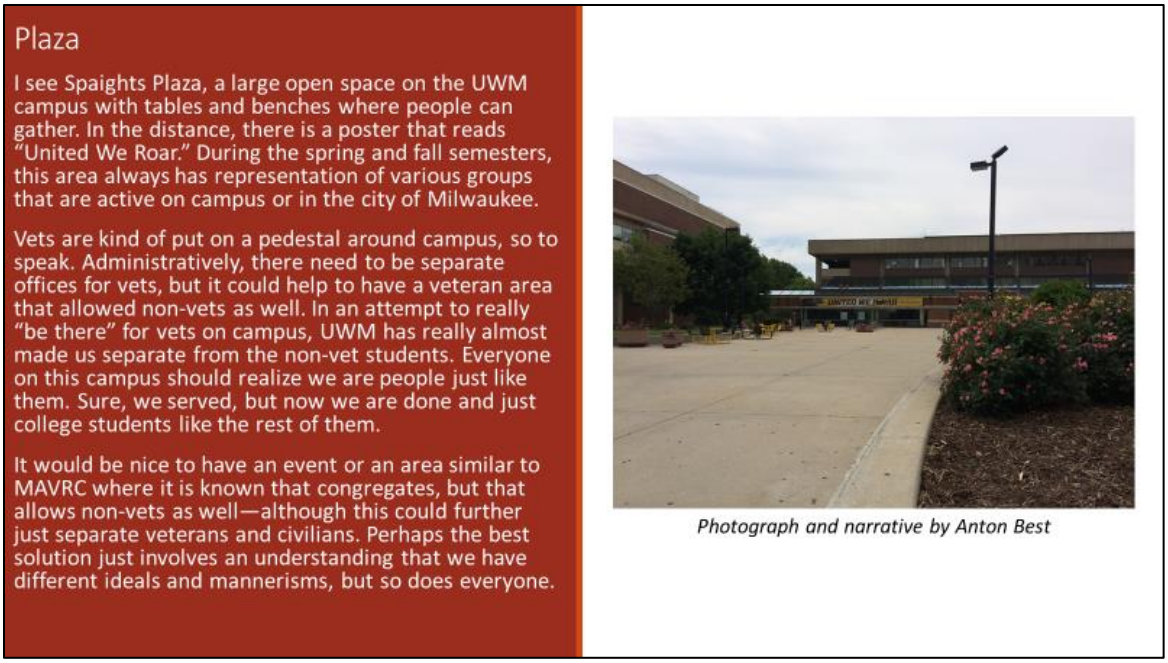

Figure 6: Photovoice Piece 6. "Plaza"

Another participant took a picture of his reflection in a window for his photovoice piece entitled "Only a Part of the Picture" and wrote,

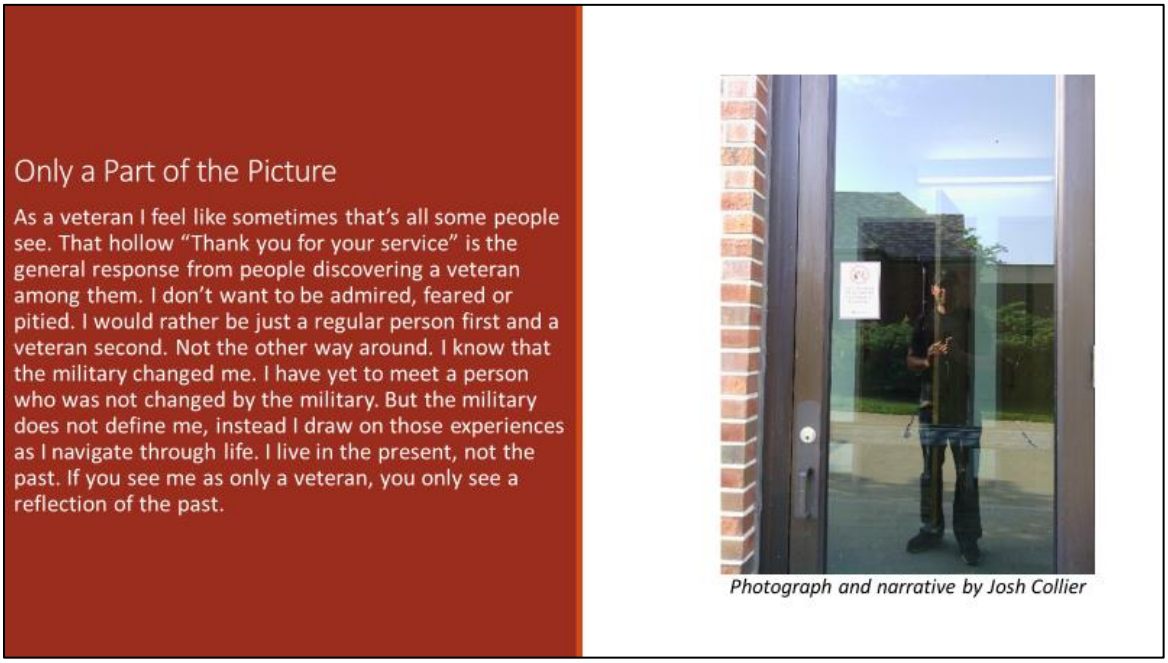

Figure 7: Photovoice Piece 7. "Only a Part of the Picture"

Returning to Civilian Life with Disturbing Experiences. One participant who had experienced combat spoke about the fact that he has had to mentally separate himself from certain experiences in the military. When prompted to think about his experiences, he took some time to think and then explained how suppressing his experiences effected his ability to communicate about them:

> I normally don't ever talk about military… at all. So everything is, like, internalized. So, when I'm trying to think about stuff to speak about, I think 'cause I've been just suppressing it for so long … Like, I talk about it like in therapy or stuff like that, but even then it's like I have to go through 152 sessions before I tell you one thing. Just the way it is. So, I think it's hard for me to, like, get to know this part of how I am…

Later, he expanded upon his experiences by describing how suppression and internalization was part of staying functional in the face of danger:

> …You have to desensitize yourself. You have to get rid of all that stuff that makes a normal person cringe, and the best analogy is when you're on a highway and you see a dead squirrel like, "Oh my god, it's a dead squirrel, let me not hit it," and you don't think nothing about it. It's the same way you think about dead people over there, and I'm a normal person just like you, but when you're faced in that situation, it's either you do or you don't. So then, when you come back … you notice something's not right, and then when you seek it out then you finally understand, like, "I excessively worry all the time about something, that's anxiety!" And then, you know, it doesn't go away. It bothers me in my everyday life … when I'm trying to live my life I'm burdened by so many things for fighting for the country. As a result, it makes my life now even harder…

Finally, this participant described struggling with the lasting effects of these experiences, stating, "I sometimes feel handicapped by my own mind," and held back by "the stigma associated with not being perfect or the stigma associated with mental illness or just simply being handicapped or just being different from the rest."

Another participant, who had mentioned losing friends in combat, expressed feeling that the mental pathways in his brain seemed to be hardwired and he could not simply switch off the battle-ready mindset instilled in him during training:

> The Navy did a health assessment of reintegration back into the civilian world, and it's weird to see that, like, your formative years … at 18 to 20, for us, we're pretty much trained about, "You're going to probably take somebody's life, and it's okay" … Part of your life is losing friends, while in college it's not part of anything you have to do, so you won't face that part of reality in your culture. It's completely different … these paths are created when you're so much younger that it's really hard to un-create those and create a new thought process about it.

Identifying Challenges

Participants saw challenges in a number of areas that impacted their ability to interact socially. Challenges included living independently, feeling the loss of their former lives, interpreting safe and dangerous situations in the civilian world, visualizing a new career, and navigating the university procedures necessary to reach their academic and career goals.

Independent Living without Guidance. Many participants expressed a feeling of uneasiness upon returning to the civilian world with many decisions to make independently. One participant described the uneasy feeling of adjusting to living in a new place without support:

I'm still not used to Milwaukee at all. I lived in a small town, and there are some strange-ass people on that bus … In a small town we knew everyone, everyone's friendly. Not here. You got homeless dudes that come on the bus and don't pay and they sit in the back of the bus and the bus driver calls transport security on them.

He further described these feelings in the following photovoice piece:

Figure 8: Photovoice Piece 8. "Milwaukee Transportation"

Other participants expressed the following sentiments about their newfound independence:

"This is the first time I got a studio apartment, so this is the first time ever I've lived alone and that's, like, huge. Like, I'm used to being stuck in a cramped room."

"I'd say getting money and … living on your own is a new experience for me, without time management with the Marine Corps."

"It's just amazing how much time I have on my hands … it's so new to me."

Another participant summed up the resulting feeling of conflict as follows:

> It takes a long time, really … to shake that feeling of "unknown." It's still there a little bit, 'cause there's still finding a job after college and stuff like that, but the initial shock of having so many directions trying to pick a field, trying out classes, is just like information overload, there's a lot of traps you don't want to fall into … picking a career and stuff like that, just a lot of choices coming from a very restrictive environment, where "this is the next rank you have to get, this is the test you have to take for the next rank."

Loss of Value in Academic Life. Participants also expressed feeling like their time in college required them to start over. Their achievements in the military did not translate to credits or recognition. One participant described this feeling of loss:

> During this whole school time, I kinda realized like I'm living in the shadow of the person I used to be … Now I'm just like responsible for little old me and nothing … My responsibilities have shrunk so much, and it kinda makes you feel empty, like I'm doing nothing with myself.

He elaborated further, saying,

> This next four years is really just rebuilding and retraining, but it's like I used to be so much more … I was the go-to guy, and now I'm just like, eh, going to school.

This participant stated in his photovoice piece,

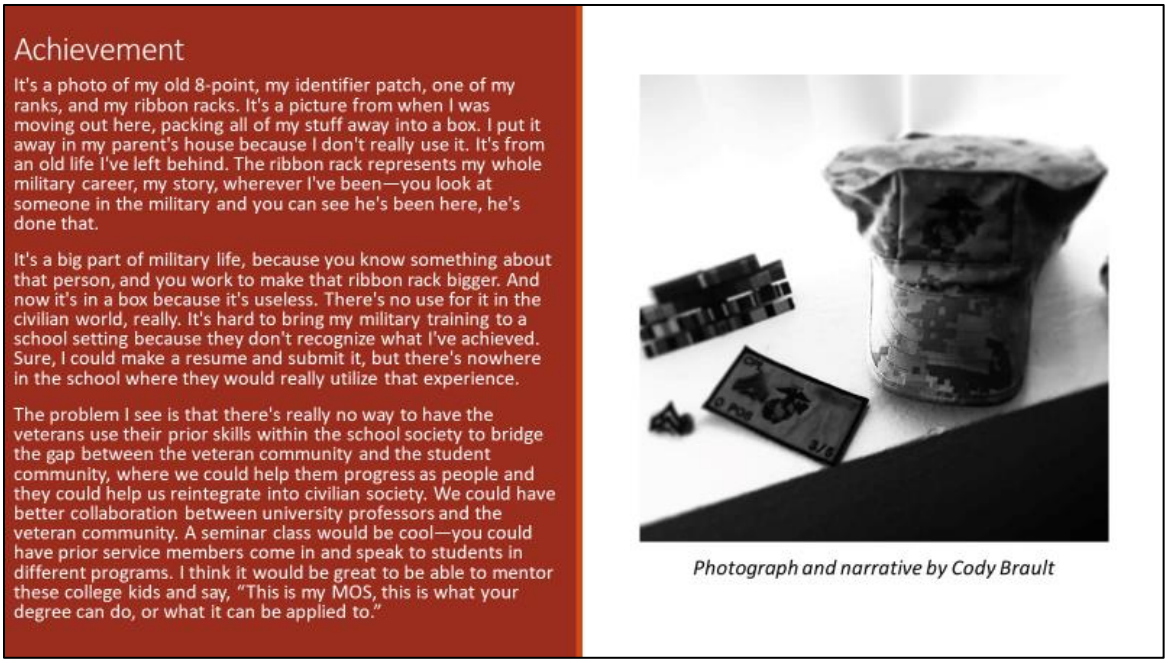

Figure 9: Photovoice Piece 9: "Achievement"

Another participant agreed:

> Starting over—I feel that too. I had a security clearance when I was in, and now I can't do anything with it.

Perceptions of Safety. Two participants mentioned how the perception of one's safety changes when reentering the civilian world. To veterans, anti-weapons signs signify that they cannot protect themselves from danger. One participant stated,

> From a veteran perspective, it is odd to be in a gun free zone, especially compared to a deployment situation where you're constantly surrounded by weapons, handling weapons … to where it's the weapons around you that make you feel safe whereas this [sign signifies] kind of the opposite … [The] idea is by removing all the guns it makes everyone feel safe, and that's much more of a civilian side … one of those transition things you have to get used to … Every time I walk into a building, I see it and it always

stands out to me every single time … it makes sense but it seems odd to me at the same time.

