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## A Qualitative Study: Military Veterans and Franchise Ownership

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## A Qualitative Study: Military Veterans and Franchise Ownership

### Abstract

This study focuses on the military experience and motivation to become a franchise business owner. Previous research indicated franchisees who were military veterans had a significantly higher level of job satisfaction in owning and operating a franchise compared to franchisees with no military background. This study attempts to provide answers to important research questions like how and why military experience influences satisfaction in owning a franchise. Seven franchise business owners who served in the military participated in this qualitative study using a process of surveying, coding, and thematizing to answer this research inquiry. The findings of this follow-on study indicated veterans had strong negative sentiment towards bureaucracy, however did value the positive aspects of systems within the franchise construct. In addition, the veterans valued their prior learning related to military experience and leadership and perceived it as a key strength towards successful franchise leadership and business ownership. One of the main aspects of business ownership and leadership that veterans valued more than other concepts was control, which connects to the traditional aspects of control within the business profession.

### Keywords

Military Veterans, Franchise Ownership, Military Entrepreneurs, Motivation, Qualitative Study

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### Acknowledgements

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## A Qualitative Study: Military Veterans and Franchise Ownership

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### Introduction

This study centers on the military experience and motivation to become a franchise business owner. Franchising plays an important part in today's economy. For example, Welsh, Desplaces, and Davis (2011) propose franchising is a major source of economic output in the United States. According to the Small Business Administration (2016), there were 28.8 million small businesses in the United States in 2013. Overall, 2.9% of these businesses are franchises. IHS Markit Economics (2017) estimates that franchise businesses accounted for about 3% of U.S. private GDP or a total of \$405 billion in 2016. Franchisees are described as a key element in successful franchise organizations (Michael & Combs, 2008). Moreover, Ramirez-Hurtado, Rondan-Cataluna, Guerrero-Casas, and Berbel-Pineda (2011) recommend the right choice of a prospective franchisee can yield positive results for the franchisor. Therefore, a bad choice in a prospective franchisee can yield endless difficulties for the franchisor like hurting the brand or legal issues. Previous studies indicate selecting qualified franchisees continues to be franchisors' most difficult problems (McDermott & Boyd, 2017; Ramirez-Hurtado, Rondan-Cataluna, Guerrero-Casas, & Berbel-Pineda, 2011; Saraogi, 2009).

A review of literature shows many military veterans steering towards a career in entrepreneurship (Avrahami & Lerner, 2003; Hope, Oh, & Mackin, 2011). Interestingly, previous findings indicate that several characteristics sought by franchisors might be found in individuals who have served in the military (McDermott, 2010; Ramirez-Hurtado, Rondan-Cataluna, Guerrero-Casas, & Berbel-Pineda, 2011; Saraogi, 2009). To explore this subject further, a quantitative study conducted by McDermott, Boyd, and Weaver (2015) sought to discover if military-veterans' level of overall satisfaction in owning and operating a franchise

was significantly higher than those franchise business owners who had not served in the military. Several statistical tests in this study indicated franchisees who were military veterans had a significantly higher level of job satisfaction in owning and operating a franchise compared to franchisees with no military background. However, the study did not provide answers to important questions like how military experience influences satisfaction in owning a franchise. To address this research gap, a follow-up, qualitative study was conducted to learn more about veterans' perspectives on the motivation to buy a franchise after serving in the military and how military experience influences satisfaction in owning a franchise. Therefore, this research is valuable to two distinct audiences: prospective military entrepreneurs and franchisors.

