

Running Head: HARNESSING POLICY WINDOWS

Harnessing Policy Windows:
Using Lessons from the Post-9/11 GI Bill Passage
to Garner Congressional Support for US Military Requirements

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HARNESSING POLICY WINDOWS

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Harnessing Policy Windows:
Using Lessons from the Post-9/11 GI Bill Passage
to Garner Congressional Support for US Military Requirements

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A candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this dissertation is to examine how stakeholders adjusted their narrative strategies to develop support for transferability of veterans' educational benefits to their spouses and dependent children, which was eventually established in the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Prior studies have not examined this particular topic, and this dissertation presents an exploratory study that contributes to various hypotheses present in the Narrative Policy Framework. This dissertation demonstrates that stakeholder groups use narrative strategies to expand or constrain the policy issue to support their desired end states and that changes in policy discussion help explain policy changes and revised outcomes.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Does it take a war to significantly improve veterans' benefits? Major improvements to educational benefits for United States (US) veterans correlate with the end of wars that presented existential threats to US livelihood (i.e., World War II (WWII) and the Global Wars on Terror (GWOT)). "Lesser" wars – those of short duration (e.g., OPERATION DESERT STORM, Grenada) or whose meaningful impact was never compellingly tied to US existence (e.g., Vietnam, Korea) – did not result in significant changes to veterans' educational benefits, even though similar political or economic circumstances were present in the environment (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2012). At the end of WWII, Congress passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 or "GI Bill of Rights," which provided a weekly stipend for the unemployed, education and training funds, and home loan benefits. The impetus for these benefits was both political and economic. Politically, Congress was trying to avoid the Bonus Marches that took place after World War I. Economically, Congress anticipated the large influx of veterans returning to a much changed economic landscape (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). These benefits later were extended to other veteran groups (e.g., Korean War veterans, peacetime veterans, Reserve Component veterans) over time (Foner & Garraty, 1991). Then, as the GWOTs were winding down in the late 2000s, Congress passed the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which entailed major upgrades from previous iterations. Specifically, much higher payment rates (comprehensive tuition assistance or "full tuition" payment) were provided to veterans – potentially up to the full amount of in-state tuition and fees – along with separate funds for housing and books. Also, eligible veterans could transfer the educational benefits to their dependents (transferability) (Dortch, 2012).

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Currently, the United States (US) military is undergoing significant fiscal reductions due to the combined effect of natural post-war drawdown and Congressional fiscal limitation under Sequestration (Serbu, 2015). The military saw a large increase in non-combat related military benefits during the height of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), which encompassed OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM (OEF/OIF), even though US economic realities were not robust (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2012). More recently, the military services have struggled to demonstrate relevance and benefit to Congress and the American people (Harper, 2015; Metz, 2014). While recent administrative changes have brought about promises for increased military funding, Congressional action is required for follow-through, and this tension remains. Additionally, years of working under both Sequestration and Continuing Resolutions have placed priorities on equipment repair/replacement and basic force readiness (Clark & Freedberg, 2017).

What circumstances were present after the GWOTs that facilitated non-combat benefits for service members when other wars failed to encourage such support? What narratives were effective in obtaining these benefits? This dissertation examines, as a case study, the factors that contributed to the Post-9/11 GI Bill's passage. Initially, I thought to investigate the manner in which third-party entities, such as think tanks and advocacy organizations, influenced its passage by developing, distributing, and garnering support for a persuasive narrative. Having discovered a longer history of legislative efforts to incorporate transferability and full tuition payment into GI Bill statute, I reframed my focus to concentrate on what became clearly three separate eras discussing these benefits within Congress.

Problem Statement

As stated above, the US military's overriding problem is that its leaders cannot effectively convey its relevance to the US Congress and citizenry (Freedberg, 2013; Harper, 2015; Lopez, 2013; Rossi, 2013). Despite the military's personnel and readiness needs to combat the rise of terrorist activities aligned with al Qaida, its affiliates, and the Islamic State (IS), Congress' general fiscal belt tightening, continued sequestration, and internal feuding and inability to achieve consistent budgetary consensus – resulting in continuing resolutions that cap current fiscal year spending at previous years' levels – continues.¹ The US military must find a way to express its relevance and requirements to both Congress and the US populace to avoid replicating the “hollow force” of the post-Vietnam era.² This problem may be caused by an inability to open or harness a political window and develop an effective coalition to press the military's strategic narrative. An untested hypothesis exists suggesting coalitions have the ability to adjust their narrative to more effectively garner support for their goals (Jones & McBeth, 2010). This case study, using Multiple Streams Analysis and a Narrative Policy Framework, investigates an instance where the US military received Congressional support during an inhospitable fiscal period to determine the efficacy of adjusting narratives to garner support for goals,

¹ I am not discussing whether the Department of Defense budget or even the Department of Veterans Affairs budget – under which veteran education benefits fall – is sufficient. Rather, there is a tension within and between Congress, interest groups, and the citizenry about where funds should be directed and prioritized, and those advocating for educational priorities (regardless of location or Departmental budget) would benefit from understanding how policy streams come together to better address changing circumstances with more effective strategic communications. While this dissertation is oriented within a security environment, I consider implications for the broader educational lobby in my discussion.

² “Hollow force” is a term used to describe “military forces that appear mission-ready but, upon examination, suffer from shortages of personnel and equipment, and from deficiencies in training” (Feickert & Daggett, 2012).

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and may highlight the salient factors that senior military leaders and their supporters could then pursue for strategic and operational benefit.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is two-fold. First, it identifies salient features that open policy windows for increased pro-military policy decisions. From a Multiple Streams Analysis standpoint, the theory holds that the problem, solution, and actors have to exist at the same time. If recruiting and retention problems have existed since the 1970s, and the solution also has existed, then garnering the actors may well be produced by changing circumstances or understanding – in part, impacted by altered language across time. This is germane because the US military currently is struggling to communicate its relevance – the degree to which the services “are related or useful to the current environment,” as defined in the Cambridge English Dictionary – to both to US citizens and its Congress (Cambridge, 2016; Freedberg, 2013; Lopez, 2013). Understanding instances where policy windows³ were opened and effectively used – especially for policies that were more generally on the “nice to have” rather than “critical for continued existence” side of the continuum – provides a foundation for future policymakers in this field. Specifically, it is hoped that current and future military policy makers can either shape the environment to achieve the necessary salient features to open other policy windows, or at least be sensitive to those features and more quickly and successfully harness their potential.

Second, this study contributes to the body of literature on the meso-level of the

³ Policy windows will be discussed in detail below. In brief, these are moments in time where problems, solutions, and supporters are near-simultaneous, thus opening a path to policy change.

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Narrative Policy Framework, specifically regarding the manner in which advocacy groups deliver strategic communication of policy narratives. Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth (2011) proposed that coalitions developed policy narratives based on the consistency with which public opinion aligned to the coalitions' preferred policy outcomes. Additionally, Jones and McBeth (2010) propose that policy narratives are purposely manipulated to adjust coalition membership to more effectively achieve their strategic end states. This study attempts to identify whether the Congressional coalition recommending inclusion of transferability and full cost tuition payments altered the specific content or language of their strategic narratives, and if so, whether these changes garnered coalition members who were instrumental in passing the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

- 1) What are the circumstances of political, entrepreneurial, and policy streams that surrounded the passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill?
- 2) What are the salient features of this environment that were of particular value in advancing passage of the statute?
- 3) To what extent did changing social constructs enable the passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

This study examined whether Congressional advocates adjusted their narratives to harness exogenous and endogenous public opinion to garner necessary support for post-9/11 GI Bill passage (i.e., narratives focused on endogenous opinion groups promoted support for veterans while narratives focused on exogenous populations were tailored

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toward more traditionally liberal values/beliefs, such as enhancing educational opportunity).

Research design & methodology

This study was designed to provide explanatory and descriptive understanding of the salient factors that opened the policy window to achieve passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. It articulates a case study that uses narrative policy analysis to evaluate – largely through primary document analysis – the narratives Congressional staff and third-party entities (i.e., think tanks and special interest groups) used to advocate for passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Specifically, I assess the narratives present in speeches, policy papers, reports, Congressional testimony, and newspaper, blog, and opinion articles, as well as other public records that demonstrate the overall narrative(s) used by supporters of the Post-9/11 GI Bill or its key tenets. By conducting a case study of how the policy was enacted, this study was structured to identify major contributors, and what storylines they used to garner support with their organic adherents as well as any changes they made to these storylines to improve their stance in the policy creation process (Merriam, 1998). Some of those changes were anticipated to be language-specific.

Narrative Policy Analysis was used to identify the content and form of proponents' arguments supporting passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Specifically, I examined the meso – group and coalition – level of policy narratives (McBeth, Jones & Shanahan, 2014). To do so, I examined narratives present prior to the statute's introduction in Congress – anticipating that I might find narratives present even before transferability and comprehensive tuition assistance were combined in proponents' common vernacular. I quickly found that these concepts had been offered into legislation

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at my earliest research point, in the mid-1970s, as part of discussion on resourcing for the newly legislated All Volunteer Force. As a result, my original intent of seeking out specific advocates for transferability and full tuition payment became moot; these proposals were offered into legislation regularly over the 30 years before being passed into law.

As a result, the study transitioned to examine evolution in the policy narrative, such as changing from a focus on “veterans who deserve a nation’s gratitude,” to an emphasis on the “ever-advancing professionalization of the force – which makes dependent transferability so relevant to the serving force.”⁴ Particularly interesting to this problem set was whether advocates heresthetically altered their narratives to improve the statute’s passage likelihood. Jones and McBeth (2010b) hypothesized that groups adjust their policy narratives to alter the size and composition of their coalition to improve their overall strategic benefit. More specifically, they suggest that policy narratives “influence policy change and outcomes indirectly, primarily through influences over coalition composition” (Jones & McBeth, 2010b). They drew upon William Riker’s 1986 work on political manipulation that discussed the concept of “heresthetics,” which entails rearranging the political circumstances to achieve one’s desired end states. Similarly, Lugg (2001) illustrated this rearranging of political circumstances in her study on the Christian Right’s support for Bible-as-History curricula in public schools. Specifically, the group’s “use and ownership of elaborate mass media networks, including think tanks, Bible colleges, and now graduate schools,” helped focus the entity as a clear interest

⁴ It should be noted that this potential shift – one I expected – was not found in my research. Professionalization of the force was never coded as a relevant node, and the focus on Debt to Veterans was a later theme, vice significantly present across the entire research period.

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group (Lugg, 2001, p. 50). However, its willingness to use disruptive tactics such as blocking abortion clinics or protesting at state-level political party meetings also opened the aperture for potential members interested in belonging to a social movement (Lugg, 2001, p. 50). This dissertation took on that hypothesis as a key research question.

Framework

The Multiple Streams Analysis was used to understand the context in which the post-9/11 GI Bill was passed (Kingdon, 2011; Sabatier, 1999). Public organizations operate with a “garbage can model” of organizational choice, where priorities, boundaries, problems, solutions, and participants are fluid (Cohen, March & Olsen, 1972). In this non-linear system, some identified solutions exist awaiting a satisfactory problem to address. They articulate problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities as related “streams” that feed into and affect the overall system and its resultant product. This concept of “streams” was further elaborated specifically to include the US federal government (Kingdon, 2011). Kingdon (2011) articulated three process streams: “(1) problem recognitions, (2) the formation and refining of policy proposals, and (3) politics” (p. 87). Given the right circumstances, these streams unite to create “policy windows” where interest groups, researchers, bureaucrats, and others have the necessary recognition of a particular problem or the needed political circumstances to garner attention for their preferred solutions (p. 88). These policy windows may be opened, in part, due to focusing events and which highlight a problem for the public and those involved in the political stream (p. 94-95). Focusing events may be real-world crises that force legislative attention, especially if the populace normally is not concerned with the topic. Although gun-based crime occurs daily in the US, concern heightened as

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gun-related violence occurred at schools (e.g., Columbine, Sandy Hook, Parkland, etc.), whether perpetrated by students or adults. These events focus attention on issues of gun ownership, control, sales, and so forth. Alternately, a singular event may come to symbolize a much larger issue. Various factors influence problem recognition and policy proposals, such as research data, public outcry, and budgetary constraints. For example, the Patriot Act – which among other things – significantly adjusted intelligence collection authorities and overhauled data sharing permissions and requirements across the intelligence communities – was a result of public outcry and momentum present after the large, multi-pronged terror attacks on September 11, 2001. Budgetary constraints are relevant because they impact decision-makers' perspectives on whether a matter is cost-prohibitive or perhaps something that “must” be done to get ahead of or react to a problem. In this case, conducting the GWOTs was quite expensive, and adding veterans' benefits created additional costs that may not have been clearly required for combat success. On the other hand, soldier retention was an immediate and ongoing need, and replacing a soldier with all accompanying requirements (recruitment, in processing, training, etc.) was far more expensive in both time and treasure (Numerick, 2012).

The Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) was used to bound the narrative content review, as it presented an analytical structure (Jones & McBeth, 2010a). Narratives include a specific storyline or plot, articulate a setting and relevant characters, and a “moral of the story.” The NPF identifies requirements that each of these components must demonstrate – and with relative consistency or agreement across a policy coalition – to be viewed as a policy narrative. These narratives play out at three separate levels: individual (micro), policy subsystem (meso), and institutional or cultural (macro), and

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potentially intertwine during the policy decision-making process. This dissertation focuses on the meso level, which examines group behavior and the manner in which narratives shape coalitions (Jones & McBeth, 2010a). Essentially, external conditions in the environment, within society, and among public opinion shape a coalition's policy narrative about their core beliefs. This narrative articulates whether the coalition is winning or losing as they try to achieve their core beliefs, and thus the coalition develops policy narrative strategies which either contain or expand their coalition to maintain the status quo (if winning) or mobilize additional resources to change the policy in question (if losing) (Jones & McBeth, 2010a; Stone, 1989). Within this framework, one can examine public articles for symbols, rhetoric, and overall themes that point to a coalition's narrative, and identify when and how the group alter their narrative to achieve their policy goals.

Study Significance

This study is significant as it tests a hypothesis regarding meso-level narrative policy processes, specifically whether groups “heresthetically employ policy narrative to manipulate the composition of political coalitions for their strategic benefit” (Jones & McBeth, 2010a, p. 346). Additionally, the Post-9/11 GI Bill was passed, despite the significant financial outlay as well as long-term commitment to fund transferrable and comprehensive educational benefits. Understanding what contributed to these results is important for government agencies and military leaders – there always will be war, and after war, there will always be a drawdown of financial support for military matters. Having a strong understanding of the reasons Congress continued financial outlay for non-essential military benefits provides a basis from which future military advocates can

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adjust their engagements with political leaders. The point of this study is to identify what factors came together that make (in this instance, pro-military) change possible. Ideally, this contributes to predicting – or at least, better anticipating – opportunities as they emerge, to harness them more effectively in the future.

Study Limitations

Like all research, this study has its limitations. I was not concerned about finding a singular ‘truth’ in my study. As indicated above, I sought to understand a process, which could be comprehended only by viewing the process from participants’ perspectives and gathering across multiple sources a unified sense of the key events and efforts that unfolded to open the policy window for this bill’s passage. Understanding this process was important personally and professionally. I have been involved in the fields of policy and strategy for over 20 years. Deeply understanding the “why” of situations has been a life-long interest. In this instance, there is professional application, since my duties as a military strategist and planner require clearly understanding political will and likely decision-making trajectory. This particular matter – the Post-9/11 GI Bill – benefitted me, my husband, and our son directly, but it also presented a large and long-term fiscal cost for the nation – ostensibly to fix what was a relatively short-term (and probably negligible) problem of having sufficient forces – to fight a war that was waning when Congress passed the bill. In the meantime, while I can personally pass along a year of college to my child and we wrapped up my husband’s master’s program debt-free, Congress cannot pass a budget on time and disagreement on where to spend money forces the military and other departments to work with previous years’ budgets and plans, inhibiting modernization even at the lowest levels. Why did this bill get passed when so

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many others do not? Why then?

As a case study, it is possible that the format and lessons learned will be useful for others who seek to study policy windows or narrative policy framework. Before considering limitations for the study's applicability, there were inherent limitations in the study's results due to the depth of research or a limited access to privileged advocacy efforts to implement and adjust their strategic narratives. Specifically, the study was limited by what individuals directly recorded, whether officially in articles or op-eds, or as speeches that were recorded by other responsible parties and their associated personal desires to create a positive record of their actions in proposing or supporting a major veterans' benefit. Additionally, while I sought data saturation, my work was time limited, and may have resulted in gaps impacting my depth of understanding or analysis. Regarding applicability or generalizability, though, even if advocates did adjust their narratives to improve support for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, it may be limited only to the peculiar circumstances that surrounded passage of this statute, and not account for personalities, relationships, priorities, and other situational factors which I do not examine. However, it would contribute to the overall body of knowledge on meso-level narratives, which may further future policy change initiatives in the event a similar (if not exact) policy window opened. Second, this study's focus on passing a "feel good" bill may be insufficient to draw parallels with other, more critical policy needs which, while necessary, are less emotionally engaging. Third, although the study's stated interest is to identify salient features where the military has received benefits during non-conducive fiscal circumstances – actually, it examines a benefit that went directly to US service members, and obliquely benefitted the US military as a retention incentive. In this light,

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the fact that the statutory benefit would be delivered to veterans – rather than military service departments – may be a crucial discriminator. Fourth, applying this study’s lessons learned will require two actions. Results need to be disseminated to key military decision-makers for use, and these decision-makers (or their advisors) must be attuned to indicators that point toward potential policy windows opening. Also, results would need pervasive dissemination, given the number and frequency of changes among senior military policy leaders. Further, given the study’s attempt to substantiate Jones and McBeth’s (2010) hypothesis on manipulating narratives to achieve strategic goals, the study is limited due to its lack of replication as well as the unlikely presence of a strategic communication “smoking gun,” where someone simply will share information or provide documentation that demonstrates a planned intent to adjust narratives to achieve end states. This limitation can be mitigated by additional studies on different topics or with other coalitions. Finally, my own positionality creates both an opening and limitation for the dissertation. It is quite possible that I am overly harsh or expectant that military advocates can make change where, in fact, circumstances would thwart even the most targeted, charismatic, well-planned, and on-going efforts. Likewise, I may give a pass or otherwise downplay factors where external examiners would obviously dig in.

Summary

This study frames the circumstances leading to and surrounding passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill as a 30+ year endeavor using the Multiple Streams Analysis framework and delves into advocates’ specific use of narrative to shape the policy decision-making process with Narrative Policy Framework. It is limited by subject matter, the uniqueness of time and circumstance, and due to its initial effort to test a previously established

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premise about strategically adjusting narratives to achieve desired end states. However, effectively demonstrating the accuracy of this hypothesis opens the matter for replication in other environments or coalition groups. Additionally, its results may be practically used for assisting senior military leaders – who at least nominally abjure political activism for most of their careers – in effectively articulating their own narrative, or at least understanding the likelihood of change in policy perspectives during their tenure.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study examines the circumstances surrounding passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and considers both how the legislation occurred, and the efforts advocates undertook to evolve its key features from ideas to reality. This chapter articulates the history of educational benefits for service members, including major revisions across time, and the current Post-9/11 GI Bill, along with relevant atmospherics regarding the state of US politics, society, military action, and legislation. Next, this chapter defines third-party entities and discusses their influence on US public policy. Finally, this chapter introduces Multiple Streams Analysis and the Narrative Policy Framework to identify current, unstudied hypotheses that underscore this study.