He echoed these thoughts in the following photovoice piece:

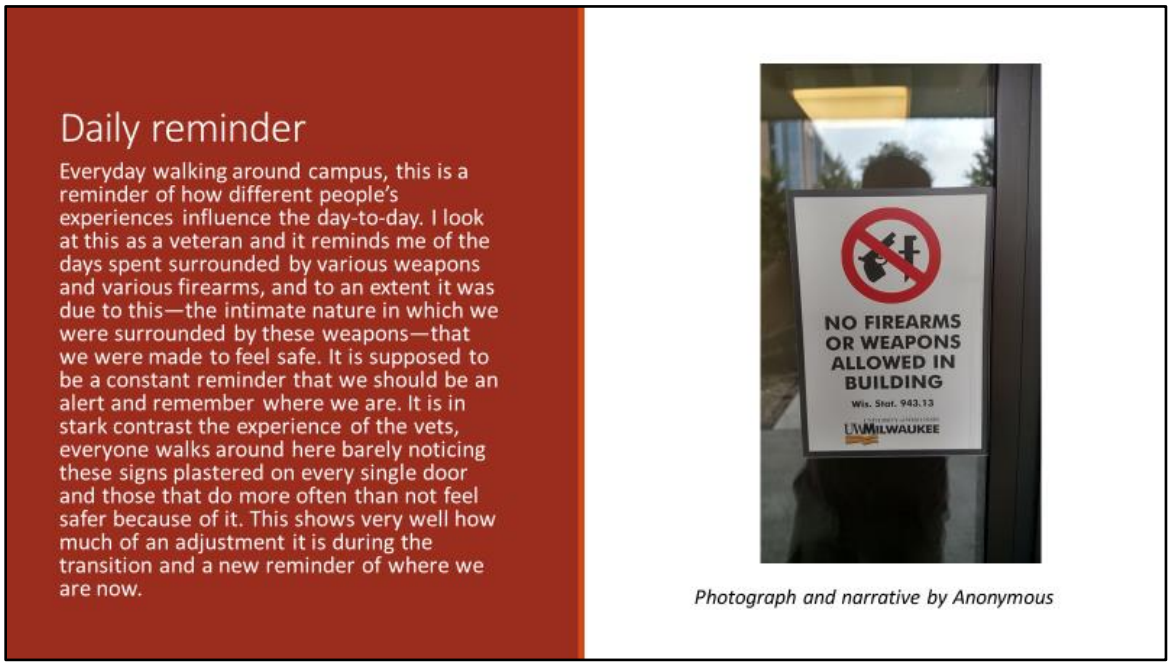

Figure 10: Photovoice Piece 10. "Daily Reminder"

Another participant agreed, saying,

> When I see that image, it reminds me of how safe we are not, because you have all the different shootings in the schools, and then you have the political biases where one person blames the guns … In the end, people try to make laws to push guns away which doesn't make you safer, 'cause you look at Chicago, guns at that point were completely banned, there's more murders there than anywhere…

He elaborated on the topic, sharing how his awareness of danger can interfere with trying to reintegrate into civilian life:

> Personally, me going to Afghanistan three times and coming back, you realize how safe you are NOT… no, no, no, no, no, you're not safe at all. And it's hard to like not let that get you super paranoid, but at the same time you've got to realize, like, I'm back home

now and I can only be as safe as I can … You keep ruminating on those different things and you can develop some kind of crazy disorder, and you don't want that, so you know, like, kinda bring yourself back, but you can never fully get in the civilian world no matter how hard you try.

Conceptualizing How to Begin a New Future in the University. Some participants expressed frustration with working toward a new career outside of the military, despite having a desire to succeed in the civilian world. Envisioning what to do and how to make it happen could be difficult. One participant lamented the lack of guidance, saying,

> I took a picture of the layout for my supply chain management [requirements] … That's all you get for the four years, like "Make it work!" … and there's no one really to mentor you through the way, like we used to have.

This participant explained the issue further in his photovoice piece, "Military Friendly:"

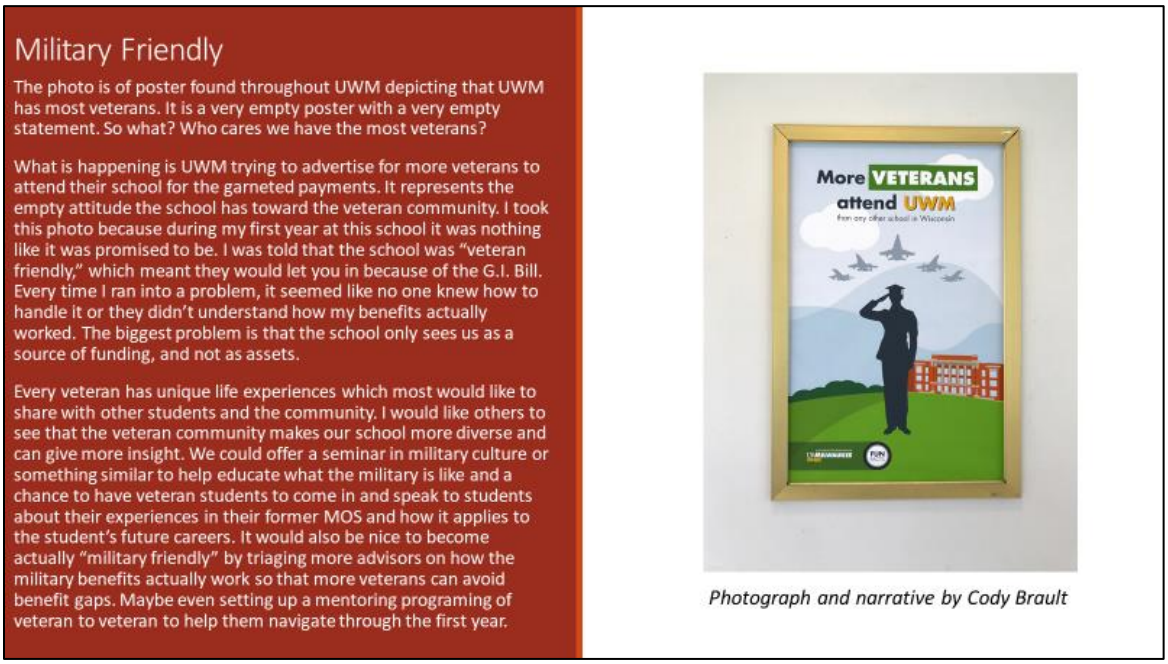

Figure 11: Photovoice Piece 11. "Military Friendly"

Another participant, when asked how long it took to feel comfortable in the university setting, answered,

> Probably up until the acceptance into OT school … about 2 years … It takes a long time, really … to shake that feeling of "unknown." It's still there a little bit, 'cause there's still finding a job after college and stuff like that, but the initial shock of having so many directions trying to pick a field, trying out classes, is just like information overload. There's a lot of traps you don't want to fall into … picking a career and stuff like that. Just a lot of choices coming from a very restrictive environment, where "this is the next rank you have to get, this is the test you have to take for the next rank" …

Procedural Challenges in the University. Even if participants had decided what they wanted their new civilian career path to be, developing a plan of action could feel difficult. One student voiced frustration with university procedures and policies involved in transitioning from the military to the university, and his belief that the university was more interested in GI Bill money than addressing the needs of military and veteran students:

> We go to MEBO [Military Education Benefits Office], it's always a constant fight of figuring out your benefits. If you're having problems scheduling, they're never really there to have advisors [that] know what is the GI bill, what you need to cover, so you end up running into gaps in your payments and understanding everything. It takes a year and a half to learn everything that's offered … during my first year I attended, it was nothing like it was promised to be … every time I ran into a problem it seemed like no one knew how to handle it or … how the benefits actually worked … The biggest problem is that the school only sees us as a source of funding and not an asset.

This participant added that he was frustrated with not being able to get credit for work experience:

> …We lived in Japan for two years, and from there I … saw 27 other countries, and yet they won't give me a cultural diversity credit. But yeah, I'm probably more knowledgeable about more cultures than the professor … So, they take our experience for a grain of salt, and just kinda take the money [from the GI bill], and do nothing with who we are as a people.

Rising to the Challenge

Some participants offered examples of how they constructively dealt with *social participation* and the transition process from working in the military to attending college. Participants mentioned active choices they made to acclimate themselves to the new environment, and offered potential ways that military and student veterans could positively influence the university.

Accepting New Responsibilities and Roles. Several participants offered information on how they strived for success in the face of transitional challenges. In regard to making new social connections, one participant stated that it was important to "…not [hold] back when it comes to meeting new people, just being open and like ... not carrying over the past to the present …" Another participant acknowledged the chaotic nature of prioritizing school and still attending to family responsibilities, inserting deadpan humor in the description of his daily life, but nevertheless conveying the need for determination in the face of multiple stressors:

> I'm actually thinking of a picture where most of my entire life now I'm at a desk and there's, like 2000 books, there's usually 3 cups of coffee, maybe a beer but I didn't say that, and I'm just, like, stressed out, you know? Like, I gotta do all this, and my son

comes running, and my wife's like, "You're not talking to me?" I'm like, "'Cause I'm trying to do this, I'm trying to have a future," and she's like, "Well, I'm pregnant," and I'm like, "Yeah, me too," y'know? There's a lot going on.

Another participant described in his photovoice piece "Pugil Sticks" (previously pictured) how he confronted the uncertainty of fitting into university life:

> This was similar to the transition from the military, going from a job I worked for almost five years and stepping into a new environment where there was so much uncertainty. I did everything that I could to prepare myself by going to the transfer student orientation and doing all I could to learn about opportunities around campus for vets.

Another participant expressed accepting his identify as both a serviceman and a student, viewing life from a larger perspective, staying focused on his goals, and being willing to reach out to others in the following photovoice pieces:

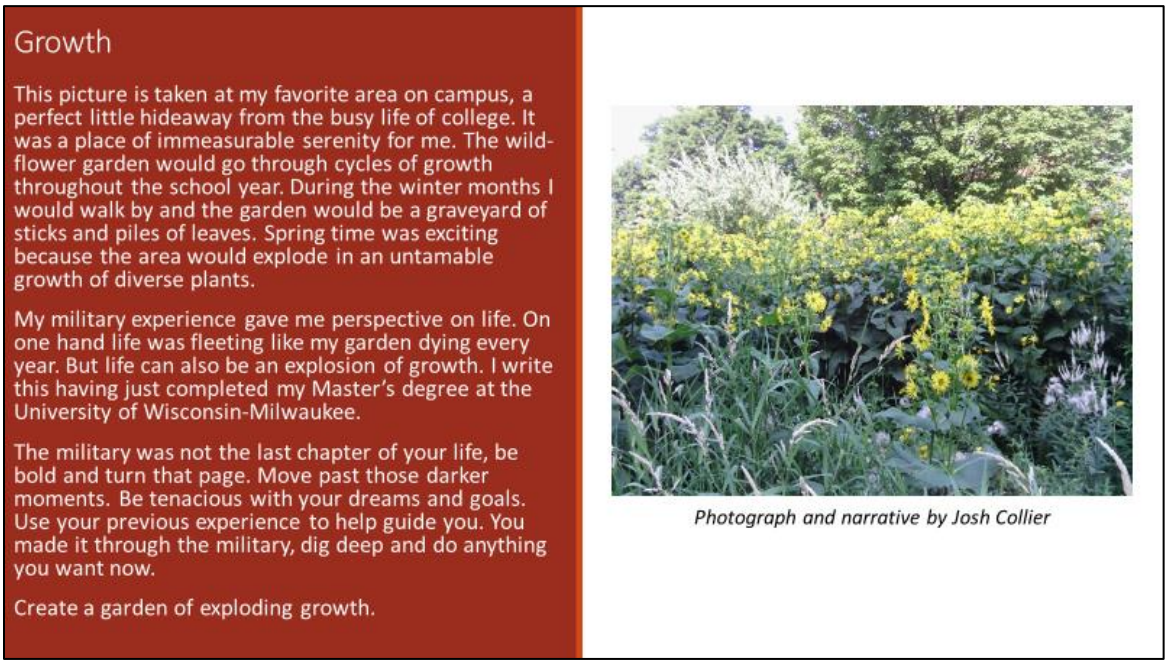

Figure 12: Photovoice Piece 12. "Growth"

