Research Proposal

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Introduction

With the post-occupation takeover of Iraq by ISIS and the recent fall of Afghanistan demonstrating an evident lack of transitional capacity on the part of the U.S., I look to understand what has and what has not been done to improve that capacity. A review of the literature and government code demonstrates that there is a significant failure to engage in effective coordination between military and civil institutions in the U.S., despite mandates set for the U.S. State Department and Department of Defense to create cross-functional, strategic partnerships social and humanitarian actors (Sopko, 2021). Since 1997, the U.S. has engaged in a series of failed attempts at creating a central knowledge base to address the reality that no concrete stability can be established without long-term, local engagement in conflict zones. (Faucher & Morgan, 2021). At the same time, the number of veterans in the U.S. has dropped since the end of the draft in 1973 to represent a much smaller segment of society, with approximately 7% of the population identifying as veterans and 41% of those having served during the pre-and-post-9/11 Gulf War era (1990 to present) (Schaeffer, 2021). One of many problems with the lack of transparency in U.S. Department of Defense data is the absence of transparent reporting on the number of veterans in the U.S. that have served explicitly in Afghanistan and Iraq. Estimates put the number at 3 million, with up to 80% of these veterans serving in combat zones (Shane, 2021). In this proposal, I examine the potential resource that our society has in the lived experience of over 2 million living combat veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. How can the narratives of U.S. combat veterans from the Afghanistan and Iraq wars serve the civil and humanitarian stabilization and long-term peace initiatives in those countries and regions in ways other methods have failed?

The field of veteran studies has theoretical perspectives in varying subcategories of psychological injury, physical disabilities, educational and employment needs, and post-service social and financial stressors. I want to expand veteran studies within the significant gap that exists in the absence of narrative studies of veterans' experience from within their service rather than after their service. Some research exists in this space, but my literature review consisted of research that primarily pertains to how those narratives can inform treatment for post-traumatic stress (Decker & Paul, 2013; Geisler & Juarez, 2019), women's issues (Feldman & Hanlon, 2012; Daphna-Tekoah et al., 2021), anti-war political movements (Decker & Paul, 2013, Flores, 2017), or veterans' identities and societal role in higher education (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017; Mobley & Miller, 2019). However, the broader study of civil-military relations pertains to theories that largely ignore all but elite military voices.

This narrative research study will be exploratory and within the realm of grounded theory as a guideline for building conceptual frameworks that arise through the study (Robson & McCartan, 2015). While it is a challenge to engage in this type of research without any expectations of the potential implications of the results, remaining open to developing themes is not inconsistent with using grounded theory in a flexible design (Robson & McCartan, 2015). I hope this study can provide a map for additional, expanded research on new ways to navigate the barriers to military and civilian integration of knowledge and the practical application of that knowledge in stabilization and peacekeeping operations. On a philosophical level, I believe this study will contribute important information on how veterans' stories are received and how the narrative process varies among the diverse demographic of post-9/11 conflict veterans. The use of grounded theory in this study is called for precisely due to the absence of existing research on combat veterans' narratives as a resource for cooperative peacebuilding in former conflict zones.

Background

Civil-Military Theory

Institutions are both enduring and evolving, as well as conceptually disputed among political scientists regarding their level of autonomy and controls within a societal system (March & Olsen, 2011). Military institutions in the U.S. have been influenced heavily by the "objective control" model put forth by Samuel Huntington in his 1957 book *The Soldier and the State* in identifying their role within the societal system. Huntingtonian logic posits that objective control requires a clearly defined division of responsibility between the military and the civilian spheres. This approach calls for operational autonomy for the military within the country's armed conflicts and a clear focus on cultivating expertise in "management of violence" and civilian leadership autonomy in partisan politics and policy decision making (Brooks, 2020). This type of philosophy has led to generations of military training to avoid merging civilian and military identities among servicemembers and create a societal and cultural expectation that a military professional cannot and should not have or voice personal political views.