Educational Benefits for Service Members

This section discusses US Congressional support for educational benefits for Service members, beginning in the mid-1940s through present day. It reviews Congress' stated purpose for this support, the form and manner in which it was provided, and recipient impact. By examining the various iterations of Service member educational benefits, I identify evolving trends leading to current Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and set the stage for discussing the policy streams that converged to make transferability ideas proposed in the early 1980s reality more than 25 years later.

History of Educational Benefits for Servicemembers. The United States has authorized educational benefits for veterans since World War II (WWII). The first education benefit bill was the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (P.L. 78-346) – also known as the GI Bill of Rights or simply the GI Bill – and it existed until July 1956. These benefits were provided without cost to the veteran, paid directly to the veteran's

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institute of higher education (IHE), and included separate funds paid to the individual for subsistence based on family size (Smole & Loane, 2008). The program funded up to \$500 annually for IHE expenses, which was sufficient to cover annual fees at universities such as Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Smole & Loane, 2008). The purpose of this benefit was to “help veterans readjust to civilian life, avoid high levels of unemployment, and afford returning veterans an opportunity to receive the education and training that they missed while serving in the military” (Smole & Loane, 2008, p. 3).

However, its passage was not guaranteed. This statute was landmark legislation designed to avoid outcomes similar to post-World War I, where veterans received a small, one-time stipend and train passage home, only to struggle during the Great Depression.

During WWII, many non-traditional workers entered or shifted within the labor force (women, minorities, rural people); by 1945 the unemployment rate was only 1.9% with as much as 20% of the population employed in the Armed Forces, the US industrial base had been forcibly transitioned to wartime production, and consumption had been artificially suppressed through rationing and price controls (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2012, pp. 6-7). With those realities, it would take a period of time to return the industrial base to a consumer footing: relevant to new products technologically available, easily produced with mass manufacturing present in post-war factories, and re-training or situating workers who had entered or shifted within the labor force to support increased deployment rates. Congress believed the GI Bill could ward off economic and social impacts likely to occur in these complicated circumstances (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). As a result of its passage, at the

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peak year of 1947, veterans accounted for 49 percent of college admissions.

To a large degree, the large veteran population initially reflected a backlog of attendees who would have gone to college had they not been delayed by war. But 40 percent would not have attended college before the war – half of these not at all and the other half at less rigorous institutions or for shorter time periods (Cervantes, Creusere, McMillion, McQueen, Short, Steiner & Webster, 2005, p. 9; Clark, 1998).

By the time the original GI Bill ended on July 25, 1956, “7.8 million of 16 million [WWII] veterans had participated in an education or training program” (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d., p. para. 13). This bill was “generally considered successful in averting unemployment, raising the educational level and thus the productivity of the U.S. workforce, and confirming the value that Americans place on those that provide military service” (Dortch, 2016, p. 2).

Additional legislation was passed for veterans of the Korean War – the Veterans’ Readjustment Assistance Act of 1952 (P.L. 82-550), known as the Korean GI Bill – which existed until January 1965. The program’s purpose was “to prepare returning veterans to enter the workforce” (Dortch, 2016, p. 1). This statute combined the educational and subsistence benefits into a monthly payment directly provided to recipients, intending to address alleged fraud and abuse by for-profit IHEs and encourage veterans’ frugality by requiring them to contribute toward their educational costs. By the time it ended, 2.4 million of the 5.5 million eligible veterans participated in the program for a total cost of \$4.5 billion (\$30.8 billion in 2008 dollars), resulting in a per participant benefit of \$1,882 (\$12,867 in 2008 dollars) (Dortch, 2016).

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The Post-Korea and Vietnam-Era GI Bill existed from 1966 to 1989 as the Veterans' Readjustment Benefits Act of 1966 (P.L. 89-358). Although implemented well after the Korean War's conclusion (1950-1953), post-Korean War veterans were grandfathered in for assistance. This statute was not intended to provide benefits as substantial as previous iterations, although benefits were provided to veterans while still on active duty – a break from previous bills, where benefits were available only after active service ended. By doing so, it encouraged continued service, and so was an effort at retention, rather than recruitment or award for combat service (Dortch, 2016). Personnel became eligible for these benefits after serving at least 180 consecutive days on active duty – at which time veterans were eligible for one month of educational benefits for each month served. Benefits were provided in a similar monthly stipend format as the Korea GI Bill, and this stipend was adjusted multiple times during its duration (Smole & Loane, 2008).

The Post-Vietnam Era Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (VEAP) offered educational benefits for personnel serving on active duty between December 31, 1976 and June 30, 1985 under the Veterans' Education and Employment Assistance Act of 1976 (P.L. 94-502). VEAP was unique for five reasons: peacetime passage, for an all-volunteer force, with the purpose being a recruiting tool, requiring recipients to contribute toward their benefits, and being available to active and reserve personnel from the start. These changes were made in large part because the United States changed its military structure to an all-volunteer force after the Vietnam War, with compulsory military draft expiring in June 1973 (Dortch, 2016). As such, there was broad acceptance that recruiting required a different benefits package for general recruiting, retention, and

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force-shaping efforts. GI Bill “kickers” were an example of force-shaping efforts, where the Department of Defense (DOD) providing additional, cost-neutral, contributions for personnel working in desired military fields. VEAP participants had to use their educational benefits after departing active military service and within 10 years of discharge (Veterans Benefits Administration, 2001). Individuals enrolled in VEAP who were still on active duty on October 9, 1996 (potentially only 11 years into the 20-year requirement for a pensionable retirement) were given a year to convert to the Montgomery GI Bill program (Smole & Loane, 2008). This conversion would ensure benefits remained available at the end of the veteran’s active service.

The Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD) was originally passed as the All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program (P.L. 98-525) for individuals who entered active military service after June 30, 1985. Congressional testimony at the time indicated military services were struggling to recruit and retain the necessary personnel for the all-volunteer force, across all components (Active, Reserve, and National Guard) (Dortch, 2016). The bill’s stated purpose was to “provide educational readjustment assistance and to aid in the recruitment and retention of highly qualified personnel for both the active and reserve components of the Armed Forces” (Dortch, 2016, p. 8). Proponents for a new GI Bill at this time suggested eliminating the service member contribution, as there had been high disenrollment of the VEAP; others recommended allowing service members to transfer their educational benefit and entitlement period to spouses and children after 10 years of service (Dortch, 2016). Neither suggestion of transferability or eliminating service member contribution were incorporated into the final bill (Dortch, 2016). Instead, it contained similar requirements as VEAP: 1)

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participants had to pay into the benefit (\$100 payroll deduction for 12 months); 2) which were payable for no more than 36-months after serving for three continuous years on active duty; and 3) had to be used within 10 years of an honorable discharge (Smole & Loane, 2008). A new requirement was that potential beneficiaries had to have a high school diploma, its equivalent, or 12 credit hours of college to qualify for the benefit – an effort toward encouraging highly capable applicants to volunteer for service. MGIB-AD benefits were provided directly to the recipient, could fund specific educational costs (i.e., tuition, fees, and expenses), and provided a set monthly amount, regardless of educational costs, based on program intensity (i.e., part-time, three-quarters time, or full time attendance) (Veterans Benefits Administration, 2011). DOD provided “kickers” in this program in three forms: The College Fund, the \$600 Buy Up Program, and Tuition Assistance “Top-Up.” First, new recruits electing the MGIB-AD could be eligible for the College Fund if their military service (i.e., Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps) offered the benefit for the individual’s particular military occupational specialty (MOS) (Veterans Benefits Administration, 2011). This provided a set monthly amount in addition to the MGIB-AD benefits. Second, new recruits who opted to contribute \$1800 toward the MGIB-AD instead of the \$1200 required, their overall benefit would be increased to \$5400 over the 36 months of entitlement (Dortch, 2016). Third, the Tuition Assistance “Top-Up” was approved in fiscal year (FY) 2001 and offered active duty personnel the opportunity both to 1) use MGIB-AD benefits while on active duty, and 2) combine Tuition Assistance with MGIB-AD benefits to reduce or close the gap between educational costs and what either one of these benefits would provide individually. Using the Tuition Assistance “Top-Up” reduced future MGIB benefits but provided

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immediate access to educational funds (Smole & Loane, 2008). In 2002, Congress authorized services to pilot a MGIB transferability program of up to 18 months of benefits beginning in 2006 for the “purpose of enhancing retention of Regular Army soldiers serving in critical skills with six or more years of active service” (MILPER 06-205). The Army and Air Force both conducted pilot programs testing how transferability would impact retention, however, neither service continued the option after their pilot (Dortch, 2016).⁵

Congress developed a MGIB-AD variation for the Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR), authorized under Title 10, Chapter 1606 of US Code. The Selected Reserve consists of personnel assigned to units and organizations that participate in at least 48 scheduled training periods annually and serve on active duty for training at least 14 days each year, including those assigned to augment Reserve or Active Duty units (Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA)) and those providing indefinite, full-time service, much like their Active Duty counterparts (Active Guard Reserve (AGR)) (10 U.S. Code 10147, P.L. 114-38). Individuals who served for six-years were eligible to receive up to 36 months of educational benefits. The bill’s purpose was to support retention and also provide the Selected Reserve ability to compete with state-provided National Guard educational benefits (Dortch, 2016). Originally, benefits had to be used within 10-years of eligibility – which was extended to 14 years after October 1992 – and while the person was serving with a Reserve unit (Veterans Benefits Administration, 2007). Beneficiaries received approximately 1/3 the maximum benefit available to Active Duty personnel (\$317 to \$1101 for FY2008) (Smole & Loane, 2008).

⁵ Not evaluated in this paper is whether the pilot’s discontinuation was impacted by plans in 2008 to establish a Post-9/11 GI Bill, which included transferability for all beneficiaries.

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Congress developed another Reserve educational benefit in the form of the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) through the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act of FY2005 (P.L. 108-375). Eligible beneficiaries had to be members of the Selected Reserve, Individual Ready Reserve, or National Guard⁶ who served on active duty for at least 90 consecutive days in response to war or national emergency on or after September 11, 2001. This benefit was much more generous, recognizing the nation's increased use of Reserve and National Guard forces during the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), and provided graduated payouts based on the amount of time served in this manner (Dortch, 2016). Specifically, beneficiaries who served more than 90 consecutive days but less than one year received 40% of the full MGIB-AD rate; those serving at least one year but less than two years received 60% of the full MGIB-AD rate, and those serving two or more continuous years received 80% of the full MGIB-AD rate (Veterans Benefits Administration, 2008). Benefits were time-limited like the other programs, requiring use within 10 years for a maximum of 36 months of benefits and while the individual was serving with a Reserve unit (Smole & Loane, 2008). The requirement that beneficiaries remain serving with a Reserve unit made the MGIB-SR and REAP retention benefits, rather than recruitment benefits, such as VEAP and the MGIB-AD. In this case, Congress required – rather than just authorized – each service to create and retain this program for Reserve forces (Dortch, 2016). Benefits transferability was authorized, however no service offered that option

⁶ Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) is a “manpower pool consisting of individuals who have had some training or who have served previously in the Active Component or in the Selected Reserve, and may have some period of their military service obligation remaining” (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2016, p. 110). National Guard personnel are those who have a dual mission at both the state, and when federalized, national service level.

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(Dortch, 2016). The program was curtailed by the FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act.

One unique education benefit for service members is the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (DEA) – a program designed not for the service member, but their family members. The War Orphans' Educational Assistance Act of 1956 (P.L. 84-634) originally established the benefit, which grants up to 45 months of educational assistance to the spouse and children of veterans

who are permanently and totally disabled, or dies, as a result of a service-connected disability that arises out of active duty; has a permanent and total service-connected disability and dies from any cause; is missing in action or captured in the line of duty and held by a hostile force; is detained by a foreign government or power; or is hospitalized or receiving outpatient treatment for a service-connected permanent and total disability and is likely to be discharged for that disability (Veterans Benefits Administration, 2010, p. 3).

Children are eligible for benefits from age 18 to 26, while spouses are eligible for benefits for the 10-year period beginning with the veteran's death or notice that the Veteran's Administration (VA) had determined the veteran had a permanent and total disability, unless the veteran died while serving on active duty. In this case, the spousal benefits are available for 20 years after the veteran's death (Smole & Loane, 2008).

Historical Purpose of Educational Benefits for Service Members. The political purpose for providing educational benefits to service members varied across time and circumstances. However, two themes emerge: averting mass unemployment

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and shaping the force. The initial GI Bill was developed between Congress and the American Legion, a non-for-profit service organization, with the primary focus on averting mass unemployment for the 16.1 million “working-age males (between 20 and 64 years of age)” who were returning from WWII (Dortch, 2016, p. 2). As noted above, the major change in providing educational benefits moved from avoiding unemployment and acknowledging the significance of veterans’ wartime service occurred after Vietnam and implementation of the All-Volunteer Force. From that point onward, educational benefits were used for recruitment and retention, with varying options and adjustments to support force-shaping efforts. This largely was a result of concerns about the US military being a “hollow force” – one where the existing personnel were insufficient to fill requirements and also poorly trained and equipped for their expected missions (Feickert & Daggett, 2012). Military service was not viewed as a plausible career due to low pay and high national inflation through the 1970s and early 1980s, minimal public support for the military, increasing defense spending cuts, and equipment that was both outdated and poorly maintained. The minimal pay increases were focused on new recruits with the military relying on the generous retirement benefits to retain those who were passed the 10-year service mark.⁷ To repair the hollow force, Congress improved salaries, funded training and weapons procurement tied to new doctrine, and instituted recruitment benefits – in the form of the GI Bill and College Fund – designed to draw better quality personnel. Rather than providing educational benefits as a reward for combat service, they became integral for force development and shaping activities.

⁷ Until 2016, individuals discharged from the military under honorable conditions at the conclusion of 20 years of service immediately received monthly retirement benefits worth approximately 50 percent of their last paycheck. Generally, once individuals had completed more than 10 years of service, the likelihood that they would depart prior to reaching 20 years diminished considerably.

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Concerns about a hollow force were highlighted again after the Gulf War (1991-92), due to decreasing defense budgets which had begun in 1986, as well as increased maintenance backlogs in major equipment overhauls, aging weapons systems, and underfunded salaries and benefits, all which compounded impacts of high operational tempo. Concerns about recruiting and retention centered on seven factors with some similarity to those surrounding the 1970s' hollow force debate. Specifically, analysts cited:

A public impression that the end of the Cold War meant that military service was no longer interesting, relevant, or even available as a career option; (2) the post-Cold War drawdown in active duty military manpower by 40%, which greatly reduced real and perceived enlistment and career retention opportunities; (3) the 1990s economic expansion, which led to the explosive growth of actual and perceived civilian career options; (4) a rise in civilian consumer living standards against which military families measure their own economic success or failure; (5) concerns over increased family separation due to more operations and training away from home, whether "home" was in the United States or in foreign countries; and (6) a decreased propensity for military service among young people for other reasons, such as anti-military parents and educators; skepticism about new missions such as "operations other than war," "peacekeeping," or "peace enforcement"; and the availability of government educational assistance from other sources ("the GI Bill without the GI") (Goldich, 2005, pp. 1-2).

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Congressional response to these concerns was to focus on readiness goals and improved benefits over equipment advancements (Feickert & Daggett, 2012). The benefit improvements in this case encompassed salary and housing allowance increases, rather than changes to the GI Bill, which was noted as “among the most costly benefit increases being considered” at the time (Goldich, 2005, p. 2). Although military base pay has been permanently linked to Employment Cost Index (ECI) percentage increases since 2004, Congress specifically authorized an additional 0.5 percent for the five years of 2001-2006. Additionally, Congress passed into law a specific military pay raise for every year except one since 1982, even when the amount passed was the same as that which would have been in effect through the statutory formula (Goldich, 2005). In fiscal years 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002, and 2004, the final service member pay increase exceeded the statutory formula (Goldich, 2005). The key change to service member basic allowance for housing (BAH) was to move it from being subject to an annual percentage increase tied to the ECI. Instead, in the late 1990s, BAH was based on survey results regarding local housing costs. These surveys are developed annually, and when there are decreases from one year to the next, housing allowances are grandfathered, remaining the same for those already receiving BAH at the previous year’s higher amount. As housing allowances are not taxed, this was a significant increase in net pay (Feickert & Daggett, 2012). These concerns about recruitment and retention became so ingrained in political discussion that almost immediately upon commencing the GWOT in 2002, Congress authorized additional educational benefit options to acknowledge increased service requirements (e.g., REAP), retention difficulty (e.g., pilot transferability program), and post-wartime adjustment (Post-9/11 GI Bill).

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The Congressional Research Service (Smole & Loane, 2008) analyzed these educational benefits in terms of the real value of the maximum monthly benefit provided, the educational value of benefits provided, and the purchasing power offered. For real value, the most substantial benefits (in declining order) were those offered for the GI Bill after WWII, then for Post-Korea and Vietnam-Era GI Bill in the mid-1970s, and finally the MGIB-AD after 2001. To illustrate, the original GI Bill provided \$500 each year for educational expenses plus \$50 monthly for living expenses, which equates to \$1,243 monthly in 2007 dollars. When this version ended in 1956, the benefit had morphed to a monthly benefit worth only \$999 monthly in 2007 dollars (Smole & Loane, 2008). In all cases, however much they might fluctuate during their existence, the overall trend was that the real value benefit declined from start to end. The exception to this were the MGIB-AD, which eventually was tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and adjusted accordingly, and the MGIB-SR and REAP, which were proportional amounts of the MGIB-AD. When considering the value of these benefits, versions instituted before the MGIB-AD were adjusted through Congressional approval and ultimately decreased in terms of steady economic value (Smole & Loane, 2008). The decreased value was caused by two main factors: stagnant funding levels and increasing educational costs. The MGIB-AD and MGIB-SR maintained the same monthly benefit for the program's first five years, resulting in a decreased value during this period. Then, Congress made multiple proportional adjustments, some which exceeded the CPI. Eventually, the MGIB-AD was indexed to the CPI and the MGIB-SR was indexed to a proportion of the MGIB-AD, resulting in both maintaining their overall value from year to year. Although indexing the MGIB-AD to the CPI provides consistency across a veteran's use, it does

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not provide the same annual purchasing power because higher education costs have surpassed the CPI. Over the program's course, the MGIB-AD has provided veterans the ability to purchase anywhere from 51 percent to 82 percent of the average four-year costs (tuition, fees, room, board) at public IHEs or 20 percent to 35 percent of the average costs at private four-year IHEs (Smole & Loane, 2008). At no point has the MGIB covered the full college educational costs in the way the initial GI Bill did for exceptionally prestigious universities after WWII.