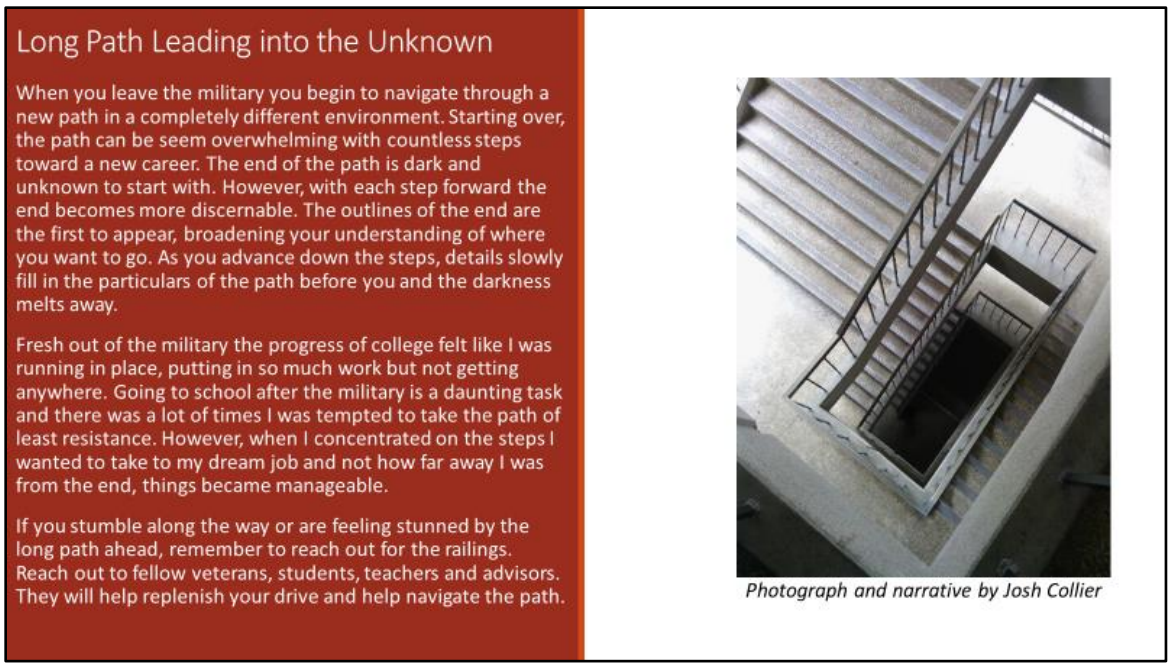

Figure 13: Photovoice Piece 13. "Long Path Leading into the Unknown"

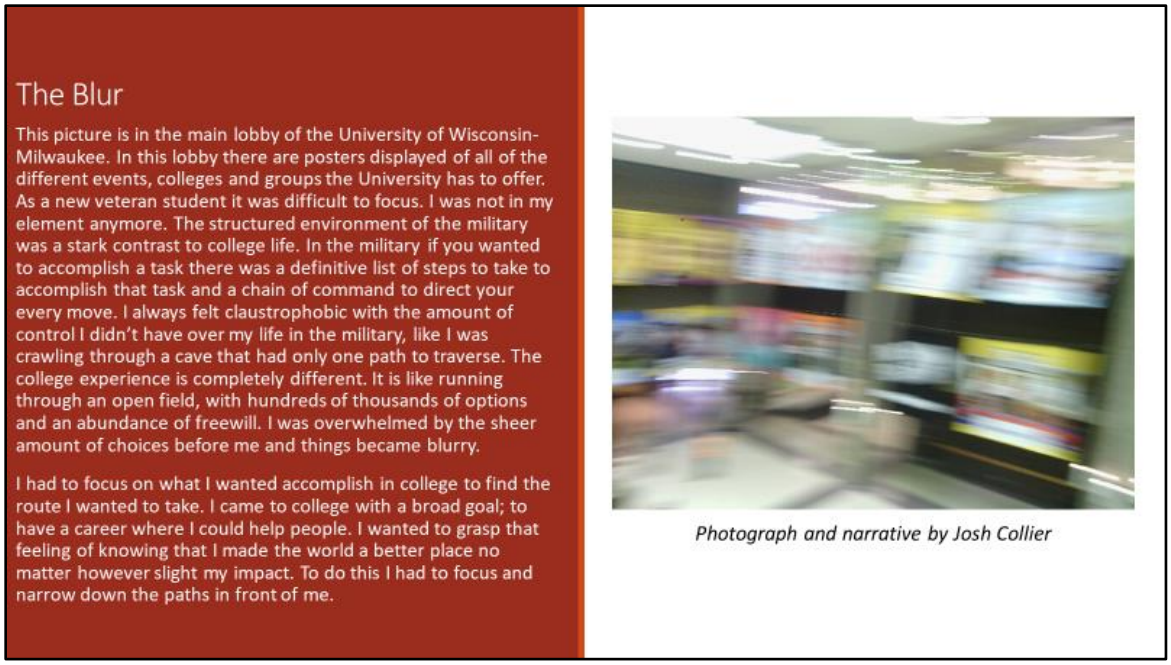

Figure 14: Photovoice Piece 14. "The Blur"

Envisioning Change to Help Other Veterans and Students. Some participants expressed wanting to serve those at the university by motivating them to reach for their goals and to not feel discouraged by the difficulty in navigating university life. One participant empathized with

all students trying to get through college, and felt that the fact that veteran students can make it should inspire all students:

> If I can do it, you can … if a veteran can have all that against him and still do it, it just shows you that, you know, you can find your strength just like we find our strength … I don't want to make it seem like it's because I'm a veteran … I'm a person at the end of the day.

Another student wanted to reach out to the wider student body, feeling that veterans had a lot of work experience that could help to guide others, and envisioned how veterans could speak to classes:

> Guest veterans come in and explain what they did and how it applies to them and, like, resources. Or if they want to do federal work, like, how do you get into that, how the GS ranks, everything like that. I think that'd be a kinda cool thing, and kind of let other people see into the culture we have.

In his photovoice piece, "Achievement" (see Figure 7), this student echoed this idea, writing,

> A seminar class would be cool—you could have prior service members come in and speak to students in different programs. I think it would be great to be able to mentor these college kids and say, "This is my MOS, this is what your degree can do, or what it can be applied to."

Diversity and Military and Veteran Students

Participants mentioned the idea of diversity in reference to campus, as well as in reference to the civilian world. Discussion brought up how military and veteran students view themselves compared to other groups on campus, and differences in how issues of race play a role in *social participation* in transitioning to the civilian world.

Diversity and MAVRC. Some participants expressed concern over funding for MAVRC. They had heard that the Student Affairs Office was considering merging its different student special interest groups and all funds would be pooled. These groups include the LGBT Resource Center, the Inclusive Excellence Center, the Women's Resource Center, and others. Participants felt that their funding was important in order to support military and veteran student interests:

> …They see us as a culture group to help diversify, but that's really not what we're here about. We're more here helping to get through benefits and stuff … They see parts of us in other groups, and that's why they want to include us from what I understand, but we do have a much bigger, broader mission than that.

Participants saw MAVRC as an inclusive space. They felt that military and veteran students who came from other special interests groups were free to seek assistance from MAVRC, so there was no need to merge organizations. One participant described his views in a photovoice piece "Resources for Student Vets,"

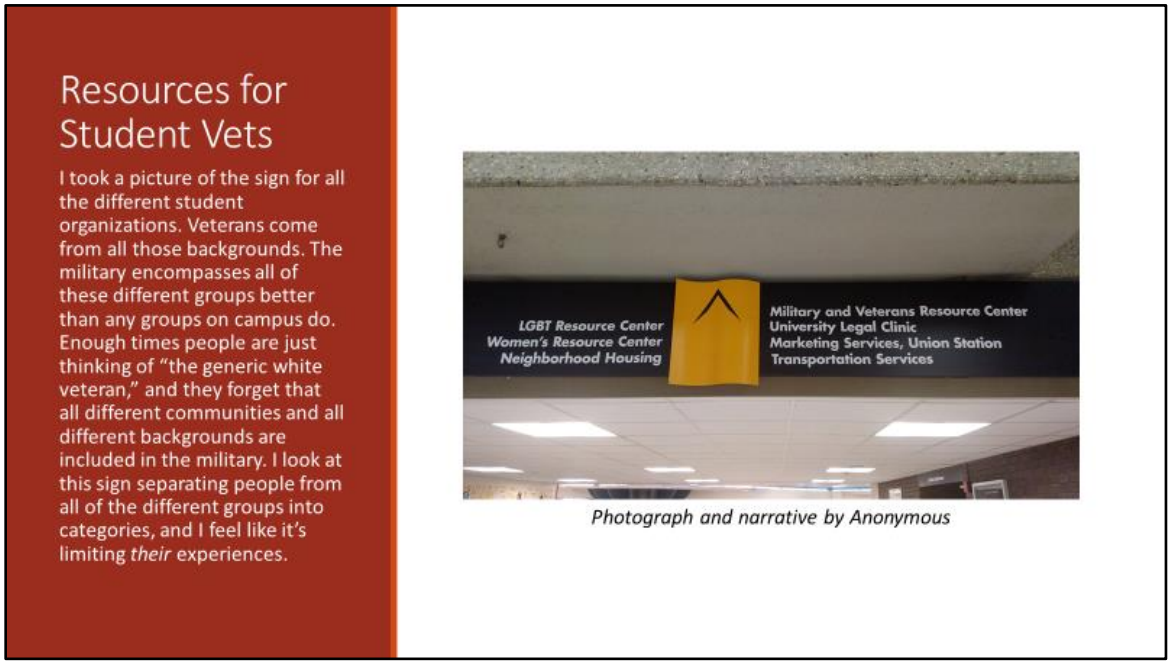

Figure 15: Photovoice Piece 15. "Resources for Student Vets"

This participant added,

> …Every group under the sun is a part of the military … like, I definitely know some individuals who are [close-minded] but some of the ones that hang out in here are mostly very open minded about other people's point of views and things like that.

Diversity and Civilians vs. Military.

One participant—the lone participant who identified as African-American and Latino—stated that cooperating in the face of danger lessens issues of racial tension in the military:

> …When everyone comes together I don't care if they're black or white or brown or green, it don't matter … All you care about now is, "They're shooting at me," and guess what? The very next day you have to go to that same area, and the next day after that, and look for a fight, so it becomes a point of, "I'm trying to get all of us home, and I don't care about other B.S."

He further explained that the civilian world felt far more segregated to him than the military:

> I mean, you come out into the real world, everything is still segregated—and I'm not talking like the 50s, I'm talking about the underlying biases. You can see it, especially as a minority, you can see how people treat you. I live in Oak Creek. When I dress like this, in Oak Creek, people are looking at me weird no matter what, like, "Why are you here?" … When I wear a suit or something, I'm interning, all of a sudden people are holding the door for me … These are things that are hard to say, and people feel it but not everyone can articulate what is happening, so when you come out this is what really sucks, 'cause it's not the same. Everybody is still, "We're gonna do our own thing," but in the military

… my buddies, there were like 6 of them … we were the United Nations together basically, and that's what I miss the most. That's what pisses me off.

Summary

Data were obtained through the use of recorded interviews with participants, development of photovoice pieces, and fieldnotes. Data were reviewed and analyzed by the PI and graduate researcher; themes and subthemes were developed and discussed with the intention of avoiding personal biases. Themes centered around *Camaraderie, Alienation, Identification of Challenges, Rising to Challenges,* and *Diversity and Military and Veteran Students.*

Feelings of *Camaraderie* were described as positive experiences in social participation. Participants described feeling most comfortable around other veterans. They felt that a bond with other veterans knowing that they had gone through similar experiences during their time of service, including learning to endure negative circumstances. Conversely, feelings of *Alienation* described negative experiences in social participation. Participants felt that they had difficulty in communication with civilians, particularly those who were younger or less mature students. They felt that many civilians who took interest in their military experiences did so by asking prying, offensive questions. They believed that many civilians held negative and stereotyped views about veterans, and felt that other civilians' lack of understanding of the military led them to feel intimidated by veterans. Some servicemembers experienced disturbing events during deployment, and all servicemembers are trained to anticipate life and death situations. They feel that this mindset is something foreign to civilians, and that they cannot revert to a mindset that is not attuned to signals of danger.

Participants also discussed problems and solutions within the transition to university life. They described having to acclimate to living independently without the rules and regulations of the military, and realizing that their military statures and skill sets did not directly translate into the university and civilian spheres. Signals of safety were a mirror image of what they had been in the military—signs indicating that weapons were not permitted left participants feeling vulnerable to the environment. Developing a vision of a new career was difficult without structured guidance, and discovering the steps and procedures necessary to follow a new career path felt frustrating. However, they also discussed the drive to succeed in their new lives, and applying their desire to serve others into the university setting.