In addition to the Huntingtonian standard of thought, another crucial voice has contributed to the scholarship on the topic in Morris Janowitz. Janowitz's critique of Huntington led to a wide discourse over the civil-military relationship, specifically as the U.S. military transitioned to an all-volunteer force in 1973. Writing of the contrasting views of the two theorists, Peter Feaver summarizes the struggle that the very act of maintaining a military provides. "The civil-military problematique is a simple paradox: because we fear others we create an institution of violence to protect us, but then we fear the very institution we created for protection." (Feaver, 1996). Janowitz rejected the Huntingtonian mandate for a strict division of the political and military, citing the nuclear age as a factor to requiring that the military must

become more of a force prepared to act, but seeking minimum use of force and viable international relations rather than victory (Feaver, 1996). Feaver later developed his own replacement theory, agency theory, which describes a civilian executive monitoring authority of military agents as "armed servants" (Feaver, 2003). This theory seems to expand on, rather than offer an alternative to, Huntingtonian theory.

Another theory that has been developed as an expansion of Huntingtonian theory is the concordance theory posited by Rebecca Schiff. Concordance theory is focused on the necessity of cultural agreements between the military, political elites, and the citizenry (Schiff, 2012). However, the identification of the theory has not thus far led to adopting the theory on an institutional level in the U.S. Though Schiff points out that the U.S. military has compiled lessons learned from the Vietnam era failure to understand the history, language, culture, or values of the battlefield, the solutions she puts forth as examples of instituting these lessons learned all lie within U.S. military institutions. Further, the development of the theory evolved outside the institutional reality and solely within academic circles, which may be one of the reasons it has not been adopted by a broader base of political scientists and sociologists.

In contrast, the work of Janowitz regarding civil-military cooperation in developing an independent, central, lessons learned seminar has been the most successful of the scores of academic scholars who have studied the field (Burk, 1993). He developed the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Security (IUS) in 1960, and by 1972 the seminar had 250 members drawn from university and military settings from political science, psychology, history, and sociology. These conferences became international cooperatively with the International Sociological Association and resulted in many published books and articles. One legacy of note from this seminar is the quarterly journal Armed Forces and Security, which continues to be

published, despite funding losses from the Sage Foundation. The Ford Foundation stepped in and continues to fund the journal today (Burk, 1993). One distinct piece missing from work initiated by the IUS is the participation of military personnel in the seminar research. Though a couple of fellows in military science who served as officers participated in the seminar, there was a distinct lack of involvement from the military side and a severe overrepresentation of the university side of involvement. However, rather than looking at this experience as a failure of the IUS, I take this as another indicator of the difficulty of undertaking a civil-military exploratory study given the resistance of social scientists to appear too close to military interests and the restrictions of military personnel to have the time, institutional permission, or ability to participate in such collaborations (Little, 1966; Burk, 1993).

The most resonant theory in my initial review of the vast library of academic research on civil-military theory is that of Risa Brooks. Brooks' theory on the paradoxes of professionalism points to critical paradoxes in Huntingtonian theory. First, that Huntingtonian norms designed to prevent political behavior in fact enrich and amplify these activities in a partisan way. Second, that the norms promote civil authority of using force yet undermine their own practical control of the military. Finally, that the norms have made the U.S. military more operationally effective while reducing its' strategic effectiveness in combat (Brooks, 2020). Under Huntingtonian norms, Brooks argues that military leaders would contend that the civilian leadership lost a war because the military did not have what it needed to win but simultaneously contend when a war is won, it was the military's success, ignoring any potential failure to achieve larger strategic or political objectives (Brooks, 2020).

There is much written about what does not work regarding building bridges between autonomous institutions, but as none have been able to construct a theory that withstands

evolving eras of political and military change, and the challenge to find a bridge that works remains daunting. To explore ways that have not been attempted, this study looks at the entire population of combat veterans, not just elite military commanders and scholars, to elicit ideas for how to bridge the civil-military institutional and political divides. Interestingly, in all canonical analyses of the sociology of the military, there is reference to how the military officer serves the paradigm at hand, but not the larger military servicemember.