On the other hand, since Congress passed the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, veterans have been eligible for other educational benefits through multiple programs that offered grants, work-study, and loans. This law – part of President Johnson's Great Society legislative package – had been preceded by other efforts to broaden educational funding for higher education in the 1940s and late 1950s to improve the national population's ability to address post-WWII threats (Cervantes et al., 2005). The bill was reauthorized seven times by 2005. These opportunities were mitigated by requirements to include veterans benefits as a resource or estimated financial assistance, which reduces veterans' overall need and thus limits how much and potentially which need-based student aid the veteran receives (Smole & Loane, 2008).

Current Educational Benefits for Servicemembers: The Post-9/11 GI Bill.

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (Post-9/11 GI Bill) was passed into law on June 30, 2008 and went into effect the following year on August 1.⁸ This bill was passed with the goals of “(1) providing parity of benefits for reservists and members of the regular Armed Forces, (2) ensuring comprehensive educational benefits,

⁸ The Post-9/11 GI Bill was passed as Title V of the Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2008 (PL 110-252). Subsequent amendments are not discussed in this dissertation, as they exceed its scope.

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(3) meeting military recruiting goals, and (4) improving military retention through transferability of benefits” (Dortch, 2012, p. 1; Miles, 2009a). The Post-9/11 GI Bill supports veterans’ and service members’ educational attendance by funding tuition, fees, books, housing, and other costs associated with higher education. Eligible individuals must have served in the active duty military on or after September 10, 2001, and benefits differ based on the recipient’s length of active service, type of educational program being pursued, and rate of pursuit (e.g., full-time, half-time, less than half-time). Additionally, these benefits can be transferred to the recipients’ dependents if the recipient serves for 10 years or dies in the line of duty while serving on active duty.

Overall, the Post-9/11 GI Bill differed from its post-World War II (WWII) predecessors in four ways. First, the Post-9/11 GI Bill addressed all personnel serving periods of active duty, regardless of component. This differed from predecessors because separate – and less financially robust – programs had been developed for Reserve Component personnel, even if those individuals had been mobilized to active duty. Additionally, the Post-9/11 GI Bill was later amended to include National Guard personnel who served on active duty during the eligibility period while on Title 32 orders as well as all Guardsmen who left active duty Title 32 service with a service-connected disability, even if the minimum eligibility period was not met (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2011). Approximately 30,000 National Guardsmen had served under Title 32 orders – in which they are mobilized stateside and remain under the administrative control of State governor – however, many states had mobilized these individuals specifically to ensure personnel and equipment were available and ready for deployment in support of the Global War on Terror (Moses, 2009).

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Second, “ensuring comprehensive educational benefits” through the Post-9/11 GI Bill improved the financial benefit to individuals because its predecessors simply paid a monthly stipend toward tuition, whereas the Post-9/11 GI Bill (as amended) pays students’ tuition and fee charges to the highest public university cost in the state, and provides monthly housing and annual book allowances (Miles, 2010). Specifically, this variant provides three benefit types: 1) tuition and mandatory fees equal to each state’s most expensive state university costs for in-state undergraduate education; 2) a housing allowance differentiated for the university locale, paid at the current Department of Defense (DOD) rate for an E-5 with dependents; and 3) an annual \$1,000 books and supplies stipend (Quigley, 2009).

Third, the Post-9/11 GI Bill provided a very attractive benefit for military service during a period when recruitment requirements had expanded due to simultaneous wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. All four military services had increased in total size during the eight years of combat after 9/11. For example, the US Army increased its number of both combat (infantry and cavalry) and sustainment battalions by 79 and 58 formations, respectively, and moved 17 mechanized battalions from the National Guard to the active component (Johnson, Peters, Kitchens, Martin & Fischbach, 2012; Kennedy, Benedict, Brown, Guerrero, Keefer & Morris, 2008). Despite these changes, heavy operational requirements meant servicemembers experienced frequent overseas deployments resulting in family disruptions and significant fatigue. This further increased recruitment requirements as servicemembers opted to leave active service due to professional stressors (Golding & Adedeji, 2006). However, surveys ahead of the law’s implementation date indicated 97 percent of those surveyed “intended to take advantage

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of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, particularly its transferability provision....73 percent said they would transfer benefits to their spouse, while 94 percent said they would transfer them to their children.” (Miles, 2009c, p. 1). Thus, the Post-9/11 GI Bill was a boon to retention, reducing recruitment requirements that would arise if those individuals would have departed service.

Fourth, by requiring continued service to transfer benefits to one’s dependent spouse or children, this supported military retention rather than encouraging departure, differing from the post WWII version, which had withheld benefits until after the recipient departed active duty service. Transferring benefits to a dependent required the service member to have served for at least six years and agree to serve four more years from the date they registered to transfer their benefits. If an individual had served at least 10 years and were prohibited from serving an additional four years, he must commit to the maximum allowable time possible in order to transfer benefits (U.S. Department of Defense, 2009).

Government advocates suggested that the Post-9/11 GI Bill would have additional benefits. Veteran Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki suggested the bill would have similar societal results as its initial predecessor, such as increasing the number of veterans in the professional work force. Moreover, the educational opportunities had the potential to ward off further increases in homelessness among veterans, a group that had 131,000 members in 2009 (Carden, 2009). Finally, beneficiaries eligible for multiple educational benefits could use the Post-9/11 GI Bill after exhausting Montgomery GI Bill benefits, albeit for only 12 additional months (Cragg, 2009).

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During the first implementation year, over 250,000 students used the Post-9/11 GI Bill, with approximately 50,000 being recipients' dependent spouse or children. Additionally, the military processed "145,000 service member requests to transfer benefits to about 331,000 family members" (Miles, 2010, p. 1). While most students attended public universities, the Yellow Ribbon program supported students attending high-cost private schools. Colleges and universities participating in the Yellow Ribbon program "waive or offset up to 50 percent of costs above the highest public in-state undergraduate rate, and the Veterans Affairs Department matches the same amount" – effectively providing education at 75% of the typical cost (Miles, 2010, p. 1). The Yellow Ribbon program holds many variations, based on the private universities' elected participation level. For example, IHEs can elect to participate with all or part of its student body (e.g., undergraduate, graduate, or both), cap participation at a certain number of students within its student body (e.g., 40% of undergraduates, 10% of graduate students), include all or some schools or campus locations in its participation (e.g., only the School of Engineering but not the Schools of Education and Business), participate one year and not the next, and differentiate funding for students at different levels or programs of study (e.g., funding 50% of costs above in-state tuition at public college for Music undergraduates and 30% of the same costs for Medical graduate students). As a result, depending on student program and university selection, the beneficiary may have personal costs associated with their program (Veterans Benefits Administration, 2014). Of note, only veterans who qualify for 100 percent of the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit (those serving 36 months of active duty after September 10, 2001) or their dependents are

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eligible for Yellow Ribbon Program participation; beneficiaries eligible for a lower level of support or those currently serving are not eligible for this program.

This study examines the inclusion of full tuition payment and transferability in the Post-9/11 GI Bill to understand how these very expensive benefits came to be essential to the statute's passage. While the bill had four stated goals, two were not materially relevant for study. Specifically, Congressional intent to provide parity for Reserve Component members from the start can be viewed as an administrative convenience which reduced later duplicative work for Congressional staff as well as the Department of Veterans Affairs, previously responsible for administering multiple variations of the GI Bill. Additionally, the focus on recruitment and retention were consistent with previous iterations. What is unique in this bill is the Congressional decision to deviate from previously effective methods of shaping recruitment and retention through increased pay or bonuses for limited populations and moved to providing full tuition payment and offering transferability for beneficiaries and their dependents. After discussing theoretical foundations for this study, this paper will discuss the manner in which this decision came about, and key factors and proponents in achieving its finally passed and truly agreed upon status.

Third-Party Entities

Third-party entities, for this study, include think tanks, research foundations, and special interest groups. Some of these entities overlap in purpose, function, or design. Others specifically exclude one another. For instance, Rich (2001) defines think tanks as, "independent, non-interest-based, nonprofit political organizations that produce and principally rely on expertise and ideas to obtain support and to influence the policy-

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making process” (p.55). They may be categorized into seven general affiliations, stretching the gamut in fiscal and intellectual autonomy (McGann, 2016, p. 7). In the US, think tanks – although frequently partisan – are rarely affiliated officially with a particular political party, and this study does not consider for-profit/corporate think tanks due to their limited topical relevance (McGann, 2005). Special interest groups, on the other hand, are by definition, “interest-based” political organizations. Interest groups may be dedicated to furthering a focus area, such as a cause/ideology (e.g., environmental safety, civil rights), an industry or economic perspective (e.g., pro-business or pro-labor), or a single-issue (e.g., gun rights/safety, abortion rights/pro-life advocacy) (Gray, 1977-78). Research foundations are generally non-profit organizations devoted to distributing funds for research and other activities that support their named missions (Stone, 2007). The funds distributed may come from specific fund-raising activities, endowments, or a combination of these sources. Each will be examined for their primary means of influence, any changes to their ability to – or interest in – specifically influencing policy over time, and their primary perceived benefit to policy making.

Think tanks. Think tanks have five primary means of influence: “by generating original ideas and options for policy; by supplying a ready pool of experts for employment in government; by offering venues for high-level discussions; by educating American citizens about the world; and by supplementing official efforts to mediate and resolve conflict” (Ahmad, 2008, p. 530). Think tanks also seek to identify and consider relevant future policy matters. While think tanks were fairly unassuming in the first part of the 20th century, they have increased in both number and public engagement since the 1960s, with nearly 30 percent of the world’s think tanks in North America. The United

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States leads the world in think tanks (1835 in 2016) by a factor of four over the next closest nation (China, with 435 in 2016) (McGann, 2016, pp. 25-26). US think tanks generally are “one of four types: academic (general purpose and specialized), contract research, advocacy and policy enterprise or a hybrid of the first three” (McGann, 2005, p. 6)

Although early 1900s think tanks such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Institute for Government Research – later the Brookings Institute – avoided specific efforts to influence policy, by the end of WWII, the US needed research capabilities that supported the policy making process. As such, the RAND Corporation and Hudson Institute, among others, were established primarily to support government-financed research efforts (Ahmad, 2008). Since 1970, think tanks increasingly have demonstrated an identifiably ideological focus, and entering the 21st century, national-level think tanks in the United States were more frequently conservative in ideology than liberal, with only 20 percent of organizations identifiably liberal and 47 percent conservative. The remaining 33 percent were identified as having “no identifiable ideology” (Rich, 2001, p. 55). Additionally, the conservative think tanks were better funded, more likely to engage in marketing and advocacy efforts in support of their research programs, and often addressed a broad scope of research matters, whereas liberal think tanks are more likely issue-specific. As an example of the effective marketing and advocacy efforts, Rich (2001) points to the Heritage Foundation as having established the procedures to which other think tanks model themselves: significant funds budgeted for advocacy, producing short, easily digestible materials, and working directly with legislators and media outlets to raise the

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visibility of their projects and products. These resources are effective especially for use in supporting or furthering existing viewpoints or positions, after an issue has risen to the Congressional decision agenda (Gray, 1977-78; Stone, 2007). This transition in the 1970s toward greater engagement and advocacy for specific policy results was a distinct pivot in think tank history.

Advocacy think tanks have as a specific goal, the desire “to advance a cause, constituency, ideology, party [or] platform” and their work is defined by a particular world view (McGann, 2005, p. 8). In addition to the Heritage Foundation, the CATO Institute, and Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) reflect this think tank type, although the Heritage Foundation has the policy enterprise focus identified above, where the importance of disseminating their work further refines their organizational structure. In essence, think tanks in the US have moved from being autonomous and independent in their initial days, to increasingly quasi-independent and quasi-governmental, due to changes in their funding base. This is supported by a 2005 survey of 23 leading think tanks that indicated funding “has become increasingly short-term and project-specific, rather than longer term, general institutional support, ... alter[ing] the focus and diminish[ing] the capacity of many think tanks” as the shorter-term monies curtail independent research (McGann, 2005, p. 23).

Since there are think tanks associated with US legislative bodies and executive agencies, what benefit do think tanks provide the public policy process, how, and when? McGann (2005) emphasizes that think tanks are suited especially to futurist or innovative thought. While government bureaucrats must spend time establishing and administering policy, think tanks can consider generate future policy options, as well as organize cross-

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organizational research collaboration due to greater flexibility in their policy agendas (Gray, 1977-78). Additionally, they

aid the intellectual synthesis that comes from breaking down bureaucratic barriers ... because they are better able to disseminate relevant policy research within government ... and “telescope” the policy function (i.e., from data collection to knowledge to conceiving means of implementation) than government bureaucracies, which may be internally segmented along such lines (Gray, 1977-78; McGann, 2005, p. 5).

Dissemination activities include not only publications, but also seminars, conferences, or briefings, discussion with journalists (print, television, or radio), web-based resources, and engagement with government agencies or officials, through hearings, personal briefings, and personal and professional relationships (Gray, 1977-78). McGann (2005) and Gray (1977-78) find think tanks especially useful earlier in the policy making process, when issues are being identified and policies initially formulated. This creates an apparent inconsistency – if think tanks are most relevant in the early days of policy development, why would some move to a policy enterprise format, focused heavily on preparing quick-turn, easily digestible products (McGann, 2005; Rich, 2001)? As discussed in the next section, an answer may be found in the repetitive process policy ideas undergo, where old ideas are refurbished with new context to carry a desired policy goal through to implementation (Durant & Diehl, 1989).

Research foundations. Research foundations influence public policy in three ways: by providing funds for research efforts, by withholding funds from proposed research, and by disseminating research results (Hollis, 1941; Stone, 2007). By

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extension, research foundations' selection – or avoidance – of specific researchers or their organizational affiliations can influence both the research conducted and the credibility with which the research results are received by the policy making community. Foundations not only sponsor research, but also support elements that disseminate knowledge, “transforming libraries, museums, and art galleries from places of collector interest and genteel amusement into genuine educational institutions” (Hollis, 1941, p. 6). In some ways, then, there may be significant overlap between research foundations and think tanks – perhaps only differing by the organizations' own definitions of their mission priority: “advocacy (think tanks) and organizational capacity for quality policy research (institutes)” (Stone, 2007, p. 262).

In more recent times, research foundations also have influenced the direction of federal research dollars in the US, as exemplified by the National Institute of Health's redirection of funds to global health matters after similar support by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) (Matthews & Ho, 2008). Another change exemplified by the BMGF is the requirement that research proposals articulate interim milestones, which, if not achieved, threatens continued funding. This is a departure from the original understanding that some studies would be inconclusive and lack applicability or viable practical use (Hollis, 1941).

The perceived benefit of research foundations comes from their ability to steer research agendas toward a stated goal (Matthews & Ho, 2008). Left to independent personal interest, research agendas would be limited to individual capacities and desire. With research grants, funded positions at universities, and long-term or concurrent funding on related topics, IHEs – through their professors and students – establish centers

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of excellence designed to study critical topics. These topics are “critical” in part because there is funding to support their examination. This reality is not necessarily a negative – the ability to mass funding toward a single end certainly provides a more cohesive and potentially accelerated course toward achieving the foundations’ stated ends. With a more haphazard approach, research – and related policy options – would drag on without recognizable achievements.

Special interest groups. Interest groups influence the political process by providing relevant and applicable information to policy makers and by financially supporting policy makers who share similar viewpoints (Stone, 2007). The primary benefit special interest groups provide politicians is the direct access to a particular constituent point of view. In 2010, the *Citizens United v Federal Election Commission* case was a turning point for interest group financial support to politicians. The Supreme Court found that political spending is a First Amendment right for corporations and unions, allowing them to spend unlimited funds on political activities not tied to a specific party or candidate (Levy, 2015).

Two examples, related to energy powerhouse Enron and immigration policy, respectively, illustrate how information and finance deliver this influence. Interest groups – whether represented by paid lobbyists or individual mega-donors – often are perceived as having undue influence on politicians, especially through campaign financing, which supposedly provides access to politicians’ limited time and therefore can sway political decisions or positions. Certainly, this is the concern with Betsy DeVos’ recent selection and confirmation as US Education Secretary, due to the large financing she and her family provided not only to the victorious party in the 2016

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presidential election but also to more than 30 of the Senators who voted to confirm her, despite having never attended or worked in public educational institutions or holding an education-related degree (Mead, 2017). This influence may be constrained to perception alone, however, or perhaps specific topics or industries.

Dan Hopkins and Lee Drutman (2013) examined the relationship between campaign contributions and corporate lobbying efforts by analyzing internal emails within the energy giant Enron across a four-year period that represented both the height of its lobbying efforts and the immediate aftermath of its downfall. Of 250,000 emails provided as part of bankruptcy litigation, 66 percent of the political emails pertained to information gathering, 15 percent were interactions with politicians about specific legislation, and 9 percent were “focused primarily on submitting formal comments to governmental agencies and testifying at hearings” (Hopkins, 2013, p. 2). Only 1.1 percent of the political emails discussed campaigns, elections, or donations. Hopkins asserts that the assumption that assuming lobbyists’ money is their “primary source of influence we forget the importance of proprietary information they bring to the table, and the connections that corporations forge with bureaucrats who regulate them” (Hopkins, 2013, p. 3).

From an alternate perspective, though, Facchini, Mayda, and Mishra (2008) found statistically relevant correlation between interest group financial outlays and lobbying activity and associated immigration policy and legislation. Specifically, they argue that, when labor or business owners are politically organized and providing higher investments in lobbying expenditures, the amount of protection or relaxation in immigration policy is increased, respectively – and thus level of immigrants in a particular sector are curtailed

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or increased (Facchini, Mayda, & Mishra, 2008). Their findings support this argument. In industries where labor unions are especially active, immigration policies are protectionist at a statistically significant rate. In those areas where business groups lobby heavily for relaxed migration policies, these policies are present, again, at a statistically significant rate. An increase of approximately 10 percent of business group lobbying expenditure per native worker increases the number of available visas per native worker by 2.9 percent. Similarly, a 10 percent increase in union membership rate decreases the number of available visas per native worker by 3.2 percent (Facchini et al., 2008).

Tying these studies back to this research, there certainly are for-profit institutes of higher education (IHE), and even non-profit IHEs might be considered members of an industry, as their livelihoods depend on consumer support – whether through student attendance, grant and contract provision, or alumni and endowment support. Reasonably, IHEs may have argued for changes to the GI Bill, believing that it opened the aperture for larger student populations – and associated guaranteed tuition payments. Alternately, some IHEs may have argued against changes to the GI Bill, concerned that increased applicants or tuition would not outweigh associated administrative or cultural supports necessary to effectively integrate veteran populations. Likewise, veterans certainly are members of a broad interest group, often with powerful groups lobbying on their behalf, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and up-and-comers like the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Association (IAVA). Veteran age and experience diversity, however, may show internal struggles within the group, with some advocating the status quo so as not to open the overall benefit package up for Congressional consideration and others fighting for the unique transferability and full-

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tuition payment benefits. This study maintained an open eye to the engagement type and manner displayed by both groups, especially as they sought to increase their supporters or deflect detractors.