Lastly, participants reflected on perspectives of diversity in the military, on campus, and among civilians in general. In the university setting, participants felt that military and veteran student interests were definitively different from those of other student groups, and therefore funding for MAVRC should not be pooled into a fund for all student groups. However, they also believed that veterans were a diverse population that could consist of members of any of these other student groups. They viewed veterans as being mostly open-minded toward others. They believed that civilians were less likely to be open-minded, and felt that the stressful conditions and interdependence within the military had fostered a more inclusive environment than in the civilian world.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter explains the significance of the findings in the previous chapter, and how these findings can contribute to helping military and student veterans have increased success in *social participation* and the process of transitioning from a military to a university setting. This chapter discusses the findings, illuminates how these findings could impact a university community to support military and student veterans, and suggests ways to facilitate an easier transition process from a *social participation* standpoint.

The primary research question in guiding this study was: What information can be gained from OEF/OIF/OND student veterans regarding their experiences with *social participation* and the transition process from military to civilian student life? This study was also informed by the following questions: What are the contexts in which student veterans take photographs to illustrate *social participation*? What consequences arise from transitioning from military to civilian student life? How does *social participation* impact or become impacted by the transition process from military to civilian student life? What expectations do student veterans have for the university in terms of creating an environment that promotes *social participation*? These questions have been taken into consideration in the process of analysis of the themes and subthemes, and in the recommendations for higher education institutions and occupational therapy practitioners.

The Student Veteran Social Participation Photovoice Project (SVSP3) aimed to examine the occupation of *social participation* in regard to the experiences of military and student veterans when transitioning from working in the military to entering the university environment as a student. Seven participants, all of whom were veterans, were recruited for the study. They

engaged in writing narratives, taking photographs, generating photovoice pieces, and discussing their experiences. Narratives, audio recordings, audio transcripts, and fieldnotes were the sources of data from which descriptive codes and themes were developed and analyzed.

Review of Findings

Military and student veterans face a variety of challenges not faced by civilian students when entering the university (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Tomar & Stoffel, 2014). Social relationships in specific have been identified as one of the top five concerns of student veterans (Plach & Haertlein Sells, 2013). Difficulty with relating to younger peers, being confronted with invasive questions about one's military past, and feeling a lack of camaraderie among civilians can make it challenging to establish meaningful social connections (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Gregg, Kitzman, & Shordike, 2016). The SVSP3 helped to corroborate these findings and add depth to them.

Photographs tended to share similar contexts. Most photographs were taken on campus, directly addressing the issue of *social participation* on campus. One participant used photographs from a canoeing trip (Figure 5), and another took a photograph at home of different parts of his military uniform (Figure 9). Many photographs depicted a location specific to UW-Milwaukee (Figures 3, 6, 7, and 8), or one of its signs or posters (Figures 2, 10, 11, 12, and 15). Only two photographs included human figures (Figures 1 and 7), neither of which are clearly identifiable. Some photographs had no literal relation to the narrative, and were intended to be viewed metaphorically (Figures 4, 5, 7, 13, and 14).

Participants in this study reported feeling more comfortable around other veterans than civilians. They saw themselves as more similar to other veterans due to shared life experiences, including surviving the negative parts of military life. They felt that civilians could not relate to

these experiences. Feelings of alienation centered around being surrounded by people who did not understand them. Participants felt that they could not relate to younger, less experienced students, especially those who did not act maturely or with discipline. They felt that there was difficulty in making conversation with civilians compared to with other servicemembers. It was expressed that, as part of the military culture, those who have served are more likely to react with friendliness and support toward other servicemembers, regardless of whether or not they know each other. Civilians have a different sense of what is polite or acceptable, and some civilians might not realize that certain questions they ask out of curiosity are considered taboo and culturally insensitive. Participants felt civilian opinions of military personnel could fall on both extremely positive and extremely negative ends of the spectrum. They believed that there was sometimes a stigma attached to military service, or that there was an unrealistic perception of military personnel as having achieved admirable things to the point that they were completely unlike other students. Experiencing traumatic or disturbing events while serving contributed to *social participation* difficulties by causing emotional numbness, anxiety, or shame over having a mental health issue. These findings echo those discussed by DiRamio, Ackerman, and Mitchell (2008).

Living free from military structures in everyday life was cited as a challenge for participants, who had come from an environment where most facets of life were structured by military policies. Participants felt that the things they had achieved in their military career were obsolete once their active service ended. For some participants, there were feelings of loss, morning, and frustration over what they saw as the end of their accomplished military lives. It could be difficult to envision how to begin a new future, and hard to learn all of the university

procedures in place for military and veteran students. This uneasiness and apprehension made it difficult to feel able to fully socially participate in civilian surroundings.

For some participants, the transition into the university setting was part of a larger plan. According to Redmond et al. (2015) it is likely that individuals with this view of their service experience are better able to maintain career goals beyond the military. One participant, who had adjusted well to civilian life and was pursuing a graduate degree, stated, "I joined the military and figured I'd get my college paid for afterwards and find out what I wanted to do." Some participants spoke about accepting their new way of life by staying goal-oriented, seeking out information, being open to new opportunities, and not holding onto the past. Participants wanted to help other fellow students, including other veterans and civilians, as a means of applying their previously honed skills and educating the university on what it the military is like.

The issue of diversity presented itself in a variety of different contexts. The military is an institution that values collectivism and minimizing differences which might be divisive, while the civilian world focuses more on individuality and, ideally, respect for differences (Bryan, Jennings, Jobe, & Bradley, 2012; Redmond, et al., 2015). Therefore, the concept of diversity from a civilian perspective may create tension as military and veteran students find themselves attempting to reconcile with the military's approach of focusing on commonalities and unity. Participants spoke of the military as racially and culturally inclusive, yet speak of the university and civilian world in terms of division. The university has special groups to categorize individuals by race, gender, and sexuality, and civilians were said to be more likely to express prejudiced behavior. Despite these views, participants also consistently expressed some stereotyped perspectives on civilians such as, "A lot of civilians are not understanding, and have wild accusations."

Participants described their identities in different ways: as veterans trying to function in a world that belongs to civilians, as "normal" people who wanted to keep their veteran identities private, as both "normal" people and veterans simultaneously, and as beings with time-dependent identities that would evolve throughout the years. In general, military and veteran students want to preserve their connection to military and veteran culture, but they also want to be seen as "normal" students. Participants spoke of wanting to be treated like other students, yet also acknowledged that they have unique experiences that set them apart from those who have not served and wanted their differences to be recognized. They feel different, yet desire belonging.

These feelings of inherent difference from the civilian population stood out as being particularly significant in the context of *social participation* and transitions. Participants expressed a perceived distance from the civilian community, which fits the definition of occupational alienation (Townsend & Wilcock, 2004). It remains unclear what factors contribute to this viewpoint, and to what extent these differences actually exist. It is worthy of note that previous research shows that military and veteran students feel their political views distance them from civilians (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008). However, a study of the political views of West Point Cadets suggests that the perception of differences in military and civilian political affinities is greatly exaggerated (Sondheimer, et al., 2013). According to the study, 52% of Cadets viewed themselves as conservative (i.e., economically and socially conservative), 69% viewed their fellow Cadets as conservative, 60% viewed the military as conservative, 73% viewed the civilian student population as liberal (i.e., economically and socially liberal), 37% viewed the general civilian population as liberal, and 78% believed that civilians perceived military personnel as conservative. Cadets then took an online questionnaire on the PoliticalCompass.org website, which asked them about different policy issues in order to

categorize how their beliefs about specific policies match up with different political ideologies. The results of this questionnaire stood in contrast to the Cadets' self-assessments: 39% of Cadets scored as liberal, 23% of scored as conservative, 22% scored as populist (economically liberal and socially conservative), and 16% scored as libertarian (economically conservative and socially liberal). Though the online questionnaire has not been tested for validity or reliability, these results beg the question: If these feelings of extreme difference are rooted in a faulty perception of having deviant views within the civilian culture, what is causing this perception?

Recommendations and Implications for Higher Education Institutions

Past qualitative studies at UWM have a history of influencing change. Information from the study by Plach and Haertlein Sells (2013) contributed to the awareness of unmet needs that helped form MAVRC, and the Tomar and Stoffel (2014) study contributed to its expansion. The SVSP3 cast additional light on military and student veterans' challenges, successes, and needs in *social participation* on campus and in the civilian sphere. Narratives and interviews allowed gathering data that consisted of participants' own words and points of view. From these data, the following suggestions are offered to institutions of higher education in order to develop a veteran-friendly campus:

Improving Public Knowledge of Existing Resources: Tomar (2012) suggested strengthening existing resources on campus, and intervening early to offer resources and support to students with military backgrounds. While veteran resources on campus have grown considerably over the years, better marketing of these resources would be beneficial for military and veteran students. Campus tour guides should be educated on where veterans' resource centers are and what purposes they serve. Students with military backgrounds should be introduced to these support systems on campus at the time that the

university is recruiting them. University listservs should be sent out informing new students about the center. Educators (faculty, staff, and ad hoc instructors) should inform their classes that these resources exist for their veteran students, and should connect with these resources themselves in order to improve their capacity to serve their student veterans.

Improving Military Cultural Knowledge for Educators: Educators should be trained on military and veteran culture in order to better serve and understand this population. It is important to remember that military and veteran students come from a collectivist culture that values personal strength, respect, teamwork, and avoidance of burdening the group with personal issues (Bryan, Jennings, Jobe, & Bradley, 2012; Redmond et al., 2015). This may make it difficult for military and veteran students to ask for support, and may make them feel they cannot communicate openly in class if their personal opinions deviate from the norm. They dislike the notion of being considered "needy" (Tomar, 2012). Educators should include resources for military and veteran students as part of their class syllabi, encourage any veterans to approach them after class, and create an inclusive class environment that encourages respectful disagreement, inquiry, and expression. Student veterans should be invited to take part in this training process. Figure 16, designed by DiRamio, Ackerman, and Mitchell (2008), represents a way for the

university to approach these issues. As illustrated by this figure, the military or veteran student must initiate the process of receiving coordinated support from the university.

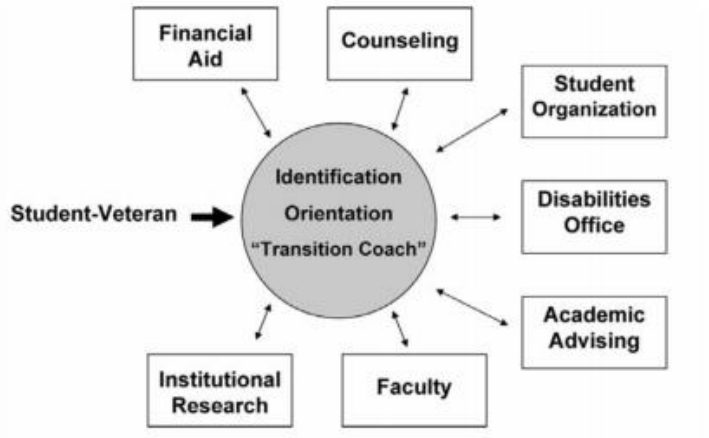

Figure 16: Holistic Approach for Assisting Student Veterans (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008).

University staff should be conscious of the fact that students with military backgrounds may not be comfortable sharing their military status, and therefore must actively and respectfully encourage these students to identify themselves. After identification, university staff across different departments can combine efforts to support the student. The findings of the DiRamio, Ackerman, and Mitchell (2008) study suggest that a mandatory orientation for military and veteran students can facilitate this process. The idea of a "transition coach" is also introduced—this person guides the military or veteran student through navigating academic, procedural, and emotional challenges, making individuals with military backgrounds natural candidates for this role.

Improving Military Benefits Knowledge for Financial Aid Staff: Financial aid staff should be educated on veteran financial aid. This should be a mandatory part of educating new employees at the university, and there should be an employee on staff with specialized knowledge in this area. Student veterans should take part in informing the

training process, and should regularly provide feedback on whether their questions were adequately addressed.

Encouraging Organization of Multi-Cultural Events on Campus: Military and veteran resource centers should take part in planning events with other student organizations and hosting their own events. This would help military and student veterans meet civilian students, meet other military and veteran students that might be affiliated with other student organizations, feel more involved in the university environment, and let the student body see what real veterans are like. These social events need not focus on military-specific topics—during the course of the SVSP3, participants expressed interest specifically in movies and video games, which are activities that interest many students regardless of background. Hosting an event with an activity with mass appeal could offer a low-pressure setting for military and veteran students to bond with civilians around common interests. Universities may offer other "neutral" activities like bowling, billiards, and table tennis through campus recreation centers.

Applying Acquired Leadership Skills: Military and veteran students with unique skill sets should be supported in applying their skills in the university. These students come with intense leadership training, which can be an asset to organizations in the civilian world (Kirchner, 2016). Work experience should be considered for credit on a case-by-case basis. Military and veteran students should be encouraged to seek leadership positions within organizations in the university. DiRamio, Ackerman, and Mitchell (2008) suggest that military and veteran students should seek paid or volunteer positions on campus where they can offer their skills and knowledge to new students.