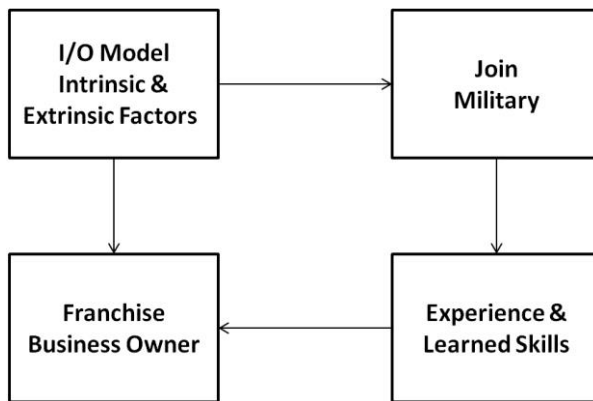
This study is important for several reasons. First, purchasing a franchise requires a significant amount of time and money from the franchisee and franchisor. The franchisee buys the right to use the franchisor's brand name and business system for an agreed period of time in return for an initial payment called a franchise fee and continuous royalties (Zachary, McKenny, Short, Davis, & Wu, 2011). Next, understanding the motivation and experience of franchise owners with a military background can give useful insight to franchise organizations who seek the best "fit" between their business model and franchisees. Also, franchisors and corporate human resources teams would benefit from knowing some of the experiential and phenomenological factors that help veterans outperform non-veterans within franchises, as a subset of business organizations. Lastly, further understanding of veteran experiences would also assist society with positive reintegration of veterans, to include providing opportunities for their returning transition to civilian life and career success. For instance, Spiegel and Shultz (2003) suggest members of the military are permitted to retire after 20 years of service and an average age of 45 years old. Since career military veterans start a new career at an older age, ex-military members might find it challenging to find a new career and as a solution pursue a career in entrepreneurship. The next section will discuss the conceptual framework for this study.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical underpinnings of this paper focus on an individual's decision to join the military, followed up by the motivation to become a franchise business owner. It explores two widely recognized theories on human motivation: institutional and occupational theory. According to Ngaruiya, Velez, Clerkin, and Taylor (2014), and Moskos' (1977, 1986), the Institutional-Occupational (I-O) Model has been used to explore the motivation to join the military. Institutional and occupational theories focus on why an individual would join the armed forces. More specifically, is joining the military seen as a calling or a job? An individual's decision to serve in the military is complex and is commonly motivated by a number of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Ginexi, Miller, & Tarver, 1994; Griffith, 2008). Intrinsic forms of motivation to serve in the military could include a desire to help others, serve one's country, or the need for self-improvement, while extrinsic factors are more tangible in nature and include money for college, benefits, or salary (Lawrence & Legree, 1996). Ngaruiya et al. (2014) suggest an occupational orientation relates to extrinsic benefits while an institutional model pertains to intrinsic factors of motivation.

This research, as shown in Figure 1 focuses on the intrinsic or extrinsic factors of motivation to join the military proceeded by the decision to become an entrepreneur, and more specifically a franchise business owner.

Figure 1



Avrahami and Lerner (2003) propose military experience is an antecedent that motivates a post-military career as a civilian. Since military service is a total experience that can affect character, skills, ambitions, goals, and career directions quite broadly at a transitional and developmental time of life, the global effect of military service on future occupations creates a significant question. The next section will discuss the research methodology for this study.

### Methodology

In this section, we will discuss the methods employed in conducting this study. However, before doing that, it is important to provide a short explanation of our own background as researchers and our relation to this study. Both researchers have been engaged in this study and contributed in their own competences. The catalyst to this study began in 1999 when the first researcher became interested in franchising. He assisted in creating one of the first portals on the Internet that provided prospective franchisees information on several hundred franchise opportunities. This event was followed up by the first researcher pursuing a Post-MBA in entrepreneurship, a Doctorate Degree in Marketing, and weekly radio show and podcast on franchising. After completing his doctorate degree, the first researcher wanted to explore if there was a relationship between having a military background on successful franchising. Because franchising is classified as a system, there was a notion that ex-military could make successful franchise owners because they were used to following rules and procedures. Therefore, a quantitative study was conducted and published on the implications of military experience on franchisee success and satisfaction. While the study did indicate that ex-military had a higher level of job satisfaction in owning and operating a franchise compared to franchisees with no military background, it did not answer important research questions like how military experience influences satisfaction in owning a franchise. This led to writing this follow-on study with the second researcher, a university Professor with a PhD. in Applied Management and Decision Sciences - Information Systems Management, who served in the military, as well as having experience in qualitative research. Both authors were actively involved with questionnaire design, data collection, and analysis.