Theoretical Foundations

This section provides a literature review of the theoretical foundations used in this study, specifically Multiple Streams Analysis (MSA) and Narrative Policy Framework (NPF). MSA provides the context of how problems and potential solutions meet and are procedurally developed into a policy. NPF delves into this latter effort, when policy advocates develop a story – narrative – that describes the problem and path to the most desired policy resolution. These two theoretical perspectives are similar to a process the US Army uses to understand and address complex situations, called Design Methodology. US Army Design Methodology is a process by which leaders and their staff use creative and critical thinking to understand, visualize, and describe complex adaptive situations and develop approaches to solve them. The main steps include 1) Framing the Environment: identifying the current operating environment – inclusive of relevant actors, existing tensions, and potentials and tendencies between and among them – and articulating a desired operating environment – which, if achieved, meet the commander’s policy objectives, orders, and guidance. Once the current and desired operating environments are specified, 2) Framing the Problem: a statement that describes the core areas that must change, and 3) an Operational Approach is developed that articulates where action must be taken to transform the current circumstances to the desired circumstances (Banach, 2010). Much like the NPF, US Army Design Methodology demands that once a situation is fully understood, it is critical to convey the

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situation in a thematic manner, with a coherent beginning, middle, and end, as well as an overall plot, moral, and point of view. This allows the situation to be understood not as an event chronology, but rather in context of human actions, thoughts, and feelings (Ochs & Capps, 1996). Additionally, US Army Design Methodology supports ongoing re-framing of the situation in light of new data. This context helps increase understanding and build advocacy support for the situation and proposed solution. NPF addresses the way coalitions develop and adjust their narratives to build support and achieve their desired policy goals. Because this study examines how transferability and full tuition payment were incorporated into the 2008 GI Bill revision, it is relevant to understand how policy advocates may have shaped – or reframed – their narrative to garner or retain supporters.

Multiple Streams Analysis. Multiple Streams Analysis originates with Cohen, March, and Olsen’s Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice (Cohen, et al., 1972), which recognizes that complex organizations work as organized anarchies, where all members do not maintain singular focus on pursuing specific, stated goals. Instead, each of these factors – preferred goals, member focus, and procedural efforts – operate both independently of one another and through intermingling with the organizational structure. As a result, decisions are made by members resolving a matter upon which they have worked for some time, through oversight, using minimal effort by connecting problems to existing choices and “solving” the problem with little effort, or by flight, where a problem’s associated choices are undesirable in terms of time, effort, or outcome, but a new choice is presented, pushing previously associated options out of the way. A further situation may be present where an organization identifies a problem but has no solution

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choices to apply. An organization can appear to make progress in this instance, however, by solving seemingly related problems. This is further illustrated by Senge's (1994) concept of "shifting the burden," where organizations solve symptomatic problems rather than resolving the fundamental issues that create the problem. These superficial solutions may create new problems, which require organizational members' time and attention, further reducing the likelihood that the organization will address the fundamental issues (Senge, 1994). Most significantly, the Garbage Can Model articulates that decision making is not exactly a process for solving problems: "Problems are worked upon in the context of some choice, but choices are only made when the shifting combinations of problems, solutions, and decision makers happen to make action possible" (Cohen, et al., 1972, p. 16).

John Kingdon revised the Garbage Can Model for use specifically within federal government policy making processes into what later would be called Multiple Streams Analysis (MSA) (Kingdon, 2011). Kingdon identifies three process streams operating in the policy system: problem identification, policy development and revision, and politics, each having their own dynamics and rules which inform the policy processes of agenda setting, decision-making, and implementation, respectively. When these streams meld together in a policy window, there is greatest likelihood that policies will be approved (Zahariadis, 2014). These streams flow separate and distinct from one another, which reflects the ebb and flow of problems, problem-solvers/policy makers, and solutions identified in the Garbage Can Model. Additionally, actors prominent in one area (e.g., problem identification) may be involved with another area (e.g., politics), but at a

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different level of prominence. Each of these areas are examined in turn, but first one must understand agenda setting broadly.

Kingdon (2011) differentiates between agenda setting and choosing between various alternatives. Specifically, the governmental agenda comprises the topics on which Congress is placing attention, while the decision agenda comprises the specific matters on which Congress needs to actively decide. Finally, the alternatives are the options within the decision agenda among which Congress is choosing. For the purposes of this study, the governmental agenda is the annual National Defense Appropriations Authorization (NDAA), the decision agenda is war funding and retention of sufficient mid-career non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and officers to continue effective pursuit of combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the alternatives with regard to retention include extending/increasing retention bonuses, altering the size of the military services, and expanding post-service benefits (i.e., GI Bill options).

Problem identification. Problems can be present for a long time before Congress decides to take them up (Kingdon & Thurber, 1984). Indeed, this is why policies (or potential solutions) can be developed in academia, at research organizations, among special interest groups, within bureaucratic agencies, or elsewhere that later appear to “bubble up” quickly when a relevant problem is presented in the public sphere. Problems are identified by changing indicators – where data is interpreted in a result that is untenable to Congresspersons; focusing events or crises that result in immediate attention (e.g., the 9/11 terror attacks focused attention immediately on both the nation’s airline security and gaps in its intelligence-sharing procedures); and feedback on existing

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programs -- whether formal or anecdotal – that demonstrate a need for adjustment (Kingdon, 2011).

The governmental agenda in this study is recurring, as part of the Congressional lifecycle. The decision agenda, however, is influenced by factors Kingdon identifies as: “crisis or prominent events occurring within the system...a gradual accumulation of knowledge and perspectives among specialists in a given area...[and] political processes” (Kingdon, 2011, pp. 16-17). All three of these factors can be seen influencing the environment in this study. When the Post-9/11 Bill was considered, the crisis or prominent event of the global wars on terror had been ongoing for seven years (longer than World War II and Korean Wars combined, and approaching the length of combat operations in Vietnam), with decreasing retention rates and high costs in a fiscally constrained environment (Beehner, 2006; Bilmes & Stiglitz, 2006; Perry & Flournoy, 2006; Skeen, 2006).⁹ The accumulation of perspective over time can be seen in the All-Volunteer Force and the 50th Anniversary of World War II (WWII). The All-Volunteer Force of the 2000s was recognized as being the most educated force ever, having high percentages of college degrees among enlisted personnel (Dubner, 2008; Kane, 2006; Spoor, 2004). The 50th anniversary of the end of WWII had occurred in 2006, and ever-declining rates of living WWII veterans were highlighted in the media (Bromley, 2016; Jones, 2005). These two data points brought to the public forefront an examination of what military service entailed and what it meant to be a “grateful nation.” Additionally, as a political process, even though only “one-half of one percent of the American adults

⁹ Although Senator Jim Webb (D-VA) introduced the Post-9/11 GI Bill statute in January 2007 prior to the US economy’s financial crisis of 2007-08 when the housing bubble burst, there was increasing awareness of the Iraq war’s rising costs since 2006 and the bill’s passage in June 2008 occurred during a financial recession (Bilmes & Stiglitz, 2006; Weinberg, 2013).

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has served on active duty at any given time,” the 1970s Abrams Doctrine ensured that over 60 percent of Americans today have an immediate family member in the military (*The Military-Civilian Gap: Fewer Family Connections*, 2011, p. 1).¹⁰

Problems can be significantly constrained by fiscal realities – not that the problem itself is constrained, but fiscal realities can constrain how the problem is defined and later addressed. This reality is what makes the Post-9/11 GI Bill passage interesting. The United States’ economic downturn that began in 2007 in concert with the massive financial outlays -- for military operations (in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Philippines, Africa, and elsewhere), integration activities across the Intelligence Community, and reorganization and expansion of federal bureaucracies related to immigration, homeland security, and foreign relations – should have resulted in more constrained policy alternatives, instead of the increased costs associated with the Post-9/11 GI Bill’s transferability and full tuition payment benefits. However, Kingdon (2011) identifies three types of expensive programs that resonate during fiscal downturns: ones that control rising costs, ones that decision-makers believe will save money in the long-run, and ones that cost little in the immediate period, “even if they would not necessarily contribute to actual cost savings” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 108). The Post-9/11 GI Bill may fall into this latter category, since Active Component personnel had to remain on active duty for an additional four years to acquire eligibility for the transferability benefit.

Policy development/revision. Kingdon identifies two factors that impact policy change: “the participants who are active, and the processes by which agenda items and

¹⁰ “The “Abrams Doctrine” asserts that a significant amount of force structure must be placed in the Army reserve components so that a President sending the Army to war must mobilize the National Guard and Reserve and thereby ensure the support of the American people for that war” (Ham, Lamont, Chandler, Ellis, Hale, Hicks, Stultz, & Thurman, 2016, p. 49).

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alternatives come into prominence” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 15). Participants include those formally part of policy making, such as members of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, as well as interest groups, whether representing business/industry or professional interests, broad public interest groups (e.g., consumer or human rights advocates), or geographic interest groups (representing other public entities, such as state or local interests). Further, the more visible participant group (e.g., prominent politicians, the president, and media personalities) usually influence agenda setting, while those less visible (e.g., bureaucrats, academic specialists, and congressional staffers) more closely impact policy development and articulation of policy alternatives.

The processes include the decision agenda formation and fiscal realities discussed above, as well as political forces discussed below. When one considers how policy alternatives are articulated, one must be alert to problem reframing. Reframing is the seemingly simple act of recasting a problem in a different light. During WWI, military service was a transactional activity between the government and the service member that did not require post-service engagement once individual terms of service ended. During WWII, however, this relationship was reframed in a broader economic light, and returning service members were seen as yet another economic factor by policy makers who remembered the recent Depression and foresaw monumental problems ahead as the economy transitioned from wartime to a consumer focus. Later, educational benefits for veterans were viewed as part of a “sacred trust,” that was (at least rhetorically) inviolate, to effectively honor those who had served (or been willing to serve) the nation in battle. With these multiple reframing iterations, then, the government-veteran relationship moved from being transactional to being a covenant lasting long after the term of service.

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Politics. Kingdon's political stream considers the various players who engage in developing and implementing policy. These include the obvious: the President, members of his staff, executive administrators (whether political appointees or long-time civil servants) – including, for this study, senior military officials (general and flag officers), Congress members and their staff, and contacts from voters, as well as less obvious, such as overall Congressional resources, such as the legal authority Congress has to pass laws, its ability to bring—or squelch – publicity through hearings, speeches, and legislation, the fact that it works with blended information – just enough expertise to galvanize agreement but general enough to maintain comfortable discussion, and finally, its members' longevity. External groups also have impact. Kingdon (2011) maintains that, “the lower the partisanship, ideological cast, and campaign visibility of the issues in a policy domain, the greater the importance of interest groups” (p. 49). This finding may be particularly relevant for this study, as the United States was consumed by patriotism and – at least with regard to supporting the troops – low partisanship during the years immediately preceding the Post-9/11 GI Bill's passage.

After the Vietnam War, veterans were not welcomed back into US society for many years. Indeed, one can quickly survey popular Hollywood movies from the 1970s forward to see how popular media reflected US public sentiment. *Taxi Driver* (1976), *The Deer Hunter* (1978), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *The Exterminator* (1980), *First Blood* (1982), *Platoon* (1986), *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), *Hamburger Hill* (1987), and *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989) all reflect negatively on Vietnam, focusing on wartime horrors, criminal acts, unsuitability for reintegration in society, etc. However, *Good Morning Vietnam* (1987), *Air America* (1990), *Forrest Gump* (1994), and *We Were Soldiers* (2002)

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increasingly focused on individuals making the best out of difficult circumstances and highlighting moral and physical courage required by service members during Vietnam. Additionally, Hollywood produced many non-Vietnam films just prior to and after initial US military action in the Persian Gulf [Operations DESERT SHIELD (August 2, 1990-January 17, 1991) and DESERT STORM (January 18, 1991-February 28, 1991)] that exemplified increasingly sympathetic views of military personnel, US involvement in foreign locations, and the personal commitment and heroism combat requires across time and conflict. Movies such as *Glory* (Revolution – 1989), *Schindler's List* (WWII – 1993), *Saving Private Ryan* (WWII - 1998), *The Patriot* (Revolution – 2000), *Black Hawk Down* (Somalia – 2001), *Pearl Harbor* (WWII – 2001), *The Last Samurai* (Post-Civil War – 2003), *Jarhead* (Iraq – 2005), *Flags of Our Fathers* (WWII – 2006), *The Hurt Locker* (Iraq – 2008), and *American Sniper* (Iraq – 2014) reflected evolving support for military personnel in US society. They also coincided with an increase in service members' families publicly displaying yellow ribbons to demonstrate support for loved ones serving, which saw resurgence during the GWOTs.

Although GI Bill transferability was proposed as early as the mid-1970s, support for veteran's matters simply was not publicly viable at that time due to lack of public support for military matters post-Vietnam and the expense of moving from a draft-based military to an All-Volunteer Force, among other economic factors. In contrast, when large portions of the nation had family members and co-workers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan in the early 2000s (ostensibly against elements that had facilitated the deaths of nearly 3,000 people on September 11, 2001), there was greater campaign visibility for veteran support. This may have lowered partisanship against the Post-9/11 GI Bill, in

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ways that might have reduced interest group influence (*The Military-Civilian Gap: Fewer Family Connections*, 2011).

Inherently, though, Kingdon (2011) found that interest groups were more likely to block actions negative to their interests rather than promote an effort beneficial to their causes. Interest groups also may have multiple resources, including membership dispersion across multiple electoral districts, potential economic impact by foregoing or altering members' actions, and group organization, which can influence interest and public awareness. While not a specific focus of this study, a number of veterans' organizations cropped up in the mid-to-late 2000s, such as the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Combat Wounded Coalition, Military Veteran Project, Veteran Caregiver, Fallen Patriot Fund, Give An Hour, Soldiers' Angels, Independence Fund, USA Cares, Building Homes for Heroes, Coalition to Salute America's Heroes, Homes for Our Troops, Military Warriors Support Foundation/Homes4WoundedHeroes, K9s for Warriors, Team Rubicon, and Angel Flights for Veterans. Some of these organizations reflect new veteran needs resulting from improved medical care and life-sustaining equipment and may logically be normal evolutions of advocating for a unique population. However, their rise may reflect GWOT-era veterans' rejection of more traditional veteran service and advocacy organizations, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, etc. (Bromley, 2016; Davey, 2014; Klimas, 2014). This study anticipated – and found – varied support for the Post-9/11 GI Bill correlated to interest groups' missions – more support from those focused on GWOT-era veterans; less or more neutral support from those focusing on veterans generally. This variation was evident especially for the Disabled American Veterans, which testified that, “[S]ince our

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inception, the DAV has sought to protect the interests of all disabled veterans. The purpose our founders set for themselves in 1920 remains the same today: building better lives for America's disabled veterans and their families" (*The Legislative Presentation of the Disabled American Veterans*, 2006, p. 9). It is unsurprising, then, that this orientation reflects in their views on the Veterans' Administration, articulating, "A core mission of the VA is the provision of benefits to relieve the economic effects of disability upon veterans and their families....Disability benefits are critical, and providing for disabled veterans should always be a top priority of the government" (*The Legislative Presentation of the Disabled American Veterans*, 2006, p. 17). Indeed, educational benefits – while recommending support for families of 80 percent or more disabled veterans – were not a significant interest area: "[t]he GI bill is not really a DAV issue ... we certainly do support ... their [the National Guard and the Reserve] ability to receive the same benefits as our active-duty military, but to be more specific than that, again, it is not an issue that DAV plays a major role in" (*The Legislative Presentation of the Disabled American Veterans*, 2006, p. 28).

Narrative Policy Framework. After his first term, President Obama commented that, "... the mistake of my first term ... was thinking that this job was just about getting the policy right. And that's important. But the nature of this office is also to tell a story to the American people that gives them a sense of unity and purpose and optimism, especially during tough times" (Boerma, 2012, p. n.p.). Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) begins with the understanding that, "how a story is rendered is as important to policy success and political longevity as what actions are undertaken" (McBeth et al., 2014, p. 224). NPF has many contributing predecessors, going all the way back to

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rhetoric and including Paul Sabatier's late 1990-early 2000s efforts to develop the Advocacy Coalition Framework (McBeth et al., 2014; Shanahan, Jones, McBeth & Lane, 2013).

Narrative Structure. Jones and McBeth (2010a) define the narrative structure as requiring, at a minimum, four characteristics: a setting or context; a plot that introduces a temporal element (beginning, middle, end) and explains causal components among the setting and characters; characters that include heroes, villains, or victims; and a policy solution as the moral of the story. While a narrative's content varies based on the circumstance and storytellers' interest, this form remains the same (McBeth et al., 2014; Shanahan et al., 2013). There are five core assumptions – those beliefs which if found false, would critically damage the NPF theory. These assumptions include a belief that narrative context is socially constructed, and as a result, policy reality is different when viewed from alternate perspectives. However, these differences create a bounded relativity, due to individuals' norms, beliefs, etc. There are generalizable structural elements present in narratives that are visible across contexts. Additionally, policy narratives operate simultaneously at three levels: micro (individual), meso (group and coalition), and the macro (cultural and institutional level). Finally, NPF assumes that narratives impact the model of the individual, “play[ing] a central role in how individuals process information, communicate, and reason” (McBeth et al., 2014, p. 230; Shanahan et al., 2013). To illustrate these core assumptions, the reader can consider the experience of military initial entry training (IET) – often referred to as Basic Training or Boot Camp. Regardless of service, in the US military, IET entails a formalized curriculum that is repeated for all members of a particular service. Although there may be changes over

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time, Army Soldiers would recognize the activities present in basic training being conducted years after they personally participated in the curriculum (generalizable structural elements). However, their personal experience of basic training would vary based on their background and experiences before arriving: a farm girl might think the early mornings were not significant while a city boy may be comfortable with marching long distances (socially constructed and bounded relativity). Initial entry training clearly operates on multiple levels: that of the participants individually, as my example above highlights (micro), that of the group participating in each class or as the larger group of people who have experienced military basic training (meso), and in a cultural or institutional context, as demonstrated by broad understandings of basic training as a rite of passage/symbolically becoming an adult, transformative in moving a civilian into a warrior, and so forth (macro). Finally, it is rare to find a person who participated in military training who cannot point to that experiences' impact on their behavior, beliefs, or perspective (model of the individual).

Looking more deeply at the narrative levels, one can see that NPF provides natural bounding mechanisms for researchers.

At the micro level the researcher is interested in the individual and how individuals both inform and are informed by policy narratives. At the meso level ... is interested in narrative but studies [them] in terms of their deployment by groups and advocacy coalitions in a policy subsystem. Finally, at the macro level ... is interested in how policy narratives embedded in cultures and institutions shape public policy (McBeth et al., 2014, pp. 229-230).

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The chart below articulates the unit of analysis, core variables, imported theories, applicable methods, and potential data sources for each of the narrative levels present in NPF (see Figure 2). This study will examine only the meso-level in detail.