Peer Support Systems: The use of peer counseling has been suggested as a means of combating the stigma of asking for help (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). As participants reported, their experiences are different from civilians' experiences and it can be more comforting to speak with other servicemembers. This has been supported in the literature (Bryan, Jennings, Jobe, & Bradley, 2012; Plach & Haertlein Sells, 2013; Tomar & Stoffel, 2014). With the help of the university, it may also be helpful to develop a veteran-led mentoring and peer counseling program for new military and veteran students, since military personnel are three times more likely to seek support from each other when addressing issues of mental health (Bryan, Jennings, Jobe, & Bradley, 2012). As previously mentioned, findings from the DiRamio, Mitchell, and Ackerman (2008) study support the need for mentorship or "coaching" during the transition process.

Implications for Occupational Therapy Practice and Research

Social participation is a critical area of occupation within the OTPF, consisting of a wide variety of interactions across different contexts and environments, and helping to shape our personal identities (AOTA, 2014). For military and student veterans, there is a considerable shift from focusing on the domain of *work* to focusing on the domain of *education.* As more time is allowed for occupations that may have had very little time devoted to them during service, such as *leisure, play,* or *instrumental activities of daily living,* these students may experience feelings of discomfort. Occupational imbalance may occur as individuals find themselves over-occupied, under-occupied, or being only able to engage in specific meaningful occupations at the expense of meaningful occupations (Creek and Lougher, 2008, pp. 47-48). There is also the challenge of adapting to a new level of occupational freedom, or choice in one's occupational participation (Plach & Haertlein Sells, 2013). An overabundance of occupational freedom may be

overwhelming to individuals who have grown accustomed to high levels of structure and limited personal choices. Additionally, it can be challenging for students with a military background to navigate new social expectations in civilian contexts and environments, leading them to struggle in the university setting.

Occupational therapy practitioners are concerned with improving participation in everyday life, leading to health, well-being, and increased quality of life for those they serve. *Social participation* includes developing healthy relationships with others in school, workplace, home, and community settings, which is critical to such engagement. The profession strives to provide occupational justice for its clients by maximizing their opportunities to engage in meaningful occupations (Townsend & Wilcock, 2004). AOTA's *Vision 2025* presents four guideposts, or principles guiding the current and future goals of the profession: 1) to be *accessible* by providing accessible services, 2) to be *collaborative* in working with individuals and groups, 3) to be *effective* in terms of cost, client-centeredness, and use of evidence in practice, and 4) to act as *leaders* of change for the profession (AOTA, 2017). Application of these guideposts in practice can help to better serve the needs of students with military backgrounds. Resources for these students should be made *accessible* by making them easy to find and having trained professionals ready to offer guidance (Tomar, 2012). The university community should be *collaborative* with the military or veteran student, with other university departments serving these students, and with individuals who have military backgrounds who can offer additional support (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008). By analyzing studies on military and veteran students and taking part in this research, we can expand the body of literature on this topic and become *effective* in the strategies we use to improve their experiences

on campus. We can serve as *leaders* of change, and help our military and veteran students do the same by applying their hard-earned leadership skills within the university.

The photovoice methodology is a strong fit for the profession of occupational therapy and the field of occupational science due to the methodology's participant-centered nature, use of multiple forms of self-expression, ability to illuminate experiences unfamiliar to the general population, and connection to the larger community (Lal, Jarus, & Suto, 2012). The methodology enabled this project to gather open-ended data that can contribute to a better understanding of the military and veteran student experience. Participants discussed their successes and challenges in *social participation* and transition, and voiced their experiences through their own narratives and photographs—a potentially empowering experience for a population that often feels shunned or silenced. Group discussion in the workshop sessions included suggestions of what could be improved on campus and how it could be improved, with several participants expressing a desire to mentor or lead others. Preliminary findings of this study were presented at the 2017 Dryhootch Wisconsin Warrior Summit, a conference combining the efforts of UW-Milwaukee, the Medical College of Wisconsin, Marquette University, MAVRC, the C.J. Zablocki VA Medical Center, Mental Health America of Wisconsin (Dryhootch Partners for Veteran Health, 2017). The photovoice methodology offers opportunities to form collaborations among scientists, clinicians, and artists within and beyond the academic community, and the pieces developed in this study were presented as part of a larger interdisciplinary panel entitled "From Participation to Advocacy and Action: Using Photovoice, Educational Comics, Storytelling, and Life Writing to Reflect and Elicit Veteran Lived Experiences." Community members and academics took part in examining and discussing these findings. Findings have also been shared within the Department

of Occupational Science and Technology among students in Pi Theta Epsilon, a research-oriented honor society for occupational therapy.

This study revealed the importance of how factors related to *social participation* impact the transition process for military and student veterans. It illuminated different obstacles in the transition process, such as acclimating to a less structured living environment, facing new perceptions of respect and diversity, feelings of uncertainty and being unsafe in the civilian world, and to reconciling the value of past achievements with new goals. It also revealed participants' desires to overcome challenges and inspire those around them. Within the university, military and student veterans certainly have a place—their drive to succeed, breadth of experiences, value of community, leadership skills, and motivation to apply these qualities in a meaningful way make them assets to the institution and their fellow students.

Strengths of the Study

The SVSP3 was successful in its aim, which was to elicit the perspectives of military and veteran students regarding *social participation* and transitioning into the role of a student. Initially, the study had a recruitment goal of 12 to 20 participants. Twelve students responded to recruitment efforts, and seven participated in at least one workshop session, which we consider to be a modest turnout. Participants generated a total of 15 photovoice pieces and over 11.5 hours of recorded discussions, leading to themes that both reinforced common findings in the literature and brought light the less frequently discussed topic of perceptions of diversity.

This study used multiple data sources in order to triangulate data. Recorded interviews, written narratives, photographs, and field notes all contributed formed sources of data. Having multiple sources of data ensured that the most important concepts would be reinforced.

Comparing these sources to one another revealed commonalities that were developed into themes and subthemes.

This study piloted a modified format of the photovoice workshop sessions. Past photovoice workshops conducted at UW-Milwaukee have extended over numerous weeks with at least four sessions (Miller, 2008; Tomar, 2012; Choi, 2012). The shorter format of the workshops in the SVSP3 was a positive factor for participants, who said they preferred this to a longer time commitment. Five sessions were able to be completed in approximately one month.

Sessions and recruitment occurred on a rolling basis in order to make scheduling easy for prospective participants. This was beneficial in that new participants could attend sessions with repeat participants, rather than needing to schedule a separate orientation session. The researchers and participants agreed on the next session time as a joint effort, which was conducive to having participants be able to attend more than one session.

Holding the workshop sessions at MAVRC had multiple benefits. Participants who frequented MAVRC were already familiar with and comfortable with the setting. In one case, a participant had not planned to attend a session, but happened to be in MAVRC and decided to join. Participants who did not frequent MAVRC were introduced to it by the study, as well as to fellow military and veteran students who were also participating.

Participants used their own personal smartphones in this study. This was beneficial in that they were able to take an indefinite number of high-quality photographs that could be instantly viewed and electronically sent to the researchers. In previous studies, participants have been limited in the number of pictures they can take with disposable film cameras, and they have needed to wait for the film to develop to view their work. Participants were already familiar with

using their personal devices, so there was no need to set aside time in the orientation process to train them in camera use.

Limitations of the Study

One of this study's limitations may have been the time period at which recruitment took place. There are not many students on campus in the summer compared to the number of students present on campus during other semesters. It is possible that there would have been a larger number of respondents to recruitment efforts in the fall or spring. However, it is also possible that the larger availability of people on campus during fall or spring would cause prospective participants to assume that their participation would not be needed because others on campus would volunteer, a concept known as "diffusion of responsibility" (Barron & Yechiam, 2002). If this is the case, then it is likely that there is no ideal time to recruit participants. Ultimately, recruitment yielded a modest number of participants.

Additionally, the diversity of the sample was lacking. Six out of seven participants were white, and all were male, and six out seven participants were undergraduate students. A wider variety of participants would have potentially generated more diverse narratives and encouraged different kinds of discussion.

Question 24 of the Demographic Form asked participants, "How long have you been back from a war zone and into your civilian world?" The phrasing of this question did not elicit an answer from those who had not deployed. We are interested in how long all participants had been away from the military. Additionally, one participant had served the Army both as active duty and as a reservist; in rephrasing the question, the possibility of rejoining the military should be considered. This question may be best rephrased as, "What were your dates of service? Please list all."

Several participants did not return for a second session. As a result, a smaller number of photovoice pieces were generated than if all participants had attended two sessions. It is unclear whether participants opted not to attend the second session due to scheduling difficulties, disinterest in the project, discomfort with the project, or some other reason.

There were also some challenges with data collection. Despite the benefits of using personal smartphones for taking photographs, it was a challenge to get participants to send the photographs in a timely manner. Some photographs and narratives were never sent to the researchers, despite being complete or nearly complete. Additionally, researchers did not request a minimum number of photovoice pieces at the first training session. Photo-missions were open-ended assignments in which participants were encouraged to tell as many stories as they wanted and edit them throughout multiple sessions. This may have resulted in a lower number of photovoice pieces generated than could have been possible within the given time.

There were a variety of topics that did not come up in a way that created a meaningful pattern or theme but were expected, based on previous research. These topics will be discussed in the next section, Recommendations for Future Research. It is possible that these topics were not discussed due to the shortened format of the workshop sessions, which resulted in fewer total hours of discussion and less time in which to establish trust and comfort between the participants and the researchers.

Recommendations for Future Research

The data gathered in the SVSP3 have provided greater insight into *social participation* and the transition process for military and veteran students. However, improvements in research strategies and topics of focus can make future studies more efficient and paint a broader picture of this population's experiences. A more diverse sample would likely have yielded a wider

variety of data. Having participants of other ethnicities or genders would have given a broader picture of what the transition process is like among all veterans. Including more graduate students would give a fuller picture of what steps are needed to achieve academic success in the university environment. A study that specifically recruits female participants is needed in order to advocate for their concerns from the perspectives of female veterans.

Methods of data collection in future studies could be improved upon. The use of personal smartphones was beneficial as well as detrimental in this study. Personal smartphones allow high-quality photographs that can be immediately shared, which is an asset for photovoice studies with a short time-frame. Having participants immediately email photographs to the PI or student PI could help ensure better data retrieval. A minimum number of photovoice pieces should be agreed upon participants. In light of our findings regarding participants' desire for guidance in the academic setting, a structured approach to the generation and submission of photovoice pieces would likely be a better fit for research with this population.

As previously mentioned, certain topics addressed in previous research were not extensively addressed in the SVSP3. The researchers took a participant-centered approach with the aim of eliciting narratives that were completely voluntary and controlled by the participants. Researchers consciously chose not to directly challenge participants' personal beliefs or press participants to give detailed information on topics that would be considered controversial or stigmatic. However, as discussed in the Literature Review portion of this paper, servicemembers face some very serious issues, including substance use disorders, traumatic experiences, mental health disorders, sexual assault, higher divorce rates, and higher suicide rates. The body of literature on *social participation* and transitions among military and veteran students may benefit from an examination of this "dark side" of occupation, defined as "occupations that could be one

of, or a combination of, the following: anti-social; criminal; deviant; violent; disruptive; harmful; unproductive; non-health-giving; non-health-promoting; addictive and politically, socially, religiously or culturally extreme" (Twinley, 2012). The following topics should be examined further in order to capture both the positive and negative aspects of *social participation*:

Mental Health and Substance Use: Participants in previous studies have addressed issues of substance use and mental health (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008; Tomar & Stoffel, 2014; True, Rigg, & Butler, 2014). There was very minimal mention of substance use in our discussion. Only one participant identified himself as having sought mental health treatment and discussed it with the group. As discussed in the Literature Review portion of this paper, these factors have significant effects on *social participation*, wellness, and functional capacity, and require further examination. Knowledge of healthy and unhealthy occupations as mechanisms for relaxation and coping with symptoms of psychological disorders would be valuable in assisting this population.

Sex, Intimacy, and Family: Our participants did not discuss marriage or sexual relationships in detail; from conversation and demographic information, it is certain the study included one married participant, one engaged participant, one divorced participant, and one actively dating participant. The other participants did not divulge their relationship statuses. This omission of intimate relationships in the context of a study specifically asking for experiences in *social participation* and transition seems significant. It has been shown that intimate relationships with military or veteran partners are at a higher risk for low satisfaction and divorce due to increased stress factors and rates of mental health issues (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). Additionally, in marriages where at least one partner is a veteran, infidelity is reported at twice the rate than it is in

civilian marriages; it is speculated that cultural acceptance of infidelity among all-male peer groups, access to sex workers near military bases, and distance from one's partner during deployment contribute to this higher rate (London, Allen, & Wilmoth, 2012). Deployment, difficulty with reintegration, and presence of mental health disorders can contribute to relationship and family problems, heightening the risk of intimate partner violence and child mistreatment (Redmond, et al., 2015). Related to these issues is the topic of sexual assault, which is known to impact many servicemembers, particularly those who are female (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Redmond, et al., 2015; True, Rigg, & Butler, 2013). Among our participants, there was no mention of sexual activity and no extensive discussion of positive or negative relationship dynamics in the home.