### Qualitative Inquiry

This qualitative study used a process of surveying, coding, and thematizing to answer this research inquiry and utilized literature from Creswell (2007), Husserl (2012), Dowling and Cooney (2012), and Polkinghorne (1989). Creswell (2007) suggests phenomenological

research explains the lived experiences for several individuals, typically referred to as a phenomenon. In addition, phenomenologists center on describing what all participants in the study have in common as they experience an event and reduce individual experience to a description of a universal meaning (pp. 57-58). For this study, we agreed upon the original phenomenology perspective, prior to post-modernism, in which concrete facts can be determined, and so followed techniques of the original creator of the phenomenology method (Husserl, 2012). Husserl wrote strategically, “Sciences of experience are sciences of ‘fact’” (p. 10). During the course of our literature review, we identified an insightful article from Dowling and Cooney (2012) in which they provided a diagram that showed the lineage in branching of various schools relating to phenomenology. While we do not include this diagram here, we do recommend this article and in particular, their diagram as instructive to the deep heritage and history of the development of qualitative study as part of the profession of science. We decided as a research team that Husserl’s original work focused on the ability to find concrete facts as emerging themes leading to a descriptive paragraph concisely communicating a given experience was best suited for this study.

Our method can be mapped out as a series of steps, similar to the studies as outlined by Polkinghorne (1989, pp. 51-55). Within this comparative context, our process maps out as the following steps:

1. Extensive bracketing by researchers prior to study or process design
2. Design and create researcher processes to prevent bias
3. Survey instrument creation with the intent to prevent bias
4. Data collection via online survey (completed returns as protocols)
5. Initial data analysis of protocols
6. Initial coding of protocols
7. Theme development (emergent and iterative; periods of reflection and discussion)
8. Final coding (iterative to completeness)
9. Descriptive narrative of primary experience development

Each of these steps will be explained in the sections below.

### **Confidentiality and Ethics**

This study was conducted with a high degree of ethical standards and followed the guidelines set forth by the Purdue University Global Institutional Review Board (IRB). Anonymity of participants was ensured through composite descriptions rather than providing multiple identifying characteristics of each person. The participants were welcome to decline inquiries that made them uncomfortable and they could stop the interview process at any time if they felt uneasy. Respondents were not asked to fill out their name and no IP address was recorded in the online survey.

### **Participant Recruitment**

A total of 78 franchise business owners who had served in the military were asked to participate in this follow-on study. The prospective participants were identified from the first study conducted in the year 2015, which asked the following question to franchisees, “Have you ever served in the military?” There were several requirements to participate in this study. First, the respondents are defined as all franchisees operating under a business format franchise arrangement. Second, their franchise unit was located in the United States. Third, the individual owned a single unit franchise. Fourth, the franchise operated in one of the following

three categories: business aides and services, maintenance and cleaning services, and home repair and improvement services. Lastly, the participants served in the military. The participants served in the span of time from the beginning of the Vietnam Era to the Post-9/11 Era, current and on-going.

## Data Collection

We collected the data through an online survey tool. We followed the guidance of Fowler (2009) and Fink (2009), as to survey creation. In this process, we balanced out the survey questions, to ensure there was a counter point positive perspective questions, matching negative perspective questions, to ensure the survey instrument did not bias the participant view on a topic to the positive or negative perspective merely by the wording of a question, or the balance of the survey instrument pushing the results off balance due to bias. Not to be confused with the emergence of themes from participants, we designed the survey to balance potential considerations from participants. These considerations included the following: influence, positivity, negativity, skills, and motivation. We asked a 10-question survey that included the following questions:

- Q1: What was your one main motivator to become an entrepreneur?
- Q2: Given your role as an entrepreneur, what is the one strong positive that you have learned about franchising?
- Q3: Given your role as an entrepreneur, what is the one strong negative that you have learned about franchising?
- Q4: What factors influenced your decision to serve as a member of the military?
- Q5: Given your role as a veteran, what is the one strong positive that you have learned from your military experiences?
- Q6: Given your role as a veteran, what is the one strong negative that you have learned from your military experiences?
- Q7: How did the military prepare you for franchise ownership?
- Q8: What skills did you learn in the military that are highly useful when applied to franchising?
- Q9: What are your goals for franchising in the next 5 years?
- Q10: What one primary event influenced your decision to become a franchise owner?

While several questions were designed to seek just one response, participants were free to go beyond their top priority as some did in the survey. This approach forced a motivator towards prioritization of what participants valued most, which was one of the objectives of this study.