Veterans' Political Voices

The expectation that military personnel develop their expertise within an apolitical vacuum has not gone unchallenged, and many military and academic researchers offer alternatives to this paradigm (Irish, 2007; Lischer, 2007; Civic & Carreau, 2010; Gerspacher & Shtuni, 2012; Brooks, 2020). In practice, though, service members and veterans remain expected to quiet their political observations despite the drastic changes in society since the 1950s, most dramatically in the evolving era of social media as a political tool (Gainous & Wagner, 2013), resulting in different patterns of engagement with political information and political identity (Bennett, 2012). There is empirical debate over how politically polarized American society is, but a societal belief that America is more politically polarized than ever persists (Westfall et al., 2015). This perception highlights a significant concern about the culture of divided political and military control. Politicians use military audiences as resources and props, most significantly during the Trump administration (Brooks, 2020), with dozens of documented instances of politicization of the military by Trump culminating in his asking the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Mark Milley, to participate in a photo op in front of a church in June 2020 using National Guard personnel and police to clear political protesters by force (Golby, 2021). Adding to the problem of maintaining that military and civilian political institutions are distinct and

objective spheres of control has been proven to ignore an inescapable aspect of the financial reality of the relationship between them. Civilian political leaders are tied to the financial interests of major military contractor donors who are the next stop for retired military commanders, who in turn provide private contractor services for the civilian-funded military (Kaplan, 2007).

Acknowledgment of the reality that servicemembers and civilian political leaders have opinions on their country's politics is long past necessary. Civilian leaders' control of the military comes with questions of accountability for missions carried out in the U.S.' name, and with that accountability comes an expectation of norms of behavior. Norms of behavior are inherent to living in a society, and when a person's behavior is an extension of the political, as a service member is, that behavior is inherently political regardless of how hard the military works to put a wall between the political and the military spheres through strict directives mandating apolitical adherence (England, 2008). There are limitations to the socialization of servicemembers through top-down processes such as basic training (Manekin, 2017), so it is unreasonable to expect then the service members executing those missions to remain apolitical yet act in expected norms of generally accepted behavior they are charged with modeling as representatives of the U.S. in the world.

This expectation of remaining apolitical is even more difficult to imagine as they transition from military professional to veteran asks for a smooth integration back into living within the larger American society. For various reasons, many veterans do not feel comfortable telling the stories of their combat experiences when they transition from military service, which leads to a lack of recognition of their full experiences (Honneth, 2002). Recognition theory assumes that to develop a societal identity fully, a person must feel others recognize their whole

self to value their whole selves (Iser, 2019). There are certainly veterans who do feel comfortable engaging in the dialogue of authority based on combat experience, though. "Identity deployment" refers to the process by with both promission (supporting the war) and antiwar veterans justify their framing and use their veteran identities to legitimize their political positions (Bernstein, 1997). This framing serves the veterans that embrace political positions by allowing them to call on the reasons they became servicemembers in the first place and therefore makes their service meaningful (Flores, 2017). However, there is a distinct lack of opportunity for U.S. military veterans to engage in a substantive discussion about their experiences. Much attention paid to veterans is superficial, for example, as a touchpoint for political candidates; or reserved for former commanders, professional consultants, or media commentators. In the post-Vietnam era, all-volunteer military era, the lack of voices from regular service members and veterans contributes to a lack of understanding of their experiences by the American public.

U.S. Government Attempts at Civil-Military Integration

Tensions between State and Defense within the U.S. government are not new. The U.S. Army was a significant force for domestic development in the 19th century toward the Pacific Ocean. In many cases, military units have been responsible for various civil processes both domestically and internationally (Irish, 2007). However, there has been a struggle for which aspects of "peacebuilding," reconstruction, and stabilization the military wishes each is willing to share control. Prior to the 1991 Gulf War, UN humanitarian staff in Iraq reported that the sanctions imposed on Iraq were beginning to have real political pressures, which was the political goal of said sanctions. However, UN staff were not consulted before the political move from economic action to military action, nor did UN staff come forward to relay their observations. Situations such as these called for action. In May 1997, President Clinton issued

Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 56, which directed the creation of an Executive Committee (ExCom) modeled by the structure of the National Security Council. PDD 56 served as a directive to all agencies of the U.S. government to come together and execute a political-military implementation plan (or "pol-mil plan") for coordinating U.S. government actions in a complex contingency operation. The PDD specifically called for federal agencies to collect "lessons learned" from each internal and external partner agency operation and incorporate them into planning for the next one (Clinton, 1997). In 1999, the Washington Times reported that the Pentagon-funded study by A.B. Technologies showed that no one had stepped forward in the leadership role to develop the ExCom (Scarborough, 1999).