Perception of Civilians: Participants consistently alluded to having views contrary to those of civilians, needing to have a "filter" or feeling like university "safe spaces" did not include them, and feeling that they were misunderstood or negatively viewed by civilians. However, there were only two specifically mentioned factors were believed to elicit negative responses from civilians: a civilian's knowledge of one's veteran status, and declarations of patriotism. There was not adequate explanation behind why these things would be attacked by civilians. One participant explained how he believes civilians may assume veterans hold bigoted views based on their stereotyped understanding of who veterans are:

> A lot of people when they think of, like, veterans and stuff like that, they think of me like I'm white, I'm from small town America … every group under the sun is a part of the military and … a lot of them don't necessarily understand that and

> they think that we frown upon that or look down [on disadvantaged groups]… like, I definitely know some individuals who are very much like that, but some of the ones that hang out in here are mostly very open minded about other people's point of views and things like that.

This statement suggests that participants believe that simply associating themselves with the military will result in negative judgment. The military as an institution has shown discrimination toward individuals of different races, genders, and sexual orientations (Burk & Espinoza, 2012; Kerrigan, 2012). It is possible that participants believe civilians hold them responsible for the actions of the military as an institution, but further research would be needed to confirm this speculation. Further research should aim to identify which aspects of military culture make military and veteran students feel like targets for anti-military sentiments, and to elicit a clearer picture of military and veteran students' lived experiences with anti-military behaviors from civilians.

It is recommended that researchers planning to explore the "dark side" of *social participation* adhere to a lengthier photovoice workshop process, rather than the shortened SVSP3-length workshop format, in order to establish the level of trust necessary to encourage voluntary sharing of these types of stories.

Conclusion

Our country has been at war in the Middle East for over 16 years (Torreon, 2017). These wars have employed 2.7 million servicemembers (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Epidemiology Program, 2015). Approximately one third of these individuals will seek a college education through the GI Bill (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008). This project used the

qualitative research method of photovoice to identify the *social participation* needs of this population as they transition into their roles as students.

Seven student veterans were recruited for the study. A total of 15 photovoice pieces were generated by the group as a means of explaining and illustrating their individual lived experiences. Though not all participants submitted photovoice pieces or completed the intended two-part workshop session series, recordings of the group discussion provided a wealth of information and insights for researchers. The following five overarching themes were identified, and subthemes emerged within them: 1) *Camaraderie,* further defined by subthemes of *Comfort, Shared Experiences,* and *Accepting Adversity;* 2) *Alienation,* further defined by subthemes of *Age and Maturity, Social Expectations, Perceived Negative Attitude Toward Veterans, Unapproachability,* and *Returning to Civilian Life with Disturbing Experiences;* 3) *Identifying Challenges,* further defined by subthemes of *Independent Living without Guidance, Loss of Value in Academic Life, Perceptions of Safety, Conceptualizing How to Begin a New Future in the University,* and *Procedural Challenges in the University;* 4) *Rising to the Challenge,* further defined by subthemes of *Accepting New Responsibilities and Roles,* and *Envisioning Change to Help Other Veterans and Students;* 5) *Diversity and Military and Veteran Students,* further defined by subthemes of *Diversity and MAVRC,* and *Diversity and Civilians vs. Military.* Findings of this study were presented at the 2017 Dryhootch Warrior Summit in collaboration with an interdisciplinary team of researchers using photovoice and arts-based methodologies to examine the lived experiences of servicemembers.

As long as our country remains involved in war, we will have servicemembers, many of whom will eventually desire to reclaim a place in the civilian world and seek higher education in pursuit of their life goals. However, the university environment stands in stark contrast to that of

a military base, both physically and culturally. The social and professional expectations established by the rank structure all but vanish in the civilian world, changing how dominance and subordination are displayed. Values and beliefs in the university setting often seem to diverge from the opinions held by service members. Veterans no longer have access to the context and social connections that defined their years of service; many feel the only way to recapture their former lifestyle is to reenlist, which is not an option for everyone. In the university setting, student veterans can feel stigmatized for their political beliefs and excluded from their new social domains by individuals who make assumptions about the military or ask offensive questions about serving. Those who return to civilian life with PTSD, depression, anxiety, or a TBI may feel the additional stigma of living with a mental health condition. These losses, changes, and feelings of exclusion subtly weave together to create an environment that fosters social deprivation. With this knowledge, the higher education community should embrace servicemembers and recognize them as an integral part of our nation's diverse culture. The identity of "servicemember" overlaps with other identity labels frequently used to describe our similarities and differences—people of all genders, all ethnicities, a myriad of different ideological backgrounds, and those with or without disabilities are veterans in our country. We know that many of them will become college students, so we must anticipate this population's needs within the university setting as we would for people of other backgrounds. This study's findings can be applied by occupational therapists, educators, and other university personnel in order to meet military and veteran students' needs in *social participation* and the transition process into the university setting.

This transition will not be the last, because integration into the university is not an end in itself—the university is a place of transition itself, existing to help students transform before

moving on to the next stages of life. Students enter this place desiring to enhance their capabilities and expand their career options, and the university can prepare them to build the lives they envision and hope for—lives that are productive, that contribute to the world, and that have meaning. It is a place that represents a critical point for student veterans, whose transformations involve turning away from the comfort of extreme structure and stepping into an open space of undefined possibilities. For them, it is a mission unlike the ones that came before—one where the objectives may be unclear, one that may be a little lonelier at first—but with time, this mission will make up only one chapter of their life stories. Let us guide them in writing the framework for their futures, and help them look forward to the multitude of chapters to follow.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – MILWAUKEE
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION CONSENT

THIS CONSENT FORM HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE IRB FOR A ONE YEAR PERIOD]

1. General Information

Study title:

USING PHOTOVOICE TO UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AS IT IMPACTS TRANSITIONS FOR STUDENT VETERANS

Person in Charge of Study (Principal Investigator):

My name is Virginia Stoffel. I am a professor in the Department of Occupational Science and Technology at UWM. I am working with Caitlin Dobson, a graduate student in the Occupational Therapy MSOT Program.

2. Study Description

You are being asked to participate in a research project. Your participation is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to, and you may withdraw from the study at any point in time without penalty.

Study description:

The Student Veteran Social Participation Photovoice Project (SVSP3) is designed to help student veterans analyze the transition between military life and life as a civilian student, and how social participation impacts and is impacted by these transitions. Participants in SVSP3 will engage in an active role in research that provides an outlet for self-expression, introspection, and exploration of the transition process through the use of photography and written narratives. These methods will provide a wealth of qualitative data that can be used to enhance the student veteran transition experience, programs, support services and resources, and expand upon the literature on student veterans.

This study is being conducted in order to gain insight into the social relationships of student veterans, and to offer student veterans support in strengthening their social relationships. Transitioning to university life from life in the military can be challenging for many veterans.

Veterans are also at risk for developing PTSD, major depression, and substance use disorders. These conditions can impact a variety of spheres in an individual's life, including social relationships. This project's intent is to provide data on student veteran relationships with the end goal of giving this population a platform to voice their needs to the university.

This study will be conducted at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. Approximately 10-20 student veterans will participate in the project. Your participation in the project will take approximately 6 hours total during the Summer 2017 semester.

3. Study Procedures

What will I be asked to do if I participate in the study?

.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide demographic information at the beginning of the first session. All data will be coded so the information you provide is not connected to your name but demographic data can be compared within subjects. Identifying information will be kept separate in a protected location. You will be asked to join other participants of the project in a 6-hour session that involves taking photographs, writing narratives to accompany the photographs, discussing the ethics of photography, how you would like to display your photography as a group, how to take photographs, and developing themes within photographs. Your participation will help enhance the body of literature on student veteran social relationships.

During each session, written field notes will be taken by study investigators; these notes will not be connected to any identifying information, but will be used to enhance accurate data to support the study findings, themes, and recommendations generated by the participants.

With your permission, we will record your voice during the group sessions with a tape recorder. The recording will be done to make sure that we accurately record and interpret your views. If you do not wish your voice to be recorded, please let the researcher know and we will write down your responses on paper instead.

In regard to exhibiting the photographs and narratives, it is your choice whether to participate in the exhibit, which will take place at a later date planned by participants.

4. Risks and Minimizing Risks

What risks will I face by participating in this study?

The potential risks for participating in this project are minimal – no greater than what you would experience from indulging in conversations with a fellow student.

Psychological: There is a small possibility that you may feel uncomfortable talking about the challenges you encounter in your daily life. You do not have to answer any questions that

may make you uncomfortable. You will be provided with a list of resources (Norris Health Center, VA Medical Center in Milwaukee, WI etc.) should you want to discuss any issues related to your psychological well-being.

5. Benefits

Will I receive any benefit from my participation in this study?
You may find the following activities to be beneficial, such as developing an awareness of how one's time is currently spent and with whom it is spent, creating photographic images expressing one's personal experiences, sharing photographs and experiences with fellow veterans, displaying photographs in a public forum in order to advocate for student veterans' programs and services.

The benefits of participating in the program outweigh the potential risks.

Are subjects paid or given anything for being in the study?
Each participant will be given a $50 gift card at the completion of the photovoice session. If you are an employee of the University, you cannot receive gift cards. To receive gift cards, you will need to provide **your name, which will be matched with your coded ID; this will be the only record of payee names and will stay in the control of the PI (10).** Snacks will be provided at each session. If you choose not to receive the gift card, you may still participate in the study.

6. Study Costs

Will I be charged anything for participating in this study?
You will not be charged for any costs associated with taking part in this study.

7. Confidentiality

All information collected about you during the course of this project will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. We plan to present what we find to the research community, or publish our results in scientific journals or present them at scientific conferences. Only the advisor and graduate student (project assistant) will have access to the information. However, the Institutional Review Board at UW-Milwaukee or appropriate federal agencies like the Office for Human Research Protections may review your records.

Your name will not appear anywhere on the demographics form and no one will know your answers except for the research team. Data storage and analysis will be held within the premises of University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Electronic files that hold data will be password protected and available only to the principal investigator and co-investigator. Printer data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in Dr. Stoffel's lab in room 982 in Enderis Hall at UWM.

For the purpose of the exhibition, you will choose the Photovoice images and narratives displayed, as well as how to identify yourself (using your real name, a pseudonym, or remaining anonymous).

Data will be maintained by Dr. Stoffel and the graduate researchers after the end of the study. The data can be potentially used for future research in this area.

At the beginning and end of each session we will ask that all participants keep information that is shared confidential, however, there is no guarantee that information that you share with the group during any session will remain confidential.

8. Alternatives

Are there alternatives to participating in the study?
No.

9. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

What happens if I decide not to be in this study?

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this project, or if you decide to take part, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the project. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee.

If you decide to withdraw or if you are withdrawn from the project before it ends, we will use the information we collected up to that point.

10. Questions

Who do I contact for questions about this study?

For more information about the project or the project procedures or treatments, or to withdraw from the project, contact:

Virginia Stoffel
Department of Occupational Science and Technology
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee
P.O. Box 413
Milwaukee, WI 53201
(414) 229-5583
stoffelv@uwm.edu

Who do I contact for questions about my rights or complaints towards my treatment as a research subject?
The Institutional Review Board may ask your name, but all complaints are kept in confidence.

Institutional Review Board
Human Research Protection Program
Department of University Safety and Assurances
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee
P.O. Box 413
Milwaukee, WI 53201
(414) 229-3173

11. Signatures

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:
To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. If you choose to take part in this study, you may withdraw at any time. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by signing this form. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, including the risks and benefits, and have had all of your questions answered, and that you are 18 years of age or older.

_____
Printed Name of Subject/ Legally Authorized Representative

_____ _____
Signature of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative Date

Research Subject's Consent to Audio/Video/Photo Recording:

It is okay to audiotape me and use my audiotaped data in the research.

Please initial: ____Yes ____No

Principal Investigator (or Designee)
I have given this research subject information on the study that is accurate and sufficient for the subject to fully understand the nature, risks and benefits of the study.