	Micro	Meso	Macro
Unit of analysis	Individual	Group/coalition	Institution/culture
Core NPF variables	Policy narrative Setting Characters Plot Moral	Policy narrative Setting Characters Plot Moral	Policy narrative Setting Characters Plot Moral
Imported theories	Belief systems Canonicity and breach (In)congruence Narrative transportation Narrator trust	Belief systems Devil/angel shift Heresthetics Policy learning Public opinion Scope of conflict	Unspecified
Known applicable methods	Experiment, interviews, focus groups, cluster analysis	Content analysis, network analysis, rational choice	Historical analysis, American political development
Potential data	Survey, transcripts	Written texts, speeches, videos	Archives, secondary sources, original artifacts

Figure 1: Narrative Policy Framework foci, variables, related theories, methods, and potential data by level (McBeth et al., 2014, p. 231). From *Theories of the Policy Process* by Paul A. Sabatier and Christophe M. Weible, copyright ©2014. Reprinted by permission of Westview Press, an imprint of Perseus Books, LLC, a subsidiary of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

The NPF meso-level operates as a system, where the narrative serves one variable of interest that interacts with other variables -- like resources, topic relevance, customs, and organizations – in a dynamic process that is shaped within the political boundaries by groups or coalitions that have shared values or end states (McBeth et al., 2014; Shanahan et al., 2013). This melds well with Kingdon’s Multiple Streams Analysis of politics, problem identification, and policy implementation/revision. NPF’s bound system is the broad political system – in this case, in the United States – where policies are legislated

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and implemented, similar to Kingdon's policy implementation/revision. NPF's narratives and other variables are related to Kingdon's problem identification, and the shaping process coalitions use to achieve their end states are related to Kingdon's political stream. Because meso-level NPF examines the policy subsystem as a whole, specifically seeking out similarities, differences, and interactions between competing policy narratives, these two theories nest well together.

NPF examines policy topics within the policy subsystem – whether it is dominated by one group or contested by many. The two factors Kingdon (2011) identifies as critical for policy development/revisions – active participants and the processes by which they bring a policy topic to prominence – are the same major factors working within what the NPF labels as the policy subsystem to control a particular issue. Understanding how policy coalitions develop and evolve is a subset of understanding the participants and their processes. Two thought streams dominate the NPF research: a so-called “instrumental” approach, drawing from rational choice research, which posits that coalitions change as a function of basic politics: who gets what, when, and how. The second draws upon the Advocacy Coalition Framework theory that focuses on coalition development through “hierarchically structured ‘belief systems,’ in which the most basic beliefs ... constrain more specific or operational policy positions” (Lugg, 2001; McBeth et al., 2014, p. 240). Within this concept, the NPF anticipates that perceived costs and benefits are critical considerations for groups, specifically in determining whether their group needs to expand or be maintained to further advance their end state. Essentially, just like any disagreement, at the meso-level, groups (advocacy coalitions) hold different viewpoints and build arguments (policy narratives) with data and examples (narrative

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elements) that support and illustrate their policy beliefs. These meso-level narratives are applied at the micro-level to individual policy to achieve specified outcomes (McBeth et al., 2014, p. 238).

There is an entire theoretical body on how a public policy agenda can be set, or more exactly, manipulated (Cohen, 1991; Dardanelli, 2009; Evangelista, 2001; Moser, Patty & Penn, 2009; Nagel, 1993; Shepsle, 2003; Taylor, 2005; Weimer, 1992). When politicians (or policy advocates) set – or control – the agenda, they use language strategically, to garner additional advocates or mitigate the power of dissenting arguments – an art Riker (1986) refers to as “heresthetic.” Specifically, heresthetic art involves thoroughly understanding the nature of the participating population, and introducing, withholding, or sequencing discussion of matters in a way designed to influence the overall policy outcome. In a broad scope, examining meso-level narratives involves examining whether policy advocates heresthetically adjust their language to grow or sustain their coalition size as necessary to achieve their goals, and if so, to what extent, and using which techniques?

Meso-level Narrative Strategies. Proponents use three primary strategies to adjust their narrative and achieve their desired policy end states: 1) scope of conflict, 2) causal mechanisms, and 3) the devil/angel shift (McBeth et al., 2014; McBeth, Shanahan, Arnell & Hathaway, 2007; Stone, 1989), which will be discussed in turn. Scope of conflict is the strategy where “interest groups attempt to maintain, demonstrate, and increase their political power as they seek to win a favorable policy. Furthermore, whether an interest group perceives themselves as winning or losing on a policy issue greatly influences how they play politics” (McBeth et al., 2007, p. 89; Shanahan et al.,

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2013). Basically, when the group believes they are winning, much like in football, the team simply wants to run out the clock with no major changes or adjustments to their plan or status, and so contains the issue. When the group perceives that they are losing, it expands the issue, trying to gain more ground to move the ball further down the field. Thinking specifically of this study, older veteran groups, who already receive educational benefits but may not be eligible for the new options provided by post-9/11 service might demonstrate **issue containment** by downplaying the need for transferability or full-tuition payment, citing the educational benefit status quo as sufficient while highlighting other (preferred) topics as more pressing (e.g., health care wait times) or warning that revisiting veterans' benefits could lead to reductions in what has already been achieved. Should the press for improved educational benefits tilt away from this position, this same group might demonstrate **issue expansion** by advocating for improved health care for female veterans, for victims of military sexual trauma, or for those suffering from traumatic brain injury (TBI) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), thereby increasing attention on an alternative (in this instance, health care) priority by gaining new coalition members (both those directly impacted by these health matters and those who are interested in the topics for their loved ones). This demonstrates a cost/benefit narrative that "attempt[s] to reallocate attention and expand the issue by diffusing costs and concentrating benefits" (McBeth et al., 2007, p. 240).

Stone (1989) discusses causal ideas or stories as the narrative portion that describes the problem by "attributing cause, blame, and responsibility....political actors ... compose stories that describe harms and difficulties, attribute them to actions of other individuals or organizations, and thereby claim the right to invoke government power to

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stop the harm” (Stone, 1989, p. 282). She articulates four types of causal theories: mechanical, intentional, accidental, or inadvertent. These causal theories reflect the intersection of actions (unguided or purposeful) and consequences (intended or unintended), and Stone argues that the strongest causal theories are those of intentional – attributing cause to conspiracies or oppression – or accidental – attributing cause to nature or machines run amok – cause. She notes that inadvertent causal theories are frequent in social policy, where there are many intervening conditions with unforeseen side effects or errors of omission. For example, transitioning to an All-Volunteer Military after the Vietnam War resulted in more service members staying for full careers, which thus increased the number of dependent family members. This fact, combined with frequent moves required by US military assignment policies, has the unforeseen side effect of limiting spousal career options. Although two-income families were less frequent in the mid-1970s, they are the norm today, and consequently, military spouses often require additional education or re-training in more mobile careers that can be carried from duty station to duty station.

Causal stories seeking to expand the advocacy group often highlight the intentional acts that result in negative consequences, creating a villain for the narrative. Stone (1989) developed a four-part typology chart to discuss the intersection of actions and consequences present in a causal story: Actions are either Unguided or Purposeful; Consequences are either Intended or Unintended. When Actions are Unguided but the Consequences are Intended, then Stone refers to the Cause as Mechanical. A trained animal, brainwashed people, or a machine would be an example. When the Action is Unguided and the Consequence is Unintended, the Cause is Accidental, such as those

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instances purely outside human control, such as weather and natural disasters. When Actions are Purposeful and the Consequences are Intended, the Cause is Intentional, such as assault, oppression, or a successful program. Finally, the Inadvertent Cause is present when Actions are Purposeful but Consequences are Unintended, such as when a person omits or neglects an important action, or when a group is on the defensive, however, mechanical or accidental causes often are highlighted, since there are fewer credible entities to argue against these narratives. An example of a causal story is an argument that the US must pursue “radical Islamic terrorists” as the key element to keep its borders safe; this is an example of the brainwashed people in Stone’s Causal Theory chart. There are no credible radical Islamic terrorists – by labeling a group radical, their voice is automatically devalued, and Muslims who defend their religion as not supportive of terror tactics can be dismissed for two simple reasons. First, one would expect Muslims to defend their religion, but the most visible terror attack in the US (given both the high immediate death rate and the subsequent decade-plus of combat actions and resultant injuries and deaths) was initiated by Muslims, making most arguments unpersuasive, although largely due to logical fallacies. Second, as Islam is a less frequent religion in the US, broad ignorance among non-Muslim Americans means the few non-Muslim experts are outnumbered by individuals who make opinion-based counter-claims. In addition to providing a narrative’s villain, this kind of causal story may precede a preferred policy solution, by laying out the problem, which then must be paired with both policy agents and solutions for Kingdon’s policy window to open.

The devil shift is exhibited when interest groups emphasize their opponents’ power and evilness and downplay their own power, while the angel shift is the opposite:

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emphasizing the narrator's "ability and/or commitment to solving a problem, while de-emphasizing the villain" (McBeth et al., 2007; Shanahan et al., 2013, p. 459). These narrative shifts are consistent with interest groups' perception of their position.

Specifically, a devil shift in a group's narrative indicates a belief that their position is on the losing side, thus needing to highlight the opposing viewpoint's "badness," while an angel shift portrays the group in its positive belief of doing great things and being successful. It is unclear, however, whether these shifts always are specific strategies or may in some instances, simply reflect in language the group's emotional status (Shanahan et al., 2013).

Meso-level Hypotheses. NPF researchers have developed nine meso-level hypotheses, shown in the chart below, and tested five of them (H₁, H₂, H₄, H₅, H₉).

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Hypothesis	Exact Wording	Origin
H ₁ : <i>Narrative strategy</i>	Groups or individuals who are portraying themselves as losing on a policy issue will use narrative elements to expand the policy issue to increase the size of their coalition.	McBeth et al. (2007); Shanahan et al. (2013); Jones and McBeth (2010)
H ₂ : <i>Narrative strategy</i>	Groups or individuals who are portraying themselves as winning on a policy issue will use narrative elements to contain the policy issue to maintain the coalitional status quo.	McBeth et al. (2007); Shanahan et al. (2013); Jones and McBeth (2010)
H ₃ : <i>Narrative strategy</i>	Groups will heresthetically employ policy narratives to manipulate the composition of political coalitions for their strategic benefit.	Jones and McBeth (2010)
H ₄ : <i>Narrative strategy</i>	The devil shift: Higher incidence of the devil shift in policy subsystems is associated with policy intractability.	Shanahan et al. (2013)
H ₅ : <i>Policy beliefs</i>	Coalition glue and policy outcomes: Advocacy coalitions with policy narratives that contain higher levels of coalitional glue (coalition stability, strength, and intracoalition cohesion) will more likely influence policy outcomes.	Shanahan et al. (2013); Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth (2011)
H ₆ : <i>Policy learning</i>	Policy narrative persuasion: Variation in policy narrative elements helps explain policy learning, policy change, and policy outcomes.	Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth (2011)
H ₇ : <i>Public opinion</i>	Exogenous public opinion: When exogenous public opinion is congruent with a coalition's preferred policy outcomes, coalitions will offer policy narratives that seek to contain the subsystem coalition (by maintaining the status quo membership of the coalition).	Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth (2011)
H ₈ : <i>Public opinion</i>	Endogenous public opinion: When endogenous public opinion shocks are incongruent with a coalition's preferred policy outcome, coalitions will offer policy narratives that seek to expand the subsystem coalition.	Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth (2011)
H ₉ : <i>Coalition membership</i>	The media can be a contributor to advocacy coalitions.	Shanahan et al. (2008)

Figure 2: NPF Meso-level Hypotheses and Origins (McBeth et al., 2014, p. 245). From *Theories of the Policy Process* by Paul A. Sabatier and Christopher M. Weible, copyright © 2014. Reprinted by permission of Westview Press, an imprint of Perseus Books, LLC, a subsidiary of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

This study was developed to address H₁, H₂, and H₃, with potential findings related to H₇ and H₈. Specifically, this study asserts that pro-veteran advocates (e.g., Conservative

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think tanks and military-related special interest groups) adjusted their narratives to harness exogenous and endogenous public opinion to garner necessary support for Post-9/11 GI Bill passage. In other words, narratives focused on endogenous opinion base would promote veteran support, while narratives targeting exogenous populations focused on educational opportunity or more traditionally supported liberal values/causes.

Summary

Currently, the US military is undergoing significant fiscal reductions due to the combined effects of natural post-war drawdown and Congressional finance limitations under Sequestration. The military saw large increases in non-combat related military benefits during the height of the Global Wars on Terror, even though economic realities were not robust. Now, the Services struggle to demonstrate relevance and benefit to Congress and the American people. What circumstances were present that facilitated non-combat (e.g., educational) benefits for service members and what narratives were effective in achieving expensive, “nice to have” benefits at a time of rising fiscal concern? This dissertation examines the environment using Multiple Streams Analysis and the narratives presented by advocates during passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill using Narrative Policy Framework with the intent of eliciting key factors that military stakeholders should cultivate or be alert for, so they can maximize future policy windows for greatest effect.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Through the course of my doctoral studies, I have been continually interested in the process in which policy occurs, with a unifying theme across topics being a desire to understand how policy is developed and whether the policy developed achieved its intended goals. Consistently, I was drawn to individual examples and the extent which it was possible to extrapolate larger meaning from them. In concert with my doctoral committee and advisor, I clarified that my main interest was to understand the overall policy development process that led to enactment of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, with a sub-question of whether or how language was modified during the development process to increase support for the bill's most unique components of transferability and full-tuition payment. With this background and intent, it is appropriate to follow a qualitative research design using case study as an examination method.

After reviewing a comparison of Yin (2002), Stake (1995), and Merriam's (1998) perspectives on case study design, I found myself drawn to Merriam's work for a few reasons. First, while comfortable with bounding a "case" as the overall process of building transferability and full-tuition payment into service member educational benefits, both Yin (2002) and Stake's (1995) work highlighted the importance of bounding via a specific program or person, which is inconsistent with my research questions (Yazan, 2015). Second, Yin's (2002) infusion of quantitative data procedures, such as categorizing and triangulation in discrete steps is inconsistent both with how I think and how I anticipate discovering information about factors influencing this particular policy development. I fully expected to not have all relevant individuals identified before beginning the study, and for unanticipated groups or factors to arise

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during research. Merriam (1998), however, anticipates analyzing and evaluating data during the collection process. Finally, I was neither embedded in the case itself, which Yin (2002) seems to promote as an extended case study method, nor was I interested in interpreting multiple perspectives to determine a collective reality, as Stake (1995) seems to promote from an ethnographic standpoint. Since the bill has been passed and I was examining historical records, neither of these lenses were appropriate. Instead, I was interested in following a process as it evolved with various stakeholders engaged and articulating (rather than interpreting) their perspectives. Ideally, I would adequately reflect how stakeholders perceived the policy development process and sought to influence the various circumstances that opened the policy window (whether by specific effort or happenchance) so the reader can look for similarities in future circumstances that foreshadow or indicate an opening policy window – and potentially take advantage of these circumstances.

Research Strategy

Merriam (1998) notes that “qualitative inquiry, which focuses on meaning in context, requires a data collection instrument that is sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data” (pp. Part 1, para. 3, n.p.). Humans are that sensitive instrument, able to observe and interpret body language, vocal inflection, and intonation, as well as sense urgency, deference, and other emotions within written artifacts. As such, it uses inductive reasoning as the predominant way of developing understanding. I am examining two topics in this dissertation. First, testing a Narrative Policy Framework meso-level hypothesis as part of my research questions, I examined whether proponents heresthetically altered their narrative language choices to increase

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support for their proposals. My primary interest, however, was the broader Multiple Streams Analysis process and whether there was even such a need to alter language. To do this, I conducted a historical case study, which describes a process in a single – albeit long-term – bounded system. To achieve a rich, or “thick” description of the circumstances, I planned to use both interviews and data analysis of specific documents and other narrative artifacts. By using document and artifacts as member checks to triangulate interview results, I would increase transactional validity through progressive induction (Cho & Trent, 2006). Specifically, I intended to increase my transactional validity by comparing documents against interviews with thought leaders/advocates. However, I discovered a number of unexpected factors causing me to adjust my overall research structure. First, transferability and full tuition payment were not “new” concepts in legislation in 2008 – just new in statute. These options were introduced into legislation as much as 30 years prior, and regularly, rather than as one-off ideas. Second, due to the common nature of the proposals, it was not possible to do interviews with the proponents – their sheer number exceeded available resources and time, and many had died, taken up private life, or were otherwise unavailable. Rather than seek out proponents who might lead me to a series of un-pursuable ends, I opted to examine more deeply the language and themes used during debates on this topic, across three eras: the late 1970s/early 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. These time delineations occurred naturally – discussion and themes were unique in each era, all of which will be discussed in the findings.

Research Questions

This study entails a primary and secondary research matter. The primary research matter is simply understanding how the policy window components associated with the

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Post-9/11 GI Bill's passage came together at this particular moment in time. The secondary matter is whether proponents adjusted their narratives to harness exogenous and endogenous public opinion to garner necessary support for post-9/11 GI Bill passage (i.e., narratives focused on endogenous opinion groups promoted support for veterans while narratives focused on exogenous populations were tailored toward more traditionally liberal values/beliefs, such as enhancing educational opportunity).

The research questions guiding this study are:

- 1) What are the circumstances of political, entrepreneurial, and policy streams that surrounded the passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill?
- 2) What are the salient features of this environment that were of particular value in advancing passage of the statute?
- 3) To what extent did changing social constructs enable the passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

Policy Selection

I selected the Post-9/11 GI Bill as the policy that I wanted to study in an effort to bring together differing areas of my career. When I began my doctoral studies, I was immersed in educational policy making, and initially planned to examine how federal special education law was translated through state policy perspectives and implemented at the local level – basically examining how well Congressional intent was carried through to local action. As my studies progressed, my career evolved due to three deployments and two US-based mobilizations in support of the GWOTs; now I serve full-time in the Army as a strategist. This career field has many similarities to my

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educational career, focused on developing high-level strategic plans and the necessary policies to achieve desired end states.

As a recipient of the REAP as well as other, non-educational, VA benefits, I watched the Post-9/11 GI Bill move through Congress, having been aware of the earlier Army and Air Force programs piloting transferability. During a masters-producing Army course, I investigated the US Army Reserve's efforts to address its officer shortages during the GWOTs, which touched broadly on efforts the Army – as a Service – undertook to retain and recruit sufficient wartime personnel. For the most part, the Army offered financial incentives and implemented policies extending personnel beyond their contract end dates, increasing promotion rates, allowing more waivers for educational and legal matters, and curtailing actions that would normally shape and reduce the force (Numerick, 2012). These actions largely were successful, although there were concerns about sustainability, especially prior to 2007, when the US economy was booming and the military's efforts to meet its personnel needs drew upon contractors, who were perceived as doing the same job as their military counterparts, but for much larger paychecks. Aware of these retention/recruitment efforts and generally interested in national policy, I selected the Post-9/11 GI Bill for my dissertation study, with the primary question of “why now?”

From a personal standpoint, being able to identify that a policy window might be opening – or more ideally, knowing how to harness those components -- would professionally be useful. While my work often entails the typical planning that comes to mind for someone developing military strategy (i.e., creating plans against specific foreign threats), Army strategy also entails policy and communication development

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necessary to acquire requisite personnel, materiel, or national will to support military actions required achieve our national end states. As someone who uses the US Army Design Methodology daily, examining how a non-combat related policy is reframed and illustrated to garner public and Congressional support has personal and professional relevance.