In 2005, President George W. Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive 44, which directed the creation of a National Policy Coordination Committee overseen by a Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (Bush, 2005). That committee was subsumed in 2011 by the new Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations under Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and began to operate on a fully functional basis (U.S. Department of State, 2011). In 2018, the agency produced an analysis and framework for leveraging the coordination of diplomacy, defense, and foreign assistance to stabilize conflict-affected areas. Within the report, there continue to be indicators that limited progress has been made (U.S. Department of State, 2018). The Bureau has continued to operate but with limited success. After ten years of developing as an inter-agency institution dedicated to creating stability in conflict-affected areas, the failure of the U.S. to accomplish stability in its' withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021 shows that the Bureau has not been able to capitalize on its' resources and fulfill its mandate. In the American Foreign Service Association October 2021 report on the 10th anniversary of the Bureau, they identify a lack of support from Congress to fund civilian partnerships as a barrier to

building the Civilian Response Corps (CRC) arm of the agency. The CRC was designated to serve as the peacebuilding quick-response team to work past emergency stabilization and facilitate broader stabilization and "peacebuilding" within local populations (Faucher & Mongan, 2021).

Separately, another mandate was issued calling for creating a military-civilian partnership for on-the-ground information sharing. In 2008, 10 U.S. Code § 409 authorized the creation of a "Center for Complex Operations," whose purpose was to provide for the preparation of the Department of Defense for complex operations, foster unity of effort among departments of the U.S. government, foreign governments and militaries, and international and domestic organizations and NGOs. Further, it was to conduct research; collect, analyze, distribute lessons learned, and compile best practices in complex operations. Finally, it called for identification of gaps in the education and training of Department of Defense and other U.S. government personnel relating to complex operations and facilitation of filling such gaps (10 USC § 409, 2008). This mandate contrasted with Bush's Directive 44 in that it put the onus on the Department of Defense to collaborate with other agencies, not the State Department. However, after being initially formed in the summer of 2008 under the Office of the Secretary of Defense, it was moved in early 2009 to the National Defense University under an NDU – OSD(P) memorandum of Agreement dated 30 January 2009, subsequently amended. The minimum scope of the mandate was met through the publication of a journal called Prism; A Journal of the Center for Complex Operations. The Center for Complex Operations was never established physically within the National Defense University. Further solidifying this divide in operational power, whereas Congress directed the Center to be a collaborative environment between military, diplomatic, and humanitarian spheres of control, the National Defense University is

fully funded by the Department of Defense and serves as a war college for military officers (National Defense University Press).

In March 2017, Charles M. Johnson, Jr. directed the GAO report *Building Partner Capacity: Inventory of Department of Defense Security Cooperation and Department of State Security Assistance Efforts* to Congress. It laid out the post-9/11 efforts to build capacity in collaboration for stabilization and peacebuilding and the redundancies, gaps, and limitations of these efforts. Specifically, it referenced the Department of Defense-sponsored 2016 RAND corporation report observing the complex patchwork of legal authorities for security cooperation resulting in differing interpretations of what the authorities allow (Thaler et al., 2016). The report further pointed out the lack of response from the Department of Defense regarding the funding amounts for DOD-related initiatives. The response to this report from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Thomas W. Ross, Jr., rebuffs most of the GAO report attempts to question DOD's lack of transparency and further uses the 2017 NDAA as the basis for failing to produce information on the funding of many stabilization initiatives. Instead, Ross suggests reviewing the RAND Corporation report exclusively as the authority on these security opportunities. (Johnson, 2017) Johnson noted that the request for funding information pre-dated the 2017 NDAA. This evident lack of progress in inter-agency cooperation concerning stabilization and external partnerships within the U.S. government indicates that the best chance for this type of development will find its' start outside either the civil or military institutions within the U.S. government.