_____	_____
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent	Study Role
_____	_____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date (12)

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

Code # _____
Demographic Form

1. Age: _____
2. Gender: _____
3. Race/Ethnicity
    a. Hispanic or Latino/Latina
    b. African-American
    c. Asian-American
    d. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
    e. Caucasian/White
    f. American Indian/Alaska Native
    g. Other: _____
4. Marital Status
    a. Single
    b. Married
    c. Separated
    d. Divorced
    e. Widowed
5. Living Status
    a. Alone
    b. With roommate
    c. With parents

d. With spouse/significant other

e. Other: _____

6. Do you have any children?

    a. Yes

    b. No

7. If question 6 was answered yes, how many children do you have and what are their ages?

    _____

    _____

8. Are you a student or alumnus?

    a. Student

    b. Alumnus

9. Are you working?

    a. Yes, full-time

    b. Yes, part-time

    c. No

10. If yes to question 9, are you working in your desired career?

    a. Yes

    b. No

11. Which branch of the military were/are you in?

    a. Army

    b. Navy

    c. Air Force

    d. Marines

e. Coast Guard

12. Which of the following were/are you?

    a. Active Service

    b. National Guard

    c. Reserves

    d. ROTC

13. What rank were/are you?

    _____

    _____

14. What age were you when you entered the military?

    _____

15. Do you smoke?

    a. Yes

    b. No

16. What was/is your Military Occupations Specialty (M.O.S.) name and number? Please describe.

    _____

    _____

17. Was what you did in the military the same as your M.O.S.? If not, what did you do?

    _____

    _____

    _____

18. Have you been deployed? (If no, you are finished with this survey.)

a. Yes

b. No

19. If yes to question 18, how many times were you deployed?

_____

20. If yes to question 18, how long were your deployments?

_____

21. <u>During which of the following operations did you serve? (Circle all that apply.)</u>

a. **<u>Operation Enduring Freedom (October 7, 2001 – present)</u>**

b. **<u>Operation Freedom's Sentinel (January 1, 2015 – present)</u>**

c. **<u>Operation Iraqi Freedom (March 20, 2003 – December 18, 2011)</u>**

d. **<u>Operation New Dawn (September 1, 2010 – December 18, 2011)</u>**

<u>(9)</u>

22. Did you receive any of the following?

a. Combat Action Ribbon (Marines)

b. Combat Infantry Badge (Army)

c. Expeditionary Medal (Navy)

d. Other:

_____

_____

23. If you feel comfortable sharing, what occurred to receive this honor?

_____

_____

24. How long have you been back from a war zone and into your civilian world?

    _____

25. <u>Have you received any type of behavioral health treatment since you served? (9)</u>

    a. Yes

    b. No

26. If you feel comfortable sharing, what type of treatment did you receive and did you find it to be helpful?

    _____

    _____

27. Have you been in a motor vehicle accident since you have been home from the military?

    a. Yes

    b. No

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX C

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR MILITARY AND VETERAN STUDENTS

Resources for Military and Veteran Students
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

On-Campus Resources	
Military And Veterans Resource Center (MAVRC) Location: Student Union, Room WG-99 Hours: M-TR: 7:30 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. F: 7:30 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Phone number: (414) 229-7211	• Offers support to military and veteran students at UWM
University Counseling (a.k.a Norris Health or Counseling and Consultation Services) Location: 5th floor of The Northwest Quadrant Hours: M-TR: 8:00 a.m.- 4:45 p.m. F: 9:00 a.m.- 4:45 p.m. Walk-in appointments are available for crisis situations To schedule: (414) 229-4761	• There is a crisis leader who will assess every individual's situation and find the best possible counselor as fast as possible • No assessments completed here, but psychiatrist available to prescribe medications for previously diagnosed conditions • Can refer to Accessibility Resource Center for accommodations and safety needs • Can call to ask for advice and seek specific services
Psychology Clinic Location: 1st floor of Pearse Hall, Room 179 Hours: M-TR: 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. F: 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. The clinic is closed on weekends and holidays and has a more limited schedule during the summer months. To schedule: (414) 229-5521	• Specific focus on depression, anxiety, eating disorders, ADD/ADHD • Clients are seen by appointment only. • Students and members of community can have assessments completed at low price: $10 – $50 depending on client income and need

"Let's Talk" Meeting spaces and times change, but are listed at https://uwm.edu/norris/counseling/lets-talk/	• Drop-in 1:1 meetings with someone from University Counseling for 20 minutes • Anonymous • Confidential, friendly, informal • No topics are off limits

Off-Campus Resources

Dryhootch 1030 E Brady St Milwaukee WI 53202 Hours: M-TR: 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. F: 8:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. SAT: 8:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. SUN: closed	• Safe, drug- and alcohol-free environment • Offer peer support from veterans for readjustment, legal services, employment needs, families, outreach, addiction, housing, and other resources • Offer music, art, and writing opportunities • Serve great coffee
Mental Health Urgent Care Building 111 at the Zablocki VA Medical Center Hours: M-F: 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Veteran's Crisis Line: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) – Press 1	• Specifically for veterans • Multidisciplinary team that can screen for and provide services for several diagnoses and needs • Can help deliver medication and change medication • Can meet for an appointment or can walk-in
Veteran Quest Limited 1322 S. 117th St., West Allis, WI 53214 Hours: M-F: 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Phone**:** (414) 257-3622	• Offers free mental health services, peer-to-peer support, group work available

Columbia St. Mary's Emergency Room 2301 N. Lake Drive Milwaukee, WI 53211 Hours: open 24-hours-a-day Phone: 414-291-1200	• Psychiatry students, who are in residency (very qualified) • Intake can have a very low rate • Follow-ups can be as low as $15

APPENDIX D

PHOTO RELEASE FORM

PHOTO RELEASE FORM

Learning the lived experience of student veterans in their post-war experience using photovoice methodology.

I give permission for public dissemination of my photograph and narrative titled:

_____

I took this photo and wrote this narrative as a participant in the photovoice workshop at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to convey my perspective on the experiences of being a student veteran which is part of a study being carried out by Dr. Virginia Stoffel and Caitlin Dobson. I understand that the photo and narrative may be included in a research report and subsequent professional publications, and other exhibits at local, state, national or international health, public or professional conferences to disseminate the findings from this study. I understand that I may choose to have my name listed as the photographer of this photo and the writer of this narrative, may choose to have the photo and narrative displayed anonymously or I may choose to have a pseudonym (a different name) used.

_____ Include this photo and narrative in the research report and subsequent professional publications with my name listed as the photographer/narrator.

_____ Include this photo and narrative in the research report and subsequent professional publications as taken by an anonymous photographer/narrator.

_____ Include this photo and narrative in the research report and subsequent professional publications as taken by a photographer/narrator with a pseudonym (a different name).

_____ Include this photo and narrative in any exhibit/presentation with my name listed as the photographer/narrator.

_____ Include this photo and narrative in any exhibit/presentation as taken by an anonymous photographer/narrator.

_____ Include this photo and narrative in any exhibit/presentation as taken by a photographer/narrator with a pseudonym (a different name).

I understand at any time prior to the printing of the research report I may choose to withdraw my consent for this photo and narrative to be included. I understand that I may also decide to change the way I am identified as the photographer/narrator at any time prior to the printing of the report or subsequent professional publications. Once the report or subsequent professional publication is published, I may choose to withdraw my release of this photo/narrative for possible future publications.

I understand I may withdraw my permission for this photo to be included in a health, public or professional exhibit at any time prior to the opening of such exhibit. I understand I may decide to change the way I am identified as the photographer/narrator at any time prior to the opening of such exhibit.

I understand that I am being given a copy of this consent form for my own records.

_____ _____

Photographer/narrator signature Date

APPENDIX E

PHOTOGRAPHY CONSENT FORM

PHOTOGRAPHY CONSENT FORM

Using Photovoice to Understand the Meaning of Social Participation as it Impacts Transitions for Student Veterans.

I, (print name) _____ agree to have my photograph taken as a part of a photography project to explore the lived experiences of student veterans. I understand that the photographer is participating in a workshop where they will take pictures and will tell stories about those pictures to express their perspectives on important issues in their communities and lives as student veterans. I understand that this photo will become the personal property of the photographer and will not be used for any financial gain. I understand that the photographer may share the photo in the workshop as a part of the class discussion.

I understand that the photo and narrative may be included in a student thesis and subsequent research reports and subsequent professional publications, and other exhibits at local, state, national or international mental health, public or professional conferences to disseminate the findings from this study. I understand my name will not be used under any circumstances if the photo is included. I understand I can withdraw my consent for this photo to be included in the thesis report or any subsequent professional publications prior to their being printed or exhibited.

This consent form and any information on it will be kept confidentially in a locked cabinet at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee by Dr. Virginia Stoffel. If I have any concerns or questions about this project, I can contact Caitlin Dobson, graduate student, at cgdobson@uwm.edu or her advisor, Dr. Virginia Stoffel at 414 229-5583 or via email at stoffelv@uwm.edu.

I understand I am being given a copy of this consent form to keep for my own records.

_____ _____ _____

Signature of person being photographed Print name
Date

_____ _____ _____

Signature of photographer Print name
Date

APPENDIX F

PHOTOVOICE: AN OVERVIEW

Photovoice: An Overview

You are the expert—tell your story…

What is Photovoice?

It is a process used to help people share their stories.

- It puts cameras into the hands of people that have a story to share.
- You take pictures that reflect your experiences.
- You discuss your pictures and share your stories.
- You write about your pictures.
- You find common joys and concerns with each other.
- When concerns are identified, programs and services can be changed to better meet the needs of the people sharing their stories.

Background

- Photovoice combines participation and action as a method of research
- It has been used for:
    - Women in China
    - Homeless people
    - Youth exposed to violence
    - Older adults experiencing pain
    - African American survivors of breast cancer
    - People living with mental illness

Goals

1) It allows people to record and think about strengths and problems in the community.
2) It allows people to share their stories in a group.
3) It directs these stories at people in the community who have the power to make decisions.

APPENDIX G

THE *SHOWED* METHOD

Questions to consider when writing *SHOWED*…

1) What do you **SEE** here?
    - What is the photo of?
    - Where was the photo taken?

2) What is really **HAPPENING** here?
    - What is the photo really about?
    - Does it represent anything?

3) How does this relate to **OUR** lives?
    - Why did you take this photo?
    - How does it relate to the community when thinking about being a military or veteran student?

4) **WHY** does this problem or strength exist?
    - If it is a negative picture, can you say what contributes to the problem?
    - If it is a positive picture, can you say why it's important?

5) How could this image **EDUCATE** the community or policy makers?
    - What would you like to tell people about this problem or strength?
    - What does our audience need to understand?

6) What can we **DO** about it?
    - What can we do to fix the problem?
    - If it is something positive, what can we do to strengthen it?

APPENDIX H

***SHOWED* EXAMPLE**

SHOWED Example

What do you **SEE** here?

What is really **HAPPENING** here?

How does this relate to **OUR** lives?

WHY does this problem or strength exist?

How could this image **EDUCATE** the community or policy makers?

What can we **DO** about it?

APPENDIX I

STAGES AND PROCESSES OF PHOTOVOICE

Stages and Processes of Photovoice

1) Think about ideas/problems (balancing the role of being a student with the role of being a veteran or current military)

2) Think about an audience
    a. Who needs to know my perspective?
    b. Why is it important that they know?

3) Training
    a. Learn how to be a visual researcher
    b. Learn about taking photographs
    c. Ethical issues

4) Think about ideas for taking pictures—what does it look like?

5) Taking the pictures—the Photo Mission

6) Group discussion
    a. Select photographs
    b. Reflect on your pictures and share your stories
    c. Identify common joys and concerns
    d. Write stories about the photographs

7) Think about people that you could teach about your experiences. Think about people that could make decisions to better meet your needs.

8) Evaluate
    a. What did you learn?
    b. What was helpful?

9) Share your project

APPENDIX J

PHOTO MISSION GUIDELINES

Review of Guidelines for Photo Mission

1) Always **ask permission** if you are taking a picture of a person or their things. It is nice to introduce yourself by your name and SMILE!

2) Remember that if you are taking a picture of a child who is under 18, you need to obtain consent of the parent/guardian to take the picture. The parent/guardian should fill out the consent form.

3) Come up with an explanation of why you want to take the picture.

4) Remember that most people do not want a picture when they are doing something embarrassing:
    a. Crying
    b. Losing their temper
    c. Eating
    d. Kissing
    e. Using drugs

5) Feel free to set up shots before taking a picture to capture a scene/idea/emotion.

6) **PAY ATTENTION!** Don't put your safety at risk. Be aware of your surroundings.

7) Some places won't allow you to take pictures. If you can, ask permission. If someone tells you to stop taking a picture, do so **immediately.** We don't want to get anyone in trouble.

8) Remember to **SMILE** and say **"THANK YOU"** if someone lets you take their picture.

APPENDIX K

THINKING ABOUT IDEAS AND PROBLEMS

Thinking About Ideas and Problems

- What are your important stories about transitioning from military life to life as a student?

- What do you like about being a veteran or current military personnel? What are the good things?