In this follow-on study, several steps were conducted in order to reach the prospective respondents. First, respondents received a pre-contact letter in the mail. All participants received an informed consent form as the initial step in the survey. The informed consent form outlined the voluntary nature of the study, the purpose of the study, the expected benefits of the study, and contact information of the researchers. One week later, respondents received a survey packet in the mail. This packet contained directions and a link to the online survey. This two-step procedure was selected to obtain a higher response rate. We had a 9% response rate out of the 78 franchise business owners who had served in the military that were asked to participate in this follow-on study with a total of 7 data sets for analysis.

## **Data Analysis**

A qualitative analysis seeks to better understand a problem or an experience (Malhotra, 2010, p. 139). During the analysis stage, our main purpose was to better understand the viewpoints of the participants on how military experience played a part in their role as a franchise business owner. We performed the data analysis using techniques from Dowling and Cooney (2012), Polkinghorne (1989), and van Kaam (1969, pp. 325-328). The work to determine codes that lead to themes within a qualitative study, following this method, requires bracketing, to ensure the potential inherent bias of the researchers as observers do not overly influence the findings or results of the study. Dowling and Cooney (2012) define bracketing as the deferment of a researcher's beliefs, biases, and feelings so that they do not sway participants' explanations of their experiences. As a team, we worked for nearly 6 months, prior to data collection to bracket our individual and collective perspectives against bias, discussing how we would create processes as researchers to ensure bias was minimized and to further check each other for bias prior to data collection, during initial data analysis, and into the more critical phases of coding and then discovering general themes as they emerged, naturally, from the dataset.

The first three stages of analysis included classification, reduction, and element elimination as suggested by van Kaam (1969, pp. 325-328). The first stage was the classification of the data into categories. To begin the process, a list was created that covered every dissimilar account made by the participants. Both researchers were involved in this step. Van Kaam suggests that the use of several evaluators drawing collections from the same data can support the validity of a study. The list was agreed by both reviewers and contained specific, indefinite, complex, and overlapping statements.

The next step we utilized was the reduction and linguistic change of the listed category choices into more descriptive phrases (van Kaam, 1969, p. 326). Van Kaam suggests that linguistic transformation is accomplished by means of the capacity of individuals to comprehend the meaning of statements. Moreover, one can move from a statement to its referent, the experience to which it points and redescribe that experience from a different perspective (Polkinghorne, 1989). For example, one of the original protocol statements identified in Step I, "Double our revenue, purchase a building and personally work less hours (Participant Five; 23 June 2016)" and "Expand our geographic footprint by acquisitions and starting new offices and increase our top line revenue and improve our bottom-line percentage" (Participant Four; 22 June 2016) are transformed by identifying them as "Grow the business."

The next phase was to remove reduced statements as described in the previous phase that were not characteristic in the experience of feeling understood. According to Polkinghorne (1989), elements that only state parts of the experience that relate to a specific situation should be removed from the reduced list.

Once the first three stages were completed, the resulting list was used as the initial hypothetical description of the experience. This was followed up by a fifth stage as suggested by Polkinghorne, which refers to application phase, whereby the hypothetical description is applied to randomly selected protocols. The description was tested to establish if it included more than the necessary and sufficient elements of the theme under examination. Once all of these steps were implemented, Polkinghorne suggests the hypothetical description can be considered to be a valid identification and description of the experience. Overall, the findings aided in the discovery and emergence of primary themes. The process of coding, and theme emergence leading to findings, was supportive to obtaining the results of the study. This was an iterative process that built upon itself. The main themes formed up, and it became clear what factors were core to the experience of franchise ownership, from the veteran's perspective.



## Rigor and Trustworthiness

We spent approximately 2 months on survey design and nearly 6 months discussing the coding process. Both researchers were responsible for manually coding the data. After this process was completed, we were ready to start coding. In addition, we would go back to the literature when we did not agree on the coding. During the analysis stage, we accumulated a deep pool of data points for analysis, a dataset that was coded twice for rigor, and reviewed over a period of 4 months using the latest version of NVivo for Mac software, Version 11.3.2. We worked on coding until we were fully satisfied what the participants were trying to convey in their responses.

## Presentation of Findings

Our findings are presented as a descriptive narrative of primary experience development. The main themes are covered in order from most prominent to least prominent, and then alphabetically within themes of same prominence. To facilitate clarity and retention of the results, they are initially presented in table form. The next section will focus on the results of this study.