Resistance of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Military culture is not the only institution inherently hesitant to inter-agency cooperation. In contrast to the opportunity presented to state and military departments to share information

with each other and with NGOs to accomplish the goal of stabilization and peacemaking in conflict zones, NGOs stand to risk much more by adopting such a paradigm (Minear, 2004). Minear points out a key example of how this integration can have unbalanced adverse effects on NGOs in describing the failure of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan, one of the integrative programs that combined U.S. civilian and military personnel to perform security, humanitarian, and reconstruction duties. Coalition leaflets encouraged locals to inform on the Taliban as a condition of continued humanitarian aid, an explicit tactic of the PRT. This action directly led to the killing of five Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) aid workers in June 2004, leading to the agency's withdrawal from Afghanistan (Minear, 2004). (Ohanyan, 2012).

Contractors as Complicating Factors

The combat veterans of the post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq dealt with the phenomenon of private contractors involved in security and consulting to a level never seen in prior military conflicts. Private civilian contractors began as support functions such as running mess halls in Iraq but have evolved to be used in more problematic areas such as training and security (Williams, 2008). Private contractors at foreign military bases are increasingly being used by the U.S. military to 'fill in the gaps' where there is a lack of experienced leadership in the stability and reconstruction arena. However, this is a self-propelling phenomenon in that the higher pay commanded by these contractors lures experienced military leaders from remaining active-duty personnel. In addition, these former servicemembers-turned-contractors no longer must operate under the operational control of the military, creating a risk for activities that may threaten any balance achieved in the civil-military-humanitarian cooperative development of that area (Kaplan, 2007). Further, contractor prevalence contributes to both the critical issues of the morality of subcontracting the use of lethal military force as well as adding another layer of

experience in ground level actions that is not being communicated with civil or military institutions through lessons learned (Williams, 2008).

Research Design

A central theme of existing veterans studies research design is the phenomenological approach emphasizing lived experience (Mapp, 2008). This approach posits that humans seek meaning from their own and others' experiences contextually (Fisher et al., 2015). I feel that in keeping with that theme, constructivist grounded theory methodology was chosen to uncover relevant conditions and determine how the interviewees respond to changing conditions and the consequences of their actions (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). Narrative research has potential drawbacks, specifically that narratives are memory and therefore subjective. However, research supports the trauma superiority argument, which states that trauma may enhance memory rather than impair it (Fisher et al., 2015).

Using grounded theory methodology will allow theory to be constructed from the empirical data through the primary source of in-depth, semi-structured, narrative interviews. Grounded theory is challenging to design, but after considering alternative research design, it remains the best option not only due to the data collection method of interviews but due to the risk of approaching a vulnerable population with rigid theories to apply to their lived experiences.

Data Collection

The semi-structured, one-on-one interviews will be conducted with combat veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In addition to the relative importance of the format to the grounded theory method choice, this format was chosen due to the sensitive topic and

challenging to reach subject population. I considered using surveys or focus groups, but the population is hesitant to share information with 'outsiders,' so establishing a rapport will be integral to the study's success. A sample group of combat veterans will be selected and reviewed for qualification using snowball sampling. Snowball sampling will be initiated by an initial group of 5 combat veterans from the Afghanistan or Iraq wars. Those participants will be asked to recommend other participants, expanding the study further. A population of 25 interviewees is expected for the initial study, though it is difficult to predict how many interviews will be necessary to reach saturation (Moss, 2008). Each interview is expected to last more than one but no more than two hours. The interview guide will include top-level, critical questions on the main topics that are open-ended and elicit as much detail as possible from the interviewee.

The interviewees may have served in any military branch. However, the screening will ensure that all candidates are no longer serving on active duty or in any active reserve or ready reserve status. The screening qualifier is essential to ensure the highest level of openness in responses, as those no longer under military control will not feel the same potential consequence of openly discussing their opinions and their military experiences. A pseudonym will identify each interviewee to ensure anonymity. All interviewees will sign informed consent documents and be given a face sheet, and with permission of the interviews, the sessions will be audiotaped for transcription.