Data Collection

Documents and Artifacts. For this study, I examined documents as artifacts for perceptible language changes across time. Merriam and Tisdell identify that documents provide, “the paper trail for what [they] can reveal about the program—“things that cannot be observed,” things “that have taken place before the study began” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 164). Additionally, as an observer, it is possible to trace perceptible change across documents; in my case – working as a complete observer (i.e., not engaged with those being recorded at the time the artifacts were developed) –observations were focused on key words or language being used within documents on the specific topic of veterans’ educational benefits. Documents included more than 3,000 pages of committee hearing notes, policy papers, written testimony, and statutory submissions. Other artifacts included recorded speeches, conference presentations, published interviews, correspondence, and news releases or reports. I selected these artifacts for multiple reasons. First, they were most easily accessible as I conducted most of my research while living outside the United States. Second, the public records entail not only the “official, ongoing records of a society’s activities,” but also convey those concepts and perspectives that the speaker/author wants to be recorded (Gagliardi, 1990; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 164). More precisely, within Congressional documents, those providing

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testimony are doing so in an effort to convince – either their colleagues or a committee – and thus are going on the record to be known as holding a particular view point (Wildemuth, 2017). When one considers that these hearings exist to convince Congress to act in a particular way, one must assume that those speaking are providing what they believe to be their most compelling arguments. This is the crux of what I examined – what language and concepts were most relevant across time, and how the existing environment (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic) contribute to or hinder the persuasiveness of the arguments.

Across these sources, I followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) recommendation to sample until a level of saturation has been achieved where no further unique data is being acquired. Identifying saturation is an art in itself, where – drawing upon disparate sources – no substantially new leads or resources are being identified and respondents' perceptions / experiences are forming into fairly cohesive groups upon which one can draw. There may be remaining leads that are related but exceed the scope of this study, which could provide opportunity for future research, and I simply noted these as part of identifying saturation points – many of which are presented in the discussion section below.

This study includes two types of artifacts: 1) those purposefully selected due to their direct relevance as legislative or advocacy activities related to the Post-9/11 GI Bill or the matters of transferability and full tuition payment, and 2) those identified from the initial artifacts using snowball or chain sampling (Merriam, 1998). The former was elicited through broad internet searches for “GI Bill,” “veteran education benefits,” “transferability” or “transfer to dependent,” including pairings of these search terms.

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This resulted in news articles, Congressional and Presidential speeches, and opinion editorials. Additionally, I searched sites with clear connections to the topics, such as the Congressional Record, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Defense, and advocacy groups like the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Association, as well as those with suspected concern, including think tanks such as Brookings, RAND, and New America. These artifacts produced references to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), Congressional Budget Office (CBO), Congressional Commissions, and additional advocacy organizations that were previously unknown to me. I searched for specifically-referenced artifacts and also broadened my search within these source groups for further artifacts.

Data Analysis

To address the Narrative Policy Framework questions of whether advocates altered their language to gain support for transferability and full-tuition payment, I completed a narrative analysis on the examples and illustrations speakers and writers used across time and audiences. In essence, what narrative was used in the late 1970s/early 1980s when transferability was brought up for Congressional consideration compared to the late 1990s pilot study, and again the post-9/11 GI Bill itself? As part of that, I identified changes in the narrative content – were specific words changed that might evoke different emotion or support? I used the qualitative data analysis software NVivo to assist in coding, organizing, and analyzing the information. More explicitly, as I read each document, I focused on the speakers’ own correlations supporting (or not) educational benefits for veterans. These were often immediately proximate:

“...[E]ligibility should be limited to enlisted personnel, and that benefits should be

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restricted to shortage skills and/or to high-quality recruits so as to minimize the cost of the program yet still accomplish its recruiting objectives” (*Improving Military Educational Benefits: Effects on Costs, Recruiting, and Retention*, 1982, p. 13). I coded this passage as “limited need,” and “need better quality” due to the narrow parameters articulated and “recruitment needs,” as that is the articulated purpose for providing educational benefits in this instance. Likewise, “recruitment need” and “limited need” were coded for this paragraph:

CBO’s analysis shows that, under these assumptions, the size of the career force (defined as those with four or more years of service) will continue to grow over the next five years.... Except for the Navy, each service should meet or exceed the career force objectives established last year, although these could be increased. Simply meeting or exceeding these objectives does not, however, ensure that skill imbalances can be resolved (*Improving Military Educational Benefits: Effects on Costs, Recruiting, and Retention*, 1982, pp. 21-22).

I also coded this paragraph for “force shaping,” which pertains to actions to ensure the right skills are present at the right ranks. In essence, the coding reflects that there is limited need for recruitment (since the services will grow over the next five years) but that force shaping is an issue. A full explanation of all coding terms can be found in Appendix A. Occasionally, I identified sub-nodes, which were concepts that could be considered derivative of the node to which it was subordinate. This is the case with Cost Inefficiency. The general tenor of this node was that the funds being spent failed to provide sufficient recruiting results – or at least, that individuals surveyed were not

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specifying that the GI Bill was a key factor in deciding to enlist. However, two closely related nodes also became apparent: the GI Bill is Underfunded, and it provides an Ineffective Program. These two nodes were frequently proffered in the debate as counters to claims the GI Bill was Cost Inefficient. Really, the argument would go, the GI Bill was only Inefficient because it was Underfunded or because it had a series of rules and procedures that made using it difficult, making the program Ineffective. As a result, these two nodes were identified as sub-nodes to Cost Inefficiency. Another sub-node for Cost Inefficiency was the Need to Contain Costs. Sometimes physically proximate to the Cost Inefficiency, the Need to Contain Costs was both a statement about fiscal realities and commentary that the GI Bill (either as structured or given the adjustments recommended) would not be the best use of limited funds – overall, a comment about whether the government was receiving enough “juice for the squeeze”.

To address the Policy Window questions of what factors came together at this particular time to achieve the Post-9/11 GI Bill’s passage, I relied on various reports, studies, and internal commentary present in the artifacts. Specifically, I looked for commonalities across time as well as outliers, as the literature demonstrates that the problems and solutions often exist for some time prior to the circumstances being right for policy advocates to connect the problems and solutions politically. This naturally occurred during the coding process, as I recognized the need to add a new code, that other codes were not being used anymore during a particular era, or even my annoyance at having to code “recruitment needs” and “retention needs” over and over. Using the coding software NVivo demonstrated great practicality here, though, as I could automate analysis on what I had coded to illustrate each coding’s density across the three eras. I

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realized early on that transferability and full-tuition reimbursement were present frequently across a 30-year period before actual passage but did not code the source material by era until the end of my other coding efforts. While I anticipated that there might be three blocks of time, I did not know whether they would break evenly by decade. In fact, the data demonstrated natural breaks at 1990 and 2002, and so documents reviewed from the late-1970s and all of the 1980s are coded as the “1980s” era, 1990-2001 is coded as the “1990s” era, and all items published or substantially reflecting work from 2002-2008 is coded as the “2000s” era. The Ninth Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, for example, was started in July 1999 and published in March 2002. I coded it as occurring during the “1990s” era, since the bulk of the events and analysis occurred prior to 2002 (30 months), with printing and publication occurring just three months into the “2000s” era.

Significance of the Study

This study has potential significance in four ways. First, it may contribute to the general Narrative Policy Framework and Multiple Streams Analysis body of knowledge. For MSA, the contribution is truly general. For NPF, the contribution is both general and also specific to three hypotheses that have not yet been fully examined, specifically with regard to policy advocates heresthetically changing their narratives to gain or limit changes to their overall interest group. Second, the study may contribute to a broad understanding of ways to achieve support for expensive policy options in a fiscally tightening environment. Third, it may provide guidance for military leaders in better understanding policy windows and how they shape or impact support to service initiatives. Fourth, but at a lesser level, veterans or those engaged in advocacy on their

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behalf may find similar use in this study as military leaders – for understanding how policy windows shift. I identify this significance as being a lesser level simply due to the less frequent engagements that veterans’ organizations have with Congress, whereas senior military leaders are existing members of the government and likely have more frequent engagements with Congressional personnel across a variety of topics.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter reviews my study's findings from multiple artifacts across time. For clarity, the chapter is divided into the three relevant eras: 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Recalling that Jones and McBeth (2010a) define the narrative structure as requiring a setting or context; a plot that introduces a temporal element (beginning, middle, end) and explains causal components among the setting and characters; characters that include heroes, villains, or victims; and a policy solution as the moral of the story, this chapter addresses each. Within each of these eras, I briefly review the national – or strategic – context within which the debate occurred, since I already discussed the environment in the literature review. For the 2000s, I provide a more detailed contextual review, since this is the period in which transferability and full tuition payment finally moved from legislative proposals to statutory reality. Next, I discuss the documents and artifacts used for that era's analysis (causal components and characters) and detail the major themes (policy solutions) present in the public debate. Across all three eras, Recruitment Needs and Retention Needs were the most frequently coded nodes. Therefore, my discussion centers on the top three themes present in the artifacts after Recruitment and Retention (the plot). Of note, the artifacts often demonstrated a tension between recruitment and retention, as best illustrated in this statement:

The problem with an educational benefit program which is too attractive is that it forces people to leave the service in order to take advantage of the benefit. In light of the need for achieving high levels of retention of these skilled personnel, and the high training costs to prepare them, we are concerned that increasing the present VEAP program as proposed in

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this legislation could exacerbate our force manning problems, and that the solution to overcome this retention disincentive could add even more to the cost of the program (*Veterans' Education Programs*, 1983, p. 68).

In the latter two eras, I highlight those themes that are new to the conversation as well as those which have dropped from the discussion. Definitions for the themes I coded in the artifacts can be found in Appendix A, however, this chapter focuses only on those most salient in each era. Appendix B graphically illustrates nodal frequency by era. Finally, I discuss the narrative strategies present within the debate for each era. This reaches back to the McBeth, et al. (2007 and 2014) and Stone (1989) work that underscored the three primary strategies proponents used to adjust their narrative and achieve their desired policy end states: scope of conflict, causal mechanisms, and the devil/angel shift (McBeth et al., 2014; McBeth et al., 2007; Stone, 1989).

1980s

Strategic Context. As noted above, the mid-1970s saw an end to the Vietnam War and transition to the All-Volunteer Force. This move from a small permanent military force that would be expanded through the draft to a larger force able to respond to the full range of military requirements without adding involuntary members reflected a significant philosophical adjustment with fiscal and administrative ripples. No longer could the United States Government go to war secure in the knowledge that necessary personnel could be acquired. Instead, the military would have to be a sufficiently attractive job opportunity for individuals – of the right quality and capacity – to willingly undertake – and to maintain (Feickert & Daggett, 2012). This required policies and benefits packages also to be sufficiently attractive, but limited data existed on these

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requirements. These challenges presented during a period where military service was not viewed as a plausible career due to low pay and high national inflation through the 1970s and early 1980s, minimal public support for the military after withdrawal from Vietnam, increasing defense spending cuts, and equipment that was outdated and poorly maintained.

Ineffective Program, Containing Costs, and Limited Need. During this era, the most frequently present nodes discussed whether the GI Bill was effective, highlighted a need to contain costs, and questioned whether there was much need for the GI Bill in the first place. Charges that the GI Bill – at that time the Post-Vietnam Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (VEAP) – was an Ineffective Program and underscoring the Need to Contain Costs both were sub-nodes for an overall concern about Cost Inefficiency. The node, Ineffective Program, can be seen in statements such as,

[t]here appears to be widespread disappointment in VEAP within the defense community for several reasons: (1) a lower than expected enrollment rate, approximating only about 20 to 25 percent of new accessions; (2) a considerably higher than expected dropout rate, amounting to more than 40 percent of all participants since the program's inception; and (3) an apparently smaller than expected enlistment-inducement effect, with no more than a 5 percent increase in enlistments of male high school graduates with above-average mental ability (*Military Educational Benefits: Proposals to Improve Manning in the Military*, 1981, p. 4).

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In essence, then, these comments question whether the GI Bill's educational program is really doing what it was designed to do, which was attract increased numbers of highly qualified (defined as high school graduates with certain aptitude levels) military recruits. The quote above illustrates that, at least in 1981, the educational benefits as offered were failing to attract additional recruits, and when they did enroll in the GI Bill options, participants did not feel it was especially compelling, as indicated by the percentage who dropped out of the program. Additionally, the Ineffective Program node was reflected in artifacts discussing what **was** effective:

The favorable current recruiting results stem in part from the current package of military pay and benefits. The basic VEAP, part of that package appears to have had little effect on either recruiting or retention. But the addition of the so-called kickers to VEAP has improved its effectiveness as a recruiting incentive. Our analysis concluded that VEAP kickers could improve recruiting in hard-to-fill skills such as combat arms by as much as 3.5 percent (*Veterans' Education Programs*, 1983, p. 150).

On the other end of the nodal continuum, this extract illustrates that the existing program's ineffectiveness might be mitigated with kickers, which were previously discussed as additional monetary bonuses that added to the basic educational benefits offered. Ultimately, then, this node illustrates that the program's effectiveness as a recruiting tool was impacted by the funding level it provided.

The Need to Contain Costs was explicit, “[w]hat, if any, standards of eligibility should be imposed on participants? Some argue that the reduce costs, eligibility should be limited to enlisted personnel and benefits restricted to those serving in shortage skills

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and/or to high-quality recruits” (*Improving Military Educational Benefits: Effects on Costs, Recruiting, and Retention*, 1982, p. 25). This node was reflected also in concerns both for the current period and a future point: “And if we were to implement a GI bill at this time—that program which is our very best ace in the hole on readjustment benefits and reward for service—in order to recruit and retain the voluntary force, then how would we deal with that as we would be required to up the ante necessarily in the time of conflict, God forbid” (*Veterans' Education Programs*, 1983, p. 2). These nodes (Ineffective Program and Need to Contain Costs) relay sentiments associated with Cost Inefficiency (seventh most present node for the 1980s), concerned with whether the GI Bill’s results were sufficiently high enough to justify the cost. For example, “...the Military Manpower Task Force which was an impressive array of individuals, of experts, concluded that educational benefits are not the most efficient incentive for recruiting high quality personnel, that other incentives such as cash bonuses and other things you mentioned and others have mentioned, are more efficient and less costly” (*Veterans' Education Programs*, 1983, p. 69). This instance provides a good summation of the argument: lots of experts believe that providing educational benefits one way – albeit not the best – of attracting people to join the military, and Congress would best be served with its limited resources by using the other methods that are both cheaper and more likely to support the desired end-state.

The node, Limited Need, was present during this era, both in its own right and as a corollary to “Economic Downturn,” which was the fourth most frequent node during this era. On its own, Limited Need was argued with statements such as this in Senator Alan Simpson’s opening statement in front of the Senate Committee on Veterans’

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Affairs, "...in light of the recent experience of all four of the military service branches in recruitment and retention of the quantity and quality of young men and women needed to support our national defense on active duty as well as in the reserves, I am not convinced that it is necessary for a new GI bill program to be in place at this time" (*Veterans' Education Programs*, 1983, p. 3). As a corollary to Economic Downturn, statements such as

[s]ome of my colleagues believe that our current recruitment successes are solely a result of a troubled economy and unemployment. I think that might ignore other factors which I believe have contributed to recent successes in recruitment such as I mentioned: increased pay, bonuses, reimbursements and actually an increased attraction to our Nation's youth to serve our country" (*Veterans' Education Programs*, 1983, p. 2).

Senator Simpson was introducing a bill that included a "triggering mechanism" for the President of the United States to use in the event recruiting or retention fell suddenly, providing a flexibility that could not be found if Congress had to meet, deliberate, pass a new statute, and allow time for the services to implement the benefit. This option was not implemented, primarily for fear that Congress would be abrogating its duties and concern about unexpected costs.

While Congress identified transferability as a potential recruitment or retention benefit during this era, there was limited recognition that this would be useful or cost effective. Indeed, the tension between Recruitment Needs and Retention Needs, the Need to Contain Costs, and a belief that there was a Limited Need all arose with this idea.

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Although previously proposed as a service option to use for recruiting or retaining specific categories of personnel, a pilot study,

...indicated that transferability has limited, if any, effectiveness as a recruitment device. Although it showed potential for some positive effect ... as a retention device, its attractiveness was confined primarily to ... officers—an area where retention problems are minimal. Moreover ... [it] could be a very expensive component ... that all or most of service members with remaining entitlement to benefits would transfer them to their children and spouses. Many individuals ... make the service their career and stay ... for retirement benefits—benefits which can be in themselves a very significant incentive....Finally, there are concerns ... transfer to dependents might ... undercut in the long run the recruitment purposes of ... educational incentives....[P]roviding educational benefits to dependents—individuals who have made no commitment to military service—it could reduce the incentive to enter the service among the pool of potential eligibles (*Veterans' Education Programs*, 1983, p. 31).¹¹

While there was interest in transferability as early as the late 1970s, a pilot study undertaken did not indicate sufficient relevance of transferability as a reason to join or remain in military service. The footnote below illustrates a number of problems with the study, but these limitations and their impact on the study were not discussed among the legislative members. Instead, the study's inconclusive results were used to underscore

¹¹ It should be noted that this same artifact included written testimony from the Department of Defense indicating that the pilot test, “must be considered inconclusive due to problems in the test construction and administration, including selectivity bias, small sample size, and lack of an experimental control group” (*Veterans' Education Programs*, 1983, p. 72).

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potential high costs, limited need (at least as it pertained to recruitment), and possible reduction in the future recruitment pool, as dependent beneficiaries would use their parents' benefits and thus have no cause to join the military for college money. There was no discussion about a potential that these dependents might join the military as a result of their parents' positive experiences, and to garner educational benefits for their own children. The Department of Defense also testified against both transferability and improved educational benefits, citing expense (Need to Contain Costs) and Limited Need, with the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics, Dr. Lawrence Korb stating,

...[G]iven a certain amount of money, the educational benefit doesn't give you the result, for example that a bonus does. But if we had a circumstance in which we were required to get a lot of people and money was not as important a consideration, or a particular type of person that the Congress may prescribe in terms of educational background or scores on our Armed Forces qualification test, then that educational benefit would help us go toward a certain type of individual" (*Veterans' Education Programs*, 1983, pp. 69-70).

Additionally, the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) testified against transferability, differentiating between offering post-service educational funding as a peacetime recruiting tool and educational benefits which are awarded for honorable wartime service – which should be provided at a more enhanced level than anything provided to peacetime service members. The American Legion expressed concern that, “the generosity of provisions contained in S.8 and S.691 leave little room either for

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conversion to a readjustment benefit or enhancement of benefits for future wartime veterans” (*Veterans' Education Programs*, 1983, p. 252). James Magill, Special Assistant, National Legislative Service, Veterans of Foreign Wars, submitted written testimony that,

...[W]e do object to the transfer of educational benefits to the service member’s spouse or children. By doing so, we would grant peacetime, career Armed Forces personnel serving of their own volition, a benefit heretofore not granted conscripted wartime veterans. In addition, by so educating the children of active duty personnel, there would be less incentive for those same dependents to later enter the Armed Forces thus reducing the pool of those willing to serve” (*Veterans' Education Programs*, 1983, pp. 195-196).