## Results

After data-analysis, several themes emerged from the findings, as results of the study. There was a total of 14 main themes that emerged from 82 of the 122 data points. It should be noted that the remaining 40 data points will be saved for potential further study, with 31 data points currently being considered as single instances of a concept, with no emergence of a theme. To state this differently, for further clarification, only one participant mentioned these “one off” comments, one time, without any matching or aligning input from any other participant. There were nine other data points which did spark some connectivity, and if considered from different perspectives may have emerged as themes, these will be mentioned as a caveat in the discussion. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Military Veterans and Franchise Ownership

Themes (82 Occurrences)
Bureaucracy (13)
Leadership (13)
Control (10)
System (9)
Growth (6)
Resiliency (5)
Deficient Support (4)
Family (4)
Discipline (3)
Relocation (3)
Results Oriented (3)
Service (3)
The Draft (3)
Values (3)

## **Bureaucracy**

During the survey, participants recalled their experiences of serving in the military and franchise ownership. One of the two most prominent themes that emerged from this study was bureaucracy. Bureaucracy occurred a total of 13 times. Nearly all the comments about bureaucracy were negative. It was enlightening to learn of the significant disdain veterans gained for the concept of bureaucracy over the course of their military experience. For example, Participant Five stated, "Bureaucracy sucks. So does promotions based on service time and not merit and inability to effortlessly fire/discipline civilian employees." This notion of promotions based on bureaucracy and the amount of time and not merit also created a dislike for leadership. For instance, Participant Three stated, "Sometimes stupid people are in charge but you still have to do what they say." In the military, there is also an adherence to strict rules, replication, and formalities as stated by Participant Two, "The incredible duplication and red tape associated with government." This duplication leads to long and drawn out processes as further expressed by Participant Five; "The military is a massive bureaucracy, slow to change and listen to dissent." As can be seen, these negative feelings on bureaucracy might suggest why all the participants migrated away from military or government experience and towards franchise ownership. The next emergent theme identified in this study is leadership.

## **Leadership**

The other most prominent theme that emerged from this study was leadership. Leadership also occurred a total of 13 times, at the same level of occurrence as bureaucracy. It was informative to learn of the significant appreciation veterans gained for the concept of leadership over the course of their military experience. Leadership was covered unanimously from participants in a very positive tone. Comments on leadership focused on a variety of perspectives. Feelings of leadership that are highly useful when applied to franchising were shared by many of the participants when reflecting on what skills were learned in the military such as, "The ability to lead people, delegate, understand power of processes, work with a diverse group of people, handle stress, and core values" as stated by Participant Four. Many of the comments from participants included a variety of skills and traits often associated with leadership. For instance, Participant Five stated the military taught them "leadership, management, accountability, motivation, dependability, and flexibility." Other skills and knowledge learned in the military included, "Leadership, delegation, and chain of command." as stated by Participant Three. Some participants also included specific leadership titles earned in the military and the outcomes associated with these leadership roles. For example, Participant Seven stated, "I attained the senior enlisted rank of E-9, I was disciplined and motivated and I was in a position of running operations, completing paperwork, etc." By and large, leadership is a valued, transferable skill that can be applied to a second career such as business ownership. The next emergent theme identified in this study is control.

## **Control**

Another main theme that emerged from the study was control. Control occurred a total of 10 times. Control manifested as a core concept in this study across domains from the pure theoretical to the directly applied. From this perspective, the theoretical included the philosophy of self-determination such as "the desire to set my own path and income" as stated by Participant Five. Or in a general sense, "To have control over my future" as stated by Participant Seven. In more pragmatic perspectives, control included the desire and benefits to be a business owner. Participant One had stated, "I had previously been my own boss, and

enjoyed that freedom” and “The need to relocate and being unwilling to go to work for another company” as stated by Participant Two. Feelings of control were also shared when participants were asked to share one main motivator to become an entrepreneur. Participant Four stated their motivation was to “Provide for my family in a manner that I had more control over our success, schedule/time, coworkers, and direction.” Feelings of control were also shared when reflecting on one primary event that influenced their decision to become a franchise owner. Participant Four similarly stated, “More control over of my career, time, and work to better provide for my family.” The next emergent theme identified in this study is systems.