In addition to the interviews, the study will also integrate complementary qualitative methods (Mobley et al., 2019). First, an event timeline will be constructed from the interview subjects, including when the veteran joined the military, deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq, and left active duty, active reserve, or ready reserve service. Additionally, I will construct a network of intersections between civil and military units within deployments to contextualize the

qualitative interview results. The applicability of this data may not be central to the developing theoretical framework, but it will be essential to have the information to explore all possible concepts fully. This qualitative data may serve as moderating variables to the emerging theory.

Data Analysis

Data analysis will use open coding, axial coding, selective coding, constant comparative analysis, and theoretical sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2014). Once the data is collected and transcripts imported into MaxQDA software, I will begin the process of open coding, examining each interview for instances of relevance and coded. These codes will be sorted into primary and secondary codes as themes emerge in reviewing the data. Then, the axial coding process will include taking the codes and creating specific categories that are assembled into causal relationships to illustrate the emerging hypothesis. Finally, I will identify core variables and systematically relate this central variable to other categories of variables. This analysis method requires constant comparison and an iterative process that will include memoing and noting decisions as they are made (Robson & McCartan, 2015). As concepts emerge, there will be a point where the theory begins to develop from the completed and coded interviews. A new theoretical sampling phase will begin to apply to the subsequent interviews (Charmaz, 2014).

Trustworthiness of the Study

Many grounded theory studies use criteria to verify trustworthiness without qualitative validity standards. Lincoln & Guba (1985) established that a standard set of criteria includes verification through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility will be established by asking interviewees if they are open to participating in checks. When appropriate and necessary, returning to the interviewees for follow-up checks will confirm that theoretical constructs are relevant and accurate will further develop the level of credibility required to be considered a valid research study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the applicability of one set of findings to another setting (Sikola et al., 2013). This measure of trustworthiness will be accomplished by documentation of the grounded theory process throughout the study, compiled in memos that will be detailed in the methods section of the study. In addition, the data obtained that is quantitative and demographic will be preserved with detail on its' relation to the interviews for replicability in future research duplication (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability

Dependability will be established through the process of utilizing a peer researcher to engage in confirming the emerging concepts and categories as the study progresses. Having an independent outside observer ask for explanations of methods will be essential to develop credibility, in additional maintaining a detailed audit trail and to ensure that the stakeholders in the study are presented with dependable results (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Confirmability

In a qualitative study with such a heavy and emotional subject matter, it will also be prudent to engage in bracketing to support confirmability (Tufford & Newman, 2012). The bracketing technique that best fits my situation as a researcher on this topic is keeping a reflexive journal separate from interview notes that document how each step of the study may have challenged my personal beliefs and experiences. My role as a military spouse to an Iraq war

veteran is an asset to gaining trust and developing rapport with the interviewees. However, it also requires my active role in minimizing any bias I bring to the study. My reason for selecting this topic for research does not come from my connection to the military; my interest in narratives of military combat veterans and conflict studies was present long before I was a military spouse. However, living with a combat veteran did expose me to more subtle details that I have not read in any published combat veteran narrative autobiographies, which prompted the initial thought that there is more information on combat experiences to be learned.

Conclusion

Political Science and Sociology, along with the disciplines of Psychology and Military Studies, have spent vast time, resources, and energy in continually seeking a way to approach a healthy level of cooperation between civil/political, military, and civilian spheres. There is much at risk if we do not continue to search for ways to improve communication between and around how the lived experiences of people from all areas of society impact and influence politics, war, and humanitarian tragedy. The living combat veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have valuable narratives that may help us all with this endeavor. Exploratory study is the best way to find what these resources have to offer us, and the consequences of ignoring potential benefits or solutions are dangerously high to all of us as stakeholders. If no theory can further the field of study, then the research proposed here will, at a minimum, increase the volume of narratives of combat veterans. American knowledge of what it has asked of its' own is critical to our future, as detachment and low personal connection to the experiences of combat veterans among most Americans could potentially result in political and military leaders to believe they can engage in military solutions and wars with little political cost (Kennedy, 2021). Ignoring these stories and forgoing conducting studies such as this would be a disservice and a tragedy in waiting.

