
AN EMIC CONCEPTUALIZATION OF VETERAN

“YOU'RE EITHER ONE OF TWO
THINGS; YOU'RE CAPTAIN
AMERICA OR YOU'RE BROKEN”

Introduction

What is a veteran?

Treating veteran as a static status

No infallible way to identify who is a veteran

Perpetuates deficit-centric view of veterans

Overlooks the complexities of the dynamic processes of social interaction

Research Purpose

Explore insider perspective of former military members discussing “veteran”

How do former military members define veteran?

1. How do former military members describe and define **veteran as object**?

2. How do former military members describe and define **veteran as self**?

3. Do these descriptions **diverge/overlap** between veteran object and veteran self?

Self

It is through interaction in the world that people develop ways to navigate the complexities of social life.

The self is never complete because we each continue to develop as long as we continue social interaction.

Object

Dinglehopper



Banded bulbus snarfblat



Gap between object and self

I propose former military members be considered as possessing a self while also existing as an object. This is possible because **reflexivity** allows one to be both inside and outside the phenomena being studied.

Former military member

It is not assumed that anyone who has joined the military is a veteran. It is unnecessary to use length, character, or period of military service. This concept does not presume any qualifying feature other than having joined the military.

Participants ($N = 16$)

Table 1

Sample Demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Entered Service	Branch of service	Combat	Are you a veteran?
Betsy	54	Female	1987	USAF*	No	Yes
Angela	62	Female	1980	Army	No	Yes
D.J.	28	Female	2012	Army	No	Yes
Stephanie	41	Female	2000	Army	Yes	Yes
Tony	28	Male	2013	USMC**	Yes	Yes
Doug	33	Male	2010	Army	Yes	Yes
Shawn	36	Male	2004	Navy	No	Yes
George	51	Male	1989	Navy	Yes	Yes
Jack	42	Male	1998	Army	Yes	Yes
Eric	50	Male	1991	USAF*	No	Yes
Danny	46	Male	1997	Army	Yes	Yes
Jesse	58	Male	1985	Navy	No	Yes
Matt	58	Male	1982	Navy	No	Yes
Joey	53	Male	1991	Army	Yes	Yes
Carl	39	Male	2002	Army	Yes	Yes
Maxwell	32	Male	2001	Army	No	No

*United States Air Force

**United States Marine Corps

Six Themes

- 1) The public describes veteran in absolutes/ tropes (**Object**)
 - 2) Service is the key to veteran status (**Object**)
 - 3) Participants are more critical of their own service (**Self**)
 - 4) Conceptions of veteran are coupled with war (**Object / Self**)
 - 5) Public displays of veteran (**Object / Self**)
 - 6) Veterans are not Monoliths (**Object / Self**).
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How do Former Military Members Define “Veteran”?

A gap exists between the generic veteran (object) and the contextualized veteran (self) for each participant.

All participants described themselves differently than they did a generic (object) veteran.

Maxwell

*The participant without a
veteran self*

“I don't uh, I don't really consider myself a veteran. Both my cousins went to Afghanistan and Iraq. Umm. And so, yeah, I yeah, I don't.”

Maxwell (cont.)

“I guess I kind of fall more on the side of, you know, if you didn't deploy, you're not a veteran, **but I know that's not true.** It's just. How much of that got ingrained into you while you were serving?”

“I think I go to pretty good lengths to uh. Cover up my service to a great degree. I don't have veterans license plates. I don't do any of that. I don't have any stickers that say I serve. I don't post pictures on Facebook or anything. Umm. Yeah. No, none of that.”

Maxwell is not a veteran

Does he have veterancy?

QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, ACCOLADES, AND FEEDBACK

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