Inherently, then, the VFW's later support for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which included transferring benefits to spouses/children, maintained their commitment to ensuring benefits to wartime veterans (as differentiated from peacetime volunteers) (Veterans of Foreign Wars, 2017). A small difference is that the United States never went back to a draft, and so many Post-9/11 GI Bill recipients were “peacetime, career Armed Forces personnel serving of their own volition.” A counter to this assertion (that wartime veterans in 2000 were different than wartime veterans prior to 1980) would note that numerous military personnel during the GWOTs were placed on involuntary stop-loss – where they were not allowed to depart military service, despite their contractual obligations being complete – and of course, the Reserve Component personnel were brought onto active duty involuntarily (at least officially and initially). It might be

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interesting to see where the VFW came out on the newest version of the GI bill (the "Forever" GI Bill), but that exceeds the parameters of this dissertation.

In contrast, the National Association for Uniformed Services submitted a response that noted no difference between peacetime and wartime service – much as there was no history of differentiating between benefits provided to those serving during wartime but solely out of harm's way or in direct combat operations, “[i]t is somewhat difficult to explain to our advisors in El Salvador, or the Marines in Lebanon, or the soldiers along the DMZ the difference in their duty from that of a clerk/typist who never leaves the United States during wartime” (*Veterans' Education Programs*, 1983, p. 244). The Non Commissioned Officer Association enjoined that,

[w]hether voluntary or involuntary, service in the armed forces is a duty of citizenship which requires the interruption of civilian life. Whether peacetime or wartime, the value of military service to the nation is constant. The inherent risks of military service are not significantly reduced in peacetime service,

going further to outline peacetime injury or death during the Myaguez incident, training accidents, and other hostile fire incidences (*Veterans' Education Programs*, 1983, p. 246). However, the Executive Director, Illinois Board of Regents, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, went on record stating, with regard to 1981-82 legislation for House Resolution 1400 (which included transferability after 10 years of active duty), that the “House Veterans Affairs Committee hearings in the field revealed a great deal of enthusiasm in all ranks of the military for this idea...[A]nd is one way to encourage many especially well-qualified people to stay in” (*Veterans' Education*

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Programs, 1983, p. 172). This lies in direct contrast to the military's pilot study results, even as the reporting dates were essentially the same. However, field hearings were no more scientifically conducted than the pilot study – which at least had the veneer of science – and were not a significant factor in the decision-making, likely in part because they were viewed as anecdotal data.

In essence, then, the 1980s was a period when Congress and veteran advocates were trying to understand the salient features that would impact recruitment and retention in an All-Volunteer military. Unfortunately, they were working with limited and rudimentary data, given the limited time the All-Volunteer Force had existed. Additionally, stakeholders were trying to convey the most relevant options within a tight economic environment, which emphasized getting the most reliably effective results with every dollar. With this context in mind, stakeholders used different strategies to advocate their positions.

Narrative Strategies. Two primary narrative strategies are present in the 1980s era artifacts. The first pertains to shaping the scope of the conflict, specifically issue containment. The nodes of Ineffective Program, Need to Contain Costs, and Limited Need all hark to a desire to tighten the educational benefits Congress has provided. Even as transferability is discussed, one can see the two most commonly known veterans organizations – the VFW and American Legion – really protecting the benefits for wartime service members, contesting any expansion for peacetime personnel.

The second narrative strategy reflected is that of causal mechanisms, which can be seen in discussion about the Ineffective Program, Limited Need, and Transfer to Dependents nodes. Primarily, across all three nodes, the GI Bill's failures are not

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attributed to problems with the benefits themselves, but rather attributed to the other, more relevant matters of improved pay and benefits. As part of that argument, then, if pay and benefits are what really brings new recruits to the table, the GI Bill's expenses and minimal relevance are inhibiting Congressional ability to provide enhanced pay and recruitment bonuses.

As part of grappling with educational benefits for veterans in the 1980s, stakeholders were focused on program (in)effectiveness, cost containment, and whether there was an overall need for changes to these benefits. In doing so, these stakeholders shaped the conversation narrowly, using narrative strategies to contain or limit support for educational benefits to a larger veteran population. These containment strategies were reinforced with additional assertions about the efficacy of other options to provide the military flexibility and support targeted recruitment, rather than universal benefits.

1990s

Strategic Context. Although the Reagan Administration had supported significant military modernization efforts during the 1980s, defense budgets had begun to decrease in 1986. The military was not engaged in major combat operations during this period, but instead increasingly used in operations other than war such as peacekeeping and humanitarian support and “little wars,” such as those in Chad, Grenada, Bolivia, Panama, and the Persian Gulf, and during the Clinton Administration, efforts in Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, Liberia, and of course, the Balkans War (Torreon, 2017, pp. 12-13). Although military prestige had increased in the public's eyes after the Gulf War (1991-92), concerns about a hollow force were highlighted, due to decreasing defense budgets which had begun in 1986, as well as increased maintenance backlogs in major equipment

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overhauls, aging weapons systems, and underfunded salaries and benefits, all which compounded impacts of the high operational tempo. These fiscal limitations – in part, a product of the anticipated “peace dividend” releasing funds from military demands to technology and social services after the end of the Cold War – created pay discrepancies even as the overall national economy grew (Markusen, 1997). As discussed above, Goldich (2005) identified seven factors concerning policy makers that resulted in significant Congressional debate on military and veteran matters.¹² This situation was illustrated in a collective statement by 10 senators,

All of the Members of this Committee [agree] we must provide fair compensation to ... our armed services for their outstanding performance and dedicated service to our nation. We are all keenly conscious of the demands that we place on our troops, the circumstances in which they must live and work, and the fact that we often pay them less, and expect them to do far more, than employers in the private sector (Warner, 1999, p. n.p.).

These broad strategic circumstances set the stage for discussions about how to effectively remediate pay problems and ensure overall military effectiveness during a period of increased government solvency.

Debts, Quality, and Readiness. During the 1990s era, after Recruitment and Retention Needs, the next most frequent arguments for veteran educational benefits centered on fulfilling the nation’s Debt to Veterans, ensuring a Quality Military, and enabling military Readiness. Although the need for Quality Military was present in the

¹² These factors included the belief that military service was no longer a relevant career option due to reduced military size impacting career options, benefits, and family separations while operational demands continued to rise, and increased civilian alternatives due to a strong 1990’s economy.

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1980s era, it moved from eighth most frequent to fourth, and Debt to Veterans had skyrocketed from 20th most frequent in the 1980s to third. Military Readiness moved from 23rd most frequent in the 1980s to fifth most frequent in the 1990s. The Need to Contain Costs and concerns about the GI Bill as an Ineffective Program dropped to ninth and eleventh, respectively during the 1990s era, while arguments that there was Limited Need for educational benefits plummeted to 30th from fifth. Indeed, in reference to the 1944 GI Bill, Senator Johnson stated, “[n]o program has been more successful in increasing education opportunities for our country’s veterans while also providing a valuable incentive for the best and brightest to make a career out of military service,” (*Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions*, 2001, p. S405). Further, there was increasing recognition that Education Benefits were a form of Troop Support. This was coded as a sub-node to the Debt to Benefits. Introducing the 1999 Soldiers’, Sailors’, Airmen’s and Marines’ Bill of Rights Act of 1999, statements on the Senate floor included the assertion that,

[i]nformation and data that we are seeing indicate that education benefits are an essential component in attracting young people to enter the armed services. This may be the single most important step this Congress can take in assisting recruitment. Improvements in the Montgomery GI Bill are needed, and our bill represents a vital move in that direction (*Soldiers’, Sailors’, Airmen’s and Marines’ Bill of Rights Act of 1999*, 1999, p. S1868).

It is clear in this quote that there is a new urgency in the discussion surrounding educational benefits – they are ‘essential,’ and this may be Congress’ ‘single most important step,’ through a ‘vital’ bill. The concept of Limited Need, then, is no longer as

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prevalent. An additional node – High OPTEMPO (operational tempo) – moved from 32nd during the 1980s to eighth in the 1990s and would see increasing frequency in the 2000s, as the nation entered the long war against terrorism.

Debt to Veterans was identified as a node both when the artifact directly stated as such, as well as when references were made to fulfilling promises or expressing concern about “keeping the faith” with military personnel. This node clearly is seen with Senator Cleland’s comment,

I strongly agree that this bill represents an excellent step toward providing the men and women of the military a clear signal that we the people of the United States and we the members of the Congress of the United States value their contributions, understand their needs and concerns, and understand our obligations to provide for those who have answered the calling to defend our nation (*Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's and Marines' Bill of Rights Act of 1999*, 1999, pp. S1866-1867).

Senator Mikulski furthered this sentiment, stating, “[t]his legislation fulfills the promises made to the men and women of our armed forces. Our men and women in uniform stand for everything that is good about our country – patriotism, courage, loyalty, duty, and honor. They deserve our full support – not just with words but with actions (*Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's and Marines' Bill of Rights Act of 1999*, 1999, p. S1884). The Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance – also known as the Principi Commission for its chairman’s last name – articulated that, “[f]ailure to enact the programs necessary to achieve successful transition would do more than break faith with the men and women who defend our Nation’s freedom. By creating

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disincentives to military service, such a failure would place the freedom of all Americans at risk” (Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, 1999, p. 10). Closely related to the Debt to Veterans node was recognition that Education Benefits were a form of Troop Support.

The node, Quality Military, was most frequently articulated in direct statements about the need for or presence of a quality military force. For example, Senator Leahy stated that, despite his concerns about cost and the lack of identified offsets, “I will vote for [this bill] because the effectiveness of our military depends on the quality of its personnel. This bill will improve the quality of our military, but with little regard for fiscal concerns” (*Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's and Marines' Bill of Rights Act of 1999*, 1999, p. S1884). The Principi Commission (1999) underscored that, “[w]ithout a military draft, the security of the United States will depend upon the ability of our Armed Forces to recruit large numbers of highly qualified volunteers to operate the increasingly complex technology and conduct the rigorous operations required for national defense in the century to come (p. 1). Its members continued, by underscoring that,

[a]t a time when our Nation is at risk because the Services are increasingly not meeting their recruiting and retention requirements, an enhanced and properly structured education benefit would be a powerful incentive for high-quality college-bound high school graduates to consider military service as a path to higher education. This recommendation would increase the quality as well as the number of men and women attracted to military service (Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, 1999, p. 4).

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A sub-node from Quality Military is Readiness – a somewhat ephemeral topic, frequently referenced by military leaders – even in the past few years as multiple Continuing Resolutions forced the services to operate on previous years’ budgets and not enter into any new purchases. Readiness can pertain to whether specific equipment is modern enough to counter anticipated enemy capabilities in battle, or the state of repair for key facilities, such as ports and runways. Readiness also can be about personnel number, quality, and seniority. In the 1990s era, the Principi Commission noted that, “[f]ive of the Army’s 10 combat division lack enough majors, captains, noncommissioned officers, tankers, and gunners.... Such problems have ‘degraded [the] capability and readiness’ of these contingents, which must reinforce troops fighting a first major regional war (p.22). But as Senator DeWine elegantly stated,

readiness isn't just about hardware and property. It's about manpower and morale. The men and women who make up our armed forces represent the best fighting force ever assembled in human history. But shortfalls in personnel recruitment and retention have made it increasingly difficult to ensure full manning of deployed units. Reversing these negative trends in military pay, retirement benefits, and recruitment must be a top priority in the 106th Congress (*Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's and Marines' Bill of Rights Act of 1999*, 1999, p. S1888).

Senator DeWine’s comment further highlights the increasing urgency Congressional members were seeing with regard to the military overall. They are beginning to articulate the problem in a broader manner than in the previous era. Now, the question is not about just having the right number of people join and stay in the military, but how to have these

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numbers actually produce military capability that can be projected to foreign lands. That question now is seen as a composite issue, where one must have the cart, the horse, the driver, and the goods to make an effective delivery, rather than just focusing in one area.

The High OPTEMPO node is clearly articulated in this statement, “although military forces have been reduced by one-third since the collapse of the Berlin Wall, deployments have actually tripled. The economy is booming and military recruiters compete with civilian employers in a very tight job market” (Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, 1999, p. 19). Senator Craig’s note that, “[n]ot only are U.S. soldiers forced to work longer and harder than ever before, they are also sent on deployment for longer period of time than before” (*Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's and Marines' Bill of Rights Act of 1999*, 1999, p. S1885). These statements highlight not only the increasing frequency and length of military deployments, but also the changing nature of military deployments. In essence, not only is military service performed by a very small portion of the U.S. population, but it is hard and getting harder, and Congress should improve the situation overall, since there are plenty of good civilian options if service members do not want to stay. This node often was linked with the concepts of Readiness and Quality Military. One also can see the disregard for containing costs in Senator Lott’s comment,

... at a time when we are asking more ... of our military ... with ... less to do the job, it would be folly--in fact, it would be insanity--for us not to do this bill and do it now....[T]here is one thing that takes even a higher priority ... than budgets, and that is the defense of our country. If we don't have good military men and women, good equipment, if they can't train properly,

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they are not going to be able to fulfill these missions ... around the world-- the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and ... we may be faced with difficult situations involving Iran and North Korea, Kosovo (*Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's and Marines' Bill of Rights Act of 1999*, 1999, p. S1864).

Here, then, there is a complete and explicit disregard for budgetary limitations – national defense is more important than the budget – and a correlation that to have an effective defense, the nation must also have capable, well-trained and equipped personnel in sufficient numbers. So again, this illustrates a move away from the 1980s concerns about cost containment and need is now being discussed not in the form of whether or not it produces sufficient recruits for the money spent, but rather that all options are on the table to meet a critical need.

Although both the Principi Commission and testimony supporting the 1999 Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's, and Marines' Bill of Rights recommended full tuition payment and transferability, these concepts were only 15th and 17th in nodal frequency during the 1990s era (Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, 1999; *Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's and Marines' Bill of Rights Act of 1999*, 1999). References to Increased Education Costs, however, were more frequent, coming in 12th most often. It is possible that specific references to full tuition payments or transferability were unstated but linked to discussion about Increased Education Cost. The consistent emphasis was on the power of such opportunities to enhance retention. Most interestingly, the concern that transferability would provide benefit to non-serving personnel was absent, replaced by the idea that transferability “sends a strong signal that their [family members] support and sacrifices are appreciated” (Warner, 1999, p. n.p.).

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Furthermore, the idea that “service members reluctantly leave the service to take advantage of more lucrative opportunities so they can afford a college education for their family members,” was advanced, with transferability, then, giving them “a vehicle to finance a college education for family members while remaining in the service ...[and] will prove to be a powerful retention incentive” (Warner, 1999, p. n.p.). This is a definite evolution in causal thinking. Previously, transferability was irrelevant in the face of luxurious retirement benefits. Now, a reduction in retirement benefits (REDUX) has occurred, educational costs continue to exceed the Consumer Price Index, and the previous concern that the GI Bill would be a reason for service members to leave comes to fruition – if only so they can get a better job than what the military provides, and primarily so they can pay for family college expenses. Additional social factors, like the increasingly older, better educated, married, and longer service period among enlisted personnel likely contributed to the increased interest in achieving or funding college for military personnel and their families (*Population Representation in the Military Services Fiscal Year 1998*, 1999).

Narrative Strategies. Two primary narrative strategies are in play during the 1990s era, as well. In this period, Congress is feeling the strain of maintaining an All-Volunteer Force during good economic times. Not surprisingly, then, advocates engage in issue expansion. Now, instead of recruitment and readiness needs being met by pay and benefits, not only is this compensation package insufficient, but recruitment and readiness is a product of the nation’s ability to meet its side of the deal. Only if Congress (as the nation’s agent) provides a sufficient overall benefits package (both during and

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after military service) will Americans decide that the difficulties of High OPTEMPO and overall military life are worth enlisting and making the military a career.

The second narrative strategy again is the use of causal mechanisms. This is visible in the paragraph above and also across the nodes related to Debt to Veterans, Quality Military, and Education as Troop Support. Of note, Congress really is advocating against its former self – the Congresses of the previous years who established ineffective systems, increased civilian pay without commensurate increases in military pay, and failed to ensure sufficient funds were available for recruiting, training, and retaining personnel for increasingly technical and hazardous duties. Because it is fighting its previous self, Congress is both to blame and also responsible for setting the situation right.

As the 1990s came to a close, marked by increased fiscal security, stakeholder discussions revolved around the type of debt they owed those few citizens willing to voluntarily serve in the military, how best to ensure a quality force given competition from the private sector, and how to achieve and maintain military readiness in both personnel and equipment. Stakeholders have turned away from arguments about the minimum support necessary to achieve the right manning levels and artifacts demonstrate narrative strategies that expand the issue – identifying a broader understanding of interrelated factors – and working to lay all options that will draw personnel into the service and support their desire to stay out for consideration.

2000s

Strategic Context.

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Global Wars on Terror. To understand the Post-9/11 GI Bill's significance, one must have a solid grasp of the circumstances preceding and surrounding its development. As such, one must understand the Global Wars on Terror, as well as the social and fiscal environment in which they took place and the results they influenced in these same areas.

The phrase "War on Terror" first found usage in then-President George W. Bush's September 20, 2001 speech to Congress where he set out the relationship of the Al-Qaeda organization – including its leader, Osama Bin Laden – with the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, previous attacks on the building in 1993, bombings at the US Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998, and the attack on the USS Cole near Yemen in 2000 (Bush, 2008). During this speech, President Bush outlined his expectation that this war would be long in duration, broad in enemies – not tied only to Al-Qaeda but extending to all terrorist groups with global reach – and encompassing all portions of national might: diplomatic, information, military, and economic. Among other topics, President Bush highlighted the importance of American prosperity, asking for citizens' "...continued participation and confidence in the American economy" (Bush, 2008, p. 71). On that day, the President thanked Congress for passing a \$40 billion bill in support of military and reconstruction costs associated with the 9/11 attacks. Just three months later at The Citadel, he touted the significant benefits of high-technology weapons which were facilitating OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM against Al-Qaeda and Taliban operations in Afghanistan. As part of this, he emphasized the need to transform the military from its existing post-Cold War structure to structure that was lighter, more mobile, and more lethal. Additionally, he announced initiatives countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, increasing the

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nation's missile defense capacity, and growing the overall intelligence system, especially in human intelligence networks.

By the State of the Union address in January 2002, the Taliban had been toppled in Afghanistan, suspected terrorists had been imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, financial assets had been frozen around the world, a new cabinet-level organization – the Department of Homeland Security – had stood up, and the US had military personnel not only in Afghanistan, but also the Philippines, Bosnia, and off the coast of Somalia, to collaborate with partners to blot out identified terrorist groups (Bush, 2008). During this speech, President Bush coined the phrase “axis of evil,” in reference to North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, and highlighted these nations' efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction and their potential to arm terrorists – the impetus to recommend “the largest increase in defense spending in two decades” -- and underscored again the need to provide funds into American pocketbooks so they could spend money (Bush, 2008, pp. 107-110). Some months later, on the 9/11 attack anniversary in 2002, President Bush called on the United Nations (UN) to require Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, to honor security commitments or be held accountable. His 2003 State of the Union address focused heavily on the economy, stressing tax reductions and tax law revisions, and highlighted the UN Security Council's call for Saddam Hussain to disarm and allow inspectors to verify these actions.