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Appendices

Appendix I

Interview Guide

Demographic Questions

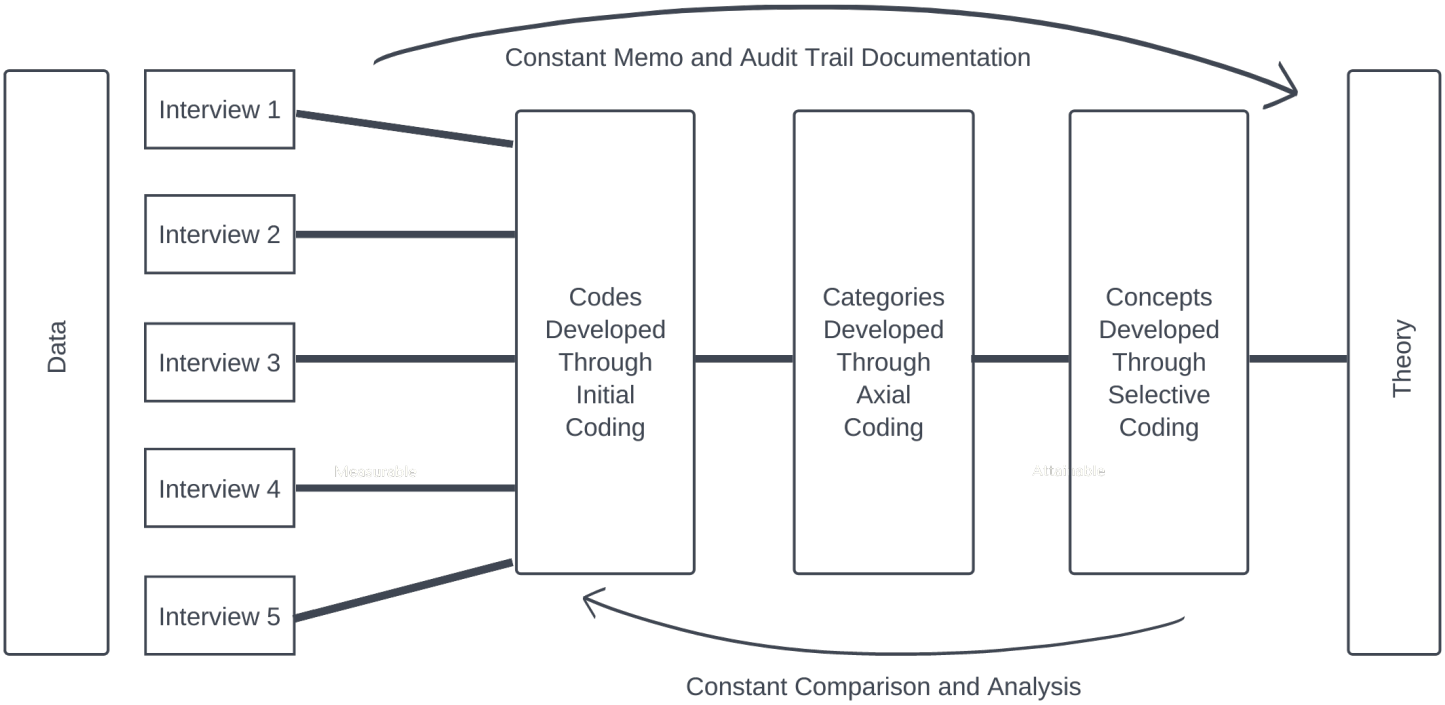
- "Please share the dates you joined the military for the first time, dates you were deployed in Afghanistan and/or Iraq, and the date you separated from military service"
- "Please share the locations you served in within Afghanistan and Iraq"
- "Please share which branch of the service you served in, your rank when deployed to Afghanistan and/or Iraq, and your rank upon separation from military service"

General Open-Ended Framework Questions

- "Can you tell me about your background and life circumstances before you entered military service?"
- "Please tell me what comes to mind when you think of your time serving in a conflict zone."
- "Would you please share if there is a location you served in where you felt you got to observe the inner workings of the community?"
- "Would you please share your experience interacting with non-military organizations? This would include U.S. civil service, U.N. organizations, private humanitarian organizations, and private contractors."
- ''Whom, if anyone, do you speak to about your war experiences?''

Appendix II

Grounded Theory Process



(Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2014)