### **System**

Close in prominence to control, as a main theme, was the concept of a system. System occurred a total of nine times. The comments related to systems as a theme were nearly all positive such as the “use the system and other people in it to learn” as stated by Participant Six. One somewhat negative comment by Participant Three was, “Eventually you get tired of the original wheel and want to change it but can't.” Within a system, a franchise owner may grow weary of the status quo and be unable to change it. Other participants perceived the role of system as a strength for franchises over other business models and connected their ability to work well within a system to their prior military experience. Participant Three stated, “You don't have to reinvent the wheel.” The veteran franchise owner is also skilled at following directions, working a plan towards success, using checklists, and networking with others within a hierarchy. Participant Five stated, “After the military, everything is easy. Also taught me the value of systems, which is the primary value found in a franchise.” Other benefits mentioned of a system pertained to rapport. Participant Four stated, “Relationships you develop with other franchise owners in our system to help grow your business by learning from them, encouragement/friendship, and ideas.” The next emergent theme identified in this study pertains to growth.

### **Growth**

In the middle of the main emergent themes was the concept of growth. Growth occurred a total of six times. Growth had several dimensions as a plan for veteran franchise owners. Feelings of growth were most often shared when participants were asked to share their 5-year goals. As this is 2016 data, it is positive to observe near universal optimism from the participant mindset towards growth, given the prior economic downturn of the Great Recession, less than a decade prior. One example of growth pertained to procurements and market development as stated by Participant Four: “To expand our geographic footprint by acquisitions and starting new offices and increase our top line revenue and improve our bottom-line percentage.” Another area of growth was related to finances. Participant Five stated, “To double our revenue, purchase a building and personally work less hours.” Another matter of growth pertained to facilities. As organizations acquire new customers, they are also in need of more employees and equipment. Participant Six stated, “To expand to another office” when sharing their 5-year goals. The next emergent theme identified in this study pertains to resiliency.

### **Resiliency**

Also, in the middle of the main emergent themes was the concept of resiliency. Resiliency occurred a total of five times. Resiliency is the ability to bounce back when things go wrong, or not as planned. Participant Four stated that the military taught them “the ability to handle stress.” Resiliency is also closely related to the concept of tenacity, or not giving up

in challenging situations. Participant Seven stated the military taught them “discipline, following directions, getting the job done, following through.” From a comparative standpoint, military service was weighed by the participants as being more difficult than the business environment. The veterans who later decided to become franchise owners saw this as a significant personal strength. Participant Five said that “after the military, everything is easy.” Other feelings of resiliency shared from participants when reflecting on what skills they learned in the military that are highly useful when applied to franchising and how the military prepared them for franchise ownership was the ability to handle difficulties. Participant One directly stated, “The ability to handle adversity.” The next emergent theme identified in this study pertains to deficient support.

### **Deficient Support**

Another middle group theme to emerge was the concept of deficient support. Deficient support occurred a total of four times. Given that support is one of the key selling points of the franchise business model, it was informative to discover deficient support as an emergent theme from analysis of the participant replies. Feelings of deficient support were mostly shared when participants were asked to identify one strong negative, they learned about franchising. Deficient support was mentioned in a diverse set of contextual frames, from a generic example such as, “No local support” from Participant One. Other examples on lack of support were more specific and focused on the weaknesses of franchise contracts. For instance, Participant Five stated, “Franchise agreements are generally written in favor of the franchisor, and it is difficult to determine the level of support to be provided to franchisees for relatively new immature franchisors.” Additionally, it was remarked that when management changes there is also normally a corresponding loss of support due to a strategic change in direction from leadership towards franchise operations. For example, Participant Six stated, “dealing with upper management turnover changing directions” when asked to reflect about one strong negative pertaining to franchising. One participant stated they saw some improvement in the area of support but were still partially dissatisfied based on the amount of royalties paid to the franchisor. Participant Four stated, “Royalties—our franchisor has gotten better about providing support. But for the amount we pay, it never seems like a good use of resources.” The next emergent theme identified in this study pertains to family.