- What is hard about being a veteran or current military personnel? What are the not-so-good things?

- What do you like about being a student? What are the good things?

- What is hard about being a student? What are the not-so-good things?

- How could you take pictures showing the good things?

- How could you take pictures showing the not-so-good things?

APPENDIX L

THINKING ABOUT OUR AUDIENCE

Thinking About Our Audience

- Think about an audience for our project
    - Who do you think needs to see or hear our work the most in order to better meet your needs?
- Write down one or two audiences
- Write the message you would send them so they can understand what it is like to be a military or veteran student

1) Audience:

My message would be…

2) Audience:

My message would be…

APPENDIX M

MAKING IDEAS INTO PHOTOGRAPHS

What Does It Look Like?
Making Ideas Into Photographs

- Look over the brainstorm list
- Think about ideas of what it is like to be a military or veteran student
- Pick a few of the ideas
- Think about how you can turn the ideas into a picture

Brainstorm Idea	Taking a Picture
For example: • Idea • Person • Experience • Place • Emotion • Activity	Think to yourself: • What would it look like? • How would I know when I see it? • Where do I find or see it? • Who does it? • Who represents it? • Where does it happen? • What could represent this?

APPENDIX N

BECOMING A VISUAL RESEARCHER

Becoming a Visual Researcher
Ethics of Taking Pictures

1) What are *ethics*?

2) Why is it important to consider *ethics* when taking pictures?

3) What would you NOT want to be doing while photographed?

4) What are some risks of taking pictures?
    a. To you?
    b. To the subject of your photograph?

5) Imagine you want to take a picture of a stranger. How would you approach this individual? What would you say?

6) What are some rules we can agree to follow for our project?

7) What are some good things we can get from sharing our pictures with people in the community?

REMEMBER—A PICTURE IS NOT WORTH TAKING IF IT WILL CAUSE DANGER OR HARM TO YOU OR ANYBODY ELSE!

APPENDIX O

TRAINER'S MANUAL

Trainer's Manual for Two-Part Photovoice Workshop

PART I

1. Getting Informed Consent — 10 minutes
    a. Read through the *Consent Form Handouts*
    b. Answer any questions
    c. Get signatures
2. Syllabus — 5 minutes
    a. Ask about the dates and times—do they work for everyone?
    b. Read through the *Syllabus Handout*
3. Photovoice: An Overview — 10 minutes
    a. Read through the *"Photovoice: An Overview" Handout*
    b. Provide examples of when and who Photovoice has been used for
4. Stages and Process — 10 minutes
    a. Read through the *"Stages and Process of Photovoice" Handout*
    b. Explain what will be happening throughout the Photovoice workshop
5. Examples of Photovoice — 10 minutes
    a. Show examples of Photovoice from previous workshops
6. Thinking About Ideas and Problems — 10 minutes
    a. Read through the *"Thinking About Ideas and Problems" Handout*
    b. Ask for input from the parents
7. SHOWED — 10 minutes
    a. Read through the "*SHOWED Example" Handout* and *"Questions to consider when writing SHOWED…" Handout*
    b. Pass out pictures as samples
    c. Participants will write a narrative silently—3 minute writing exercise

8. Sharing and Storytelling 15 minutes
    a. Ask participants to read what they wrote
    b. Give them feedback
9. Who Is Our Audience? 5 minutes
    a. Read through the *Handout*
    b. Ask what participants think (family members, university staff, public, legislators, etc.)
10. Ethics 15 minutes
    a. Read through the *"Becoming A Visual Researcher – Ethics of Taking Pictures" Handout*
    b. Know how to describe ethics and why they are important in taking photographs
    c. Go over "*Review of Guidelines for Photo Mission" Handout*
    d. Roleplay to practice getting consent
11. Brainstorm Ideas for Photo Mission 10 minutes
    a. Write a list
    b. Go over *"What Does It Look Like? Making Ideas Into Photos" Handout*
    c. Read through the *"Picture Taking Tips" Handout*
12. Take Pictures – Photo Mission 30 minutes
    a. Go out and take pictures using cell phones as a group
    b. Keep a log of who is taking what pictures
13. Select 3 Photos to Write About 30 minutes
    a. Write first draft
    b. Read out loud to others
    c. Give and receive feedback
    d. Edit and finish writing
14. Closing of Day 1 10 minutes
    a. Inform participants they make take additional photographs at home and continue writing at home

PART II

1. See How the Photography is Going — 5 minutes
2. Review Photos — 20 minutes
    a. Questions with SHOWED
    b. Ask questions to stimulate more ideas
3. Take Pictures – Photo Mission — 30-60 minutes
    a. Go out and take pictures using cell phones as a group
    b. Keep a log of who is taking what pictures
4. Writing and Feedback — 45-60 minutes
    a. Edit
    b. Read out loud to others
    c. Encourage a more in-depth group discussion
    d. Refer back to *Handout*—Thinking About Ideas and Problems
    e. Discuss venue for display
    f. Finalize photos/narratives for sharing with others
5. Closing
    a. Complete paperwork with Photovoice permissions
    b. Provide participant incentives
    c. Invite participants to join other sessions in upcoming months — 15 minutes
6. Closing

APPENDIX P

FULL TEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Figure 1: Photovoice Piece 1: Moto Shirt (pp. 38)

Brief description: Photograph of the back of a t-shirt from a Marine Corps company.

Detailed description: The photograph shows an unidentified male figure, visibly muscular and tattooed, wearing a t-shirt with a circular emblem on the back that has several pieces of text: "COMMUNICATIONS COMPANY," "COMBAT LOGISTICS SEGMENT-37," "MARINE CORPS LOGISTICS GROUP." The shirt is olive drab green. The emblem is brightly multi-colored and features the USMC eagle, globe, and anchor logo.

Figure 2: Photovoice Piece 2. “Pugil Sticks” (pp. 40)

Brief description: Photograph of a poster showing two students engaging in a pugil stick match.

Detailed description: The photograph shows a poster in which two students are competing in a pugil stick match. There is an audience behind them. The poster features bright primary colors and the text "FALL WELCOME 2017" and "UREC FEST," indicating that the match is part of festivities at the beginning of the school year.

Figure 3: Photovoice Piece 3. “Dorms” (pp. 41)

Brief description: Two side-by-side photographs depicting the dormitories on campus from different angles.

Detailed description: Two photographs show the UWM dormitory buildings on campus. They are multi-story, beige-colored buildings surrounded by trees and towering upward into a white-

clouded blue sky. One photograph includes the Bublr rental bicycle station and three buildings; the other photograph is taken from a different angle and only shows two of the buildings.

Figure 4: Photovoice Piece 4. "Fishbowl" (pp. 43)

Brief description: Photograph of a fish tank with no living creatures inside it.

Detailed description: The photograph shows a rectangular fish tank. Inside it, there are seashells, a fake plant, a decorative rock painted with a octopus, some gravel, and some water. There are no live fish or other living water creatures inside the fish tank, though there is fish food on the righthand side of the tank. In the glass, there is the reflection of a table in the room, filled with papers.

Figure 5: Photovoice Piece 5. "The Empty River" (pp. 44)

Brief description: Two photographs of the same river; one is empty, one has orange boats.

Detailed description: The top photograph shows a river stretching out into the distance; it takes up approximately half of the frame. The other half shows a blue sky, empty except for a few white clouds. Green land is visible between the two, but it is far away. The bottom photograph shows a nearly identical scene, except the sky has cleared, there are orange boats along the river, and the edge of the photographer's boat is visible.

Figure 6: Photovoice Piece 6. "Plaza" (pp. 47)

Brief description: Photograph of Spaights Plaza on the UW-Milwaukee Campus.

Detailed description: The photograph shows an empty plaza, Spaights Plaza, on the UW-Milwaukee Campus. A concrete walkway leads to the Student Union, which features a banner

that reads, “United We Roar.” The plaza, often busy and full of people tabling from different student organizations, is empty.

Figure 7: Photovoice Piece 7. “Only a Part of the Picture” (pp. 47)

Brief description: Photograph of the photographer’s reflection in a window on a door.

Detailed description: In a window on a door, we see a reflection of a figure with green bushes, buildings, and a blue sky behind him. The reflection gives the appearance of a figure inside the building beyond the door, but the landscape behind him shows that he cannot be inside the building. The viewer is positioned where the photographer stood, outside. The figure appears to be a male, judging by the clothing and build, of indiscernible age. His features are obscured by the glare from the light within the building. On the door is a sign that prohibits bringing weapons into the building.

Figure 8: Photovoice Piece 8: Milwaukee Transportation (pp. 50)

Brief description: Two photographs show the Milwaukee bus and a sign that states "Welcome" and "Lubar Hall Parking."

Detailed description: The first photograph shows a Milwaukee bus with an orange digital marquee identifying it as the 30X bus; it is passing a university building with a large poster accented with the UWM school colors, yellow and black; the poster reads "#PantherProud." The second photograph shows a yellow and black sign directing students to the Lubar Hall parking lot, with an orange digital marquee sign reading "Welcome."

Figure 9: Photovoice Piece 9: “Achievement” (pp. 52)

Brief description: Photograph of a hat called an 8-point, an identifier patch with the name blurred out, a ribbon rack, and a rank pin.

Detailed description: The photograph is in black and white. It features the following objects laid out on a white ledge: a military-style 8-point hat featuring the digital camouflage pattern; a square-shaped identifier patch with the USMC eagle, globe, and anchor, and the name on the patch blurred out; a ribbon rack, which is a collection of different-colored ribbons symbolizing military awards and achievements; and a black rank pin, blurred in the photograph, but identifiable as the rank of Corporal. Beyond the white ledge is darkness.

Figure 10: Photovoice Piece 10. “Daily Reminder” (pp. 53)

Brief description: Photograph of a sign stating “No firearms or weapons allowed in building.”

Detailed description: This is a photograph of a sign stating that no weapons are allowed on campus. It states “No firearms or weapons allowed in building,” along with a picture of a gun and knife being crossed out in red. The UW-Milwaukee logo is at the bottom of the sign. The sign itself is posted on a window; we can see the reflection of the photographer outside of the building, and the lights from within the building.

Figure 11: Photovoice Piece 11. “Military Friendly” (pp. 55)

Brief description: Photograph of a poster stating "More VETERANS attend UWM than any other school in Wisconsin."

Detailed description: The poster depicts a silhouette standing in a wide green field wearing a graduation mortar board and saluting. Above the figure's head in the sky are five fighter jets. Behind the figure is a red multi-story building with pillars representing a building at the

university. The top of the poster states "More VETERANS attend UWM than any other school in Wisconsin." The bottom left corner has the UWM logo and a white circle with the text "FUN FACTS."

Figure 12: Photovoice Piece 12. “Growth” (pp. 58)

Brief description: Photograph of yellow flowers and other wild plants.

Detailed description: The picture shows a lush green area with yellow petaled flowers, and spiky white tufts of grasses and other blooming plants. It could be a garden, a wild area where these plants naturally occur, or a middle ground between the two—a garden that has become overgrown. The yellow flowers run horizontally in the photograph, bisecting it in a way that suggests order, while the other plant life grows in chaotic clusters.

Figure 13: Photovoice Piece 13. “Long Path Leading into the Unknown” (pp. 58)

Brief description: Picture of a stairwell.

Detailed description: The photograph was taken from the top of a stairwell, aiming downward and showing the flights of stairs beneath it. The stairwell winds downward, and there is a dark space in the center between the railings of the flights of stairs, giving the illusion of no definite ending.

Figure 14: Photograph Piece 14. “The Blur.” (pp. 48)

Brief description: Photograph of a room, obscured by a blurring effect.

Detailed description: This is a picture of an indiscernible room. There are a lot of lights and bright colors, and we can see the shapes of some objects, but the motion of the camera has

obscured what is really going on in the photograph. There is a disorienting effect to the photograph.

Figure 15: Photovoice Piece 15. "Resources for Student Vets" (pp. 61)

Brief description: Photograph of a sign on campus, directing students toward different student organizations and services.

Detailed description: The photograph shows a sign on campus labeling different centers in the Student Union: The LGBT Resource Center, the Women's Resource Center, Neighborhood Housing, the Military and Veterans Resource Center, the University Legal Clinic, Marketing Services, Union Station, and Transportation Services. Each center has a different function, but is meant to serve the student body in some capacity. An arrow points away from the viewer, signifying that all of these different student organization offices and campus support centers are in the same direction.

Figure 16: Holistic Approach for Assisting Student Veterans (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008) (pp. 72)

Brief description: Model for coordinated support of student veterans.

Detailed description: This model's starting point is the "Student-Veteran." In the center of the model is a circle with the labels "Identification," "Orientation," and "Transition Coach." Around the circle are different departments of the university in charge of working to identify, orient, and provide transition coaching for student veterans.