### **Family**

A moderate theme to emerge was the concept of family. Family appeared a total of four times. Family occurred as commentary from the participants in several main perspectives. From the direct role perspective, participants were focused on their place within the family. Participant Four stated, “Provide for my family in a manner that I had more control over our success, schedule/time, coworkers, and direction.” There were also direct mentions of how prior service family members influenced their life choices to serve as mentors or role models. Participant Five stated, “A desire to serve my country and my uncle, who served, was a role model” when asked what factors influence your decision to serve as a member of the military. Family also had nuances of not only meeting some immediate provider goal, also transitioning from military service to veteran franchise ownership with intentional plans towards increased income and the increased capability to provide as a family function or duty connected to their familial role. Participant Four also stated, “More control over of my career, time, and work to better provide for my family.” The other perspective was from the longer family view of historical lineage. In this longer-view perspective participants were influenced in their

decision-making by shared family history of military service. The next emergent theme identified in this study pertains to discipline.

### **Discipline**

One minor theme to emerge was the concept of discipline. Discipline occurred a total of three times. Feelings of discipline were shared when participants were asked what skills were learned in the military that are highly useful when applied to franchising. Participant Seven stated, "Discipline, following directions, getting the job done, following through." Discipline was also mentioned as self-discipline and connected to a sense of being driven. Feelings of discipline were also shared when participants were asked how franchising prepared participants for franchise ownership. Participant Seven stated, "I attained the senior enlisted rank of E-9, I was disciplined and motivated and I was in a position of running operations, completing paperwork, etc." Because franchising is described as a system, an individual would require a higher level of discipline to follow the strict rules and procedures set by a franchisor. The next emergent theme identified in this study pertains to relocation.

### **Relocation**

A minor theme that emerged was relocation. Relocation occurred a total of three times. Participants were concerned about relocation as a general concept. For example, Participant Two stated "Relocation to Jacksonville, Florida." When asked what was one main motivator to become an entrepreneur and one primary event influence on their decision to become a franchise owner. Given that military service, by its very nature, requires extensive deployments and travel, it is worth mentioning there was then a post-military service desire, within a second career, to limit travel or relocation requirements in selected careers. Participant Two also stated, "Need to relocate and being unwilling to go to work for another company." The next emergent theme identified in this study pertains to results oriented.

### **Results Oriented**

Another minor theme that emerged was results. Results occurred a total of three times. Results focused on execution and completion of a task. In one response, there was an aspect of tenacity and results-oriented focus. For example, feelings of results-oriented were shared when answering what skills were learned in the military that are highly useful when applied to franchising. Participant Seven stated, "Discipline, following directions, getting the job done, following through." Feelings of results were also shared when participants were asked what is the one strong positive that learned from their military experiences. For example, Participant Seven also stated, "Getting the job done." The next emergent theme identified in this study pertains to service.

### **Service**

Amongst Post-9/11 Veterans, one unique minor theme was service. Service occurred a total of three times. Service had several different perspectives, however, collectively, they all were external to the individual. It was interesting to learn there is an inherent element of altruism related to service as a motivator with veterans. Feelings of service were discussed when answering what factors influenced the decision to serve as a member of the military. Participant Four stated, "Service to others and to be involved in something larger than myself." Another perspective of service focused on esteem and reverence. Participant Six stated, "Honor

Country” as their influence for joining the military. The next emergent theme identified in this study pertains to the draft.

### **The Draft**

Amongst Vietnam Era Veterans, one unique minor theme, from the perspective of the study, was The Draft. The Draft occurred a total of three times as a theme. It is difficult, to consider the reality of the phenomenon of The Draft, now four decades after it was disbanded as a national policy in 1973. However, to the participants who lived it, it remains a reality that shaped their life decisions. For example, Participant Seven stated, “I joined, rather than be drafted during the Vietnam conflict.” A subtler nuanced choice was choosing to serve, via enlistment or commission, volunteering in advance, prior to being drafted as an effort to exert more control over how they would serve in the military. Participant Two stated, “I was subject to the draft and decided to join ROTC to make sure of my deferment through college and to obtain a partial scholarship.” For the Vietnam Era Veteran, the phenomenon of “The Draft” was a theme within their lives, and it was only a minor theme in this study, as by chance this study was nearly perfectly split between Vietnam Era Veterans who dealt with The Draft and later Post-9/11 Veterans who were living and serving in the span of time after the policy change. For instance, when participants were asked what factors influenced their decision to serve in the military, Participant One stated, “Vietnam Era and I was not going to Canada.” The final emergent theme identified in this study pertains to values.

### **Values**

The remaining minor theme that emerged was values. Values occurred a total of three times. Each of the three responses was unique, however fit clearly in the values theme for the current study. Different values were listed from the more strategic perspective being core values such as, “Family, military, service history, service to others” as stated by Participant Four to the more specific and single item value perspective, “integrity” as stated by Participant Three. Values such as honor and country were also suggested. Participant Five stated, “Desire to serve my country and my uncle, who served, was a role model” when asked what factors influence your decision to serve as a member of the military. The next section will focus on the discussion for this study.

## **Discussion**

This paper highlighted the experiences of military veterans who owned and operated a franchised business. What was known before the study from previous research is military veterans as a group had a higher level of satisfaction in owning and operating a franchise. What was not known was how or why military experience influenced satisfaction in owning a franchise. This study gave us a better understanding to these research questions.

Given a total of seven participants, themes were determined based on a minimum cut-off using concepts mentioned at least three times amongst all participant comments. This was a decision made by the researchers, to limit scope, and focus the reporting of findings and results. In general, the remaining data points were singular inputs that did not emerge as a discernible pattern. However, there are three caveats to this that are potentially useful towards the current and future study that should be mentioned in this journal article. It is of value to mention three potential caveats from the dataset. If considered in combination of grouped themes, there could have been three other themes that emerged to the point of being presented in this article. Collectively considered, education and benefits would have emerged as a theme

with four mentions total amongst the participants. The Department of Defense has a history of marketing to potential recruits using the phrase, "Education and Benefits," however our participants replied to these as independent concepts. While family was a moderate theme, two other potentially related themes also could have emerged, if collectively grouped together, legacy and brotherhood. For the purpose of this current study, these were considered distinct concepts not related to family, and not related to each other. Future study may show otherwise. Royalties had been mentioned twice by participants and was not included formally in this report. However, there is some indication that royalties are a larger concern for franchises than this study discovered as a potential form of benefits, and a note towards future consideration of this data has been recorded in case it emerges differently in a future related study. It would also be noteworthy to explore if there are significant differences in experiences learned between the different branches of military and how they were applied to entrepreneurship or franchise ownership.

### **Discussion of Service Versus Draft**

Some of the veterans that participated in the study were from the Vietnam Era, while others were from the Post-9/11 Era. This was not a focus of this study, or the original study, as both studies focused on veterans as a demographic population, not segmented by combat operation or war. However, it was noted that close to half the veterans for this follow-on study self-identified as Vietnam Era, and likewise, nearly half of the population self-identified as Post-9/11 Era. In a future set of studies, the phenomenon of franchise ownership by veterans could focus-in further via this type of segmentation within the veteran population. In most instances, Vietnam Era Veterans made comments related to their experience with The Draft, while Post-9/11 Veterans, who did not experience The Draft, as it no longer was implemented by the United States during their span of service, had comments that substituted an emphasis on service in their corresponding responses to questions.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. The first limitation would consist of nonresponse bias. For mailed surveys, there is the chance that some types of participants are likely to be overrepresented and others underrepresented in the sample received, creating biased results. Another limitation is that the sample for this study only included 3 out of 75 plus industries that presently use franchising as a means of distribution. This study also focused only on individuals who owned one single franchise unit as opposed to multiple unit franchisees also impacting the generalizability of the findings. In addition, we did not distinguish what branch of military participants served in, restraining the generalizability of the findings.

### **Conclusion**

The main result of this study is the descriptive phenomenological narrative of the primary experience of military veterans and franchise ownership:

Veterans had strong negative sentiment towards bureaucracy, however, did value the positive aspects of systems within the franchise construct. The veterans valued their prior learning related to military experience and leadership and perceived it as a key strength towards successful franchise leadership and business ownership. One of the main aspects of business ownership and

leadership that veterans valued more than other concepts was control, which connects to the traditional aspects of control within the business profession.

Knowledge of this experiential and phenomenological narrative will be beneficial to franchisors and corporate human resources teams. Veterans are well-suited for future business opportunities. Veterans share inherent strengths including the ability to handle stress, to take control, to perform as leaders, and to earn successful results. These are noteworthy talents beneficial to both society and business.

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