Post-9/11 GI Bill Timeline and Proponency. Senator James Webb and Representative Mitchell sponsored S.22/H.R. 5740, which provided 100% of educational benefits after the recipient served three years. In early May 2008, the President announced proposed legislation that would implement GI Bill transferability to dependent children and spouses (Daggett, Epstein, Margesson, Tarnoff, Towell, Dale & Loane,

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2008). The Defense Department – specifically the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Robert Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Admiral Michael Mullen – opposed expansion of educational benefits, arguing that the full educational benefits being offered would reduce personnel retention because it required no additional service (Daggett et al., 2008). Shortly thereafter, Senator Graham sponsored an amendment to separate legislation that offered an alternative expansion plan, in that personnel with 12 or more years’ service would receive larger benefits. It also incorporated the presidential recommendation for transferability.

Opening the Policy Window. By 2006, the Army had identified an impending shortage of mid-grade officers (senior captains and majors) among its ranks, projecting a shortage of 3000 or more officers for FY2007 through FY2013 (Henning, 2006). This shortage was the result of two main factors: reduced officer accessions after the Gulf War drawdown and increased officer requirements brought about by changes to Army structure which allowed smaller, brigade-level elements to deploy as a core combat force. At that time, deployment tempo and general attrition were examined but not identified as primary factors in the overall shortage (Henning, 2006). The Army undertook various efforts to mitigate this shortage, such as bringing Reserve Component officers onto Active duty (although this impacted the Reserve Components which also were being mobilized and deployed in critical support fields, transitioning the shortage from one component to another), higher promotion rates, faster promotion timelines, increased initial accessions, and increased enrollment at the US Military Academy (West Point), in Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), and at Officer Candidate School (OCS). Other efforts included increasing mandatory service time for West Point and ROTC graduates

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by providing service members with their preferred branch or locale, or with guaranteed graduate school opportunities. Further options included Critical Skills Retention Bonuses, which entailed annual funds provided for service members agreeing to additional service time; student loan repayment; Continuation Pay, which entailed additional salary for increased obligatory service time; and providing targeted contribution matches to service members' military 401(k) plans. The Congressional Research Service identified three options that did not involve immediate fiscal support: continuing personnel growth policies noted above, increasing West Point and/or ROTC enrollment, and expanding Montgomery GI Bill benefits to West Point and ROTC scholarship recipients and implementing transferability of all or part of the GI Bill benefit to dependent spouse or children (Henning, 2006).

Prior to the Post-9/11 GI Bill's passage, the Department of Defense had not advocated for transferability, usually recommending increased funding for targeted bonuses, which offered the most flexibility for services to recruit and retain at very discrete portions of their population – down to specific occupational specialties and at specific ranks or years of service. When initially the Department of Defense, President Bush, and even veteran (and usual advocate) Senator John McCain rejected the transferability and full-tuition payment provisions, they did so with old arguments: concerns about cost and the potential impact on retention (Clark, 2008). Senator McCain drafted a lower-cost bill that provided transferability for re-enlistment or longer-term service, as an alternative that was incorporated into the final bill, and

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates [eventually] advocated expanding education benefits as a way to recognize troops' service while supporting

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both recruiting and retention. Gates first heard the transferability concept floated during a meeting with a military spouses' group at Fort Hood, Texas, and pitched the idea to the then-President George W. Bush. Bush promoted the idea and ultimately signed the Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2008 into law on June 30" (Miles, 2009b; "White House pushes GI Bill compromise on Iraq bill," 2008).

This turn-around, through negotiation and grassroots support, came at a time when the costs were still high and the threat that people might leave to use their benefits remained. As noted above, transferability was not an immediate cost, but nothing had changed across time to indicate that the costs would not be substantial when they went into effect. So what made this long-term commitment suddenly palatable?

Quality, OPTEMPO, and the Economy. During the 2000s era, the top five artifact nodes were Quality Military, High OPTEMPO, Economic Downturn, Adult Influencers, and Debt to Veterans. As one can see, this represents a drop in the Debt to Veterans and an increased relative frequency for Quality Military and High OPTEMPO. The 2000s era also re-introduced Economic Downturn, which had dropped from significant representation during the 1990s and introduced an entirely new node of Adult Influencers.

Not surprisingly, as this era incorporated the ever-lengthening Global Wars on Terror, the concept of a Quality Military was frequently cited in public discussion. Much as Americans plastered yellow ribbons on their cars and thanked every person associated with the military for their service, artifacts abound with praise and affirmation for the military's quality, service, and sacrifices. Very simply, "[p]rosecuting the global war on

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terrorism requires top quality, highly skilled men and women whose compensation package must be competitive enough to recruit and retain them in voluntary service” (*Hearings for Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2007*, 2006, p. 9). Specifically, the Honorable David Chu, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness articulated,

Some ask if the force is broken. It is not. Our military and civilian forces comprise high quality, motivated individuals who are choosing to continue to serve. Almost two thirds of the Active military tell us they intend to stay on Active-Duty and a similar fraction expresses satisfaction with the overall military way of life. Survey results likewise show a strong, resilient Reserve Force—over 70 percent are satisfied overall with the military way of life (*Hearings for Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2007*, 2006, p. 5).

With this being as well the first combat operations of extended duration since Vietnam, discussion also surrounded the military’s ability to retain their quality given the high operational rotations across two major operational areas.¹³ Some of that concern – especially in the Army and Army Reserve – came from real and perceived lower standards necessary to meet recruitment goals. In FY2006, the military’s long-term standard of having 90 percent or more enlistees holding a high school diploma was not met, as “the Army and Army Reserve achieved 81 and 89 percent, respectively,” although the other aptitude levels were achieved, according to Major General Bostick, of

¹³ Readers will recall that the 1990-91 Gulf War (OPERATION DESERT STORM) is remembered as the 100-day war. During the GWOTs, major combat operations occurred in Afghanistan (OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM) and Iraq (OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM), as well as other locations worldwide where terrorism was budding, such as the Philippines and Africa.

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the U.S. Army Recruiting Command (*Active Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve Recruiting and Retention Programs*, 2007, p. 8).

With already six years of military deployments and four years of significant Reserve call ups to support combat operations, it is unsurprising that High OPTEMPO would be a frequently discussed topic in 2007. What was particularly interesting is that the Department of Defense actually was reducing personnel strengths in the Air Force and Navy, even as these individuals were being used as “in lieu of” options for scarce Army and Marine Corps ground forces. Undersecretary Chu testified that,

[m]aintaining a strong defense ... remains an imperative for our Nation....[T]he DOD continues ... reducing the stress on the force as operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the global war on terrorism continue....By focusing our efforts on ... structuring and managing our forces, and employing advanced technology, we strongly believe there is no requirement for permanent increases in our end strength....[and] planned reductions ... in the active Air Force and Navy manpower programs, and the Navy Reserve ... balance risk with fiscally responsible manpower program decisions (*Hearings for Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2007*, 2006, pp. 5-6).

Additionally, in FY2006, all Services met or exceeded their Active Duty recruiting goals.

In a similar manner, Reserve Component personnel were seeing routine use – without which, the Active Duty OPTEMPO would have been even higher. Nowhere did transferability arise in the conversation surrounding the National Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2007 (NDAA FY07). Testimony during this hearing

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by the National Military Family Association (NMFA) advocated increased assistance across the States to facilitate spousal employment, such as professional license reciprocity and in-state tuition (*Hearings for Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2007*, 2006). However, just a little more than one year later, Congress determines that GI Bill transferability and full tuition payment are necessary and appropriate.

Economic Downturn was found frequently during the 1980s era due to concerns with the poor state of the economy and fear that satisfactory recruitment and retention numbers were attributable to limited alternatives. Economic Downturn was present also to stoke concern that benefits offered during a current (better) period might not be sustainable, should the economy do poorly, as exemplified by Senator Feingold's early-era statement, "The Government will not have these Social Security surpluses to use forever.... That's why we cannot continue to enact either tax cuts or spending measures that push the government further into deficit" (*Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions*, 2002, p. S3956). As the length and cost of war continued, Senator Larry Craig noted,

I believe this record budget requested is extraordinary and shows that in this fiscally austere climate, the President has chosen to make veterans once again a top budget priority. That said, I am concerned that at present spending rates, VA budgets will double nearly every 6 years and will soon collide with the spending demands in all other areas of Government, and I can see how the mainstream media and others are now treating this proposed

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budget, it may be okay for 2007, but it is surely going to mean cuts in 2008”
(*VFW Legislative Presentation 2006*, 2006, p. 2).

Additionally, I used the Economic Downturn node for moments when the artifacts included concern about the positive economy that was somehow impinging on desired outcomes. For instance, Lieutenant General Michael Rochelle, U.S. Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, stated,

Today, with unemployment at an all-time low, communicating the value of America’s Army as a place of dependable employment and noble service is no longer an effective communication. Additionally, given the dynamic of the private sector employment options and the likelihood of military deployment, many parents, teachers and coaches—commonly referred to as influencers—are discouraging even highly motivated prospects (*Active Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve Recruiting and Retention Programs*, 2007, p. 5).

In both cases – whether the economic circumstances were poor or headed that way, or good and getting better – stakeholders identified the economy as a continuous factor that had to be mitigated to ensure sufficient quality personnel were joining and staying in the military.

Adult Influencers were identified superficially during the 1980s era but became prominent during the 2000s era. In this era, the significance of Adult Influencers, “the older Americans, the adults, parents, counselors, teachers, et cetera, who have such an important effect on young people’s decisions. We need more help from them in celebrating the positive choice of young Americans to consider military service” became especially relevant for enabling effective recruitment (*Hearings for Department of*

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Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2007, 2006, p. 4). The FY 07 NDAA included a long list of requirements and services that had been included to address issues that naturally come from extended wartime requirements: pilot programs for identifying and treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), funds for medical and dental examinations for Reserve Component personnel, services for wounded military personnel and their families, etc. (*Hearings for Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2007*, 2006). While these are not specifically matters of retention or recruitment, from a service member standpoint, they are all about whether, when I risk my life – my employer will take care of me and my family. In a related manner, these external actions also demonstrate to non-military personnel the same sentiment. Indeed, Major General Bostick indicated as much when he testified that, “[t]his is an important area for us to spend time on. The educators, the influencers, the coaches, and parents must know the opportunities that we can provide. So explaining what the Army is all about and the advantages of service is very important” (*Active Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve Recruiting and Retention Programs*, 2007, p. 22).

Transferability and Full Tuition Payment were not significantly present for either the 1990s or 2000s era, sitting at 17 and 15 in the 1990s, respectively, and 15 and 18 in the 2000s. The VFW in 2006 presented its legislative priorities with an emphasis on full-tuition payment, which they referred to as, “a return to a WWII-like GI Bill Which would pay for the full costs of attendance, to include tuition, books, fees, and living expenses, to any school at which a veteran is admitted (*VFW Legislative Presentation 2006*, 2006, p. 15). The Military Coalition, an advocacy group comprised of multiple

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military interest groups, testified in support of both transferability and family member eligibility for in-state tuition rates when present due to a service member's relocation. Additionally, they supported the idea that the GI Bill benefits level should be "indexed to the cost of a 4-year education at a public institution..." (*Hearings for Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2007*, 2006, p. 148). Another advocacy group, the Air Force Sergeants' Association seconded transferability as a retention incentive during the same hearings. Discussion may have been reduced in the 2000s due to the authorization services had received in the Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's and Marines' Bill of Rights Act of 1999 to pilot transferability. The Director of the Army National Guard, Lieutenant General Clyde Vaughn noted in 2007 that the National Guard was developing a "Active First" recruiting program,

where we would recruit active soldiers into the guard first, and then go on active duty for a small period of time. The big deal about that is you get the bonus up front, but you get the full Montgomery GI bill. And you know what? I mean, the TAGs are just overjoyed with this thing because now they come back, and as you well know, it is transferable to the spouses potentially a little further down. If you put that with the state pieces of this, this amounts to something for the entire family (*Active Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve Recruiting and Retention Programs*, 2007, p. 35).

The Ninth Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, begun in 1999 with their final report published in March 2002, had noted that,

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[i]f the military is to be competitive ... for high-quality personnel, it must offer meaningful educational benefits.... Congress also granted authority to the Services to permit members to transfer some or all of the benefit to a spouse or child. The QRMC questions the cost-effectiveness of transferability but supports a pilot program to determine its efficacy (Warner, 1999, p. xxxiii).

It may be that, with this tacit concurrence, the earlier Principi Commission's endorsement, military interest group input, and routine testimony about the increasing costs of higher education, no further discussion was considered necessary.

The early 2000s presented stakeholders with concerns about providing for a quality military that could function within a high operational tempo and doing so in a fluid economic market. While the era started with a tax surplus and low unemployment rates, it quickly evolved into a much more expensive era, supporting combat operations against terrorism around the world. Not surprising then, that stakeholder testimony is conflicted, asking for much more but also struggling to contain ever-rising costs. The narrative strategies illustrate this struggle.

Narrative Strategies. In the 2000s era, artifacts demonstrated both issue containment and causal mechanisms again. From an issue containment standpoint, one gets the feeling that discussion surrounding Quality Military, High OPTEMPO – especially given executive testimony from the Department of Defense, and concerns about Economic Downturn really centers on a need to hold the line, everything is okay. The U.S. has a good quality military, it generally is able to recruit or retain the necessary

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personnel without significant gaps and is doing so in a fairly fluid economy during this period.

The causal mechanisms are seen in discussion about Economic Downturn and Adult Influencers. In this period, these two forces are symbiotic, both causing problems with recruitment and retention. The economy is generally good and there are lots of job opportunities, so adult influencers are not supporting military service. The adult influencers lacked understanding about military career options and so valued and promoted non-military career options, especially as the obvious outcomes of war – death or disability – were visible in daily life.

As the mid-2000s closed toward the Post-9/11 GI Bill's passage, stakeholders were concerned about sustaining the quality military the nation had developed after the 1990s investments. But a need to balance costs in the face of increasing military operations – and associated care for Reserve Component personnel not normally on full-time status, as well as associated costs related to treating and transitioning wounded personnel back to civilian life – was ever-present in the background. As a result, narrative strategies to contain military outlays are at odds with the need to reiterate the benefits of military service in such a way that individuals and adult influencers will recommend the military as a career choice – even during wartime.

Summary Findings

Across the three eras examined, it is clear that stakeholders evolved their understanding and arguments for increased veterans' educational benefits. What began as a matter of getting as much flexibility and benefit for the government with as little money as possible in the 1980s moved to a more holistic understanding of the need to

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invest in service members, their training, and equipment, to ensure they were present and capable of doing the next task presented, in whatever location or form in the 1990s.

Although the economy was good in the early 2000s, the ever-increasing wartime costs were met with trepidation as stakeholders sought to convince potential recruits, adult influencers, and existing military personnel to join the service and stay, creating a mixed strategic narrative, where Congress was at once spending large sums on high-end medical and morale supporting activities while simultaneously seeking (albeit unsuccessfully) to pinch pennies. The intellectual nuances present in each era become increasingly noticeable as time passes, both in terms of what is present in the artifacts for discussion and thus, what the stakeholders themselves realize and bring forth for discussion and debate.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Thinking back to Chapter 2 and the Narrative Policy Framework Meso-level Hypotheses present in Figure 3, this study clearly contributes to the body of NPF knowledge, especially as it pertains to the first hypothesis (H₁) – that groups portraying themselves as being on the losing end of a policy will try to expand the policy issue and increase the size of their coalition, second hypothesis (H₂) – that groups portraying themselves on the winning side of a policy will try to contain the policy and maintain a status quo among the coalition, and sixth hypothesis (H₆) – policy narrative persuasion, that variations in the policy narratives represent policy learning, change and outcomes – hypotheses (McBeth et al., 2014). It also reinforces Stone’s work on Narrative Strategies, as the artifacts demonstrated casual connections in the various testimony expanding or constraining veteran educational benefits.

When considering the NPF contribution, it is important to note that, although my study focused on the level of support for veterans’ educational benefits transferability and full tuition payment, the policy issue Congressional stakeholders were grappling with was that of meeting recruiting and retention needs. In this light, then, when the requirements for meeting recruiting and retention needs were largely untested and unknown in the 1980s era, the OPTEMPO was low, and the economy was poor, status quo was a supportable “winning” course of action. Regarding H₁ and H₂, then, Congressional stakeholders in the 1980s did not have reason to broaden the policy issue to increase the size of their coalition – the primary concern was just meeting the minimum requirements to make the All-Volunteer Force work and to not overtax an already poor economy. In the 1990s, though the economy was good, OPTEMPO was high, readiness was suffering,

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and there was increasing concern about the military's ability to meet current requirements with the existing benefits portfolio. As a result of this "losing" scenario, Congressional stakeholders had to broaden the policy issue to garner increased support for initial and continued military service, for example, drawing in families with additional support and benefits. Ultimately, legislation strengthened areas unrelated to veteran educational benefits, but which were designed to garner support for military service from family members, such as improved quality of life actions, more easily accessed medical care, and personal retirement savings accounts. In the 2000s, the nation was at war, so OPTEMPO was might higher than ever previously undertaken with an All-Volunteer Force, creating worry about the ability to sustain necessary recruitment and retention requirements and fulfill readiness for the war at hand, as well as any other conflict that might arise. Confidence in the economy, while good in the early part of the period, was increasingly shaken as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq dragged on, costing around \$1.8 billion per week without much end in sight (Schoen, 2006). As a result, Congress was only partially "winning" the policy battle for sustained recruitment and retention requirements. What we see, then, is an effort to expand the policy issue to increase citizen support for their desired end state (joining and remaining in military service) while putting off the fiscal outlay for a future point. An ideal way to do that is to offer educational benefit transferability to individuals who commit to serving beyond a particular point (10 years of service) or agree to serve additional time (six years of service with an agreement to serve an additional four) which can be paid out for 15 years for a dependent spouse or until the dependent child is 26 years old. This garners immediate benefit to the military in the form of a recruiting and retention incentive

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without immediate costs, as those serving at the time the statute was passed had to agree to additional service. Thus, the Post-9/11 GI Bill met the mixed circumstances Congressional stakeholder faced with a balanced solution – and one which could be later adjusted, if warranted.

Regarding Stone's work on narrative strategies, the artifacts demonstrated causal influences were reorganized or reprioritized across time. Program Ineffectiveness, Cost Containment, and Limited Need were wiped from the conversation and replaced by Debt to Veterans, High OPTEMPO, and Quality Military, at varying frequencies. Whether contributors made these alterations deliberately, in light of environmental realities (e.g., of foreign policy, limited availability of qualified personnel, or public sentiment), or simply by happenstance, however, remains to be determined. These changes (deliberate or otherwise) suggest support for McBeth et al's (2014) H₆, though, which I did not initially intend to examine. Certainly, the different policy narrative elements used across the three eras help "explain policy learning, policy change, and policy outcomes" (McBeth et al., 2014, p. 245). Some of the narrative elements were diminished or eliminated completely from the discussion, such as the impact of Other Student Aid or Cost Inefficiency, while others like High OPTEMPO grew in stature, and still further ebbed within the debate, such as the significance of Adult Influencers. This reasonably suggests that some arguments were more or less compelling under different circumstances, and that, to achieve their preferred ends, stakeholders learned from previous experiences (theirs or others) and altered the nature of the debate.

Despite this dissertation's contribution to the body of knowledge, there were a number of places where I expected to see relevant data but did not. My earliest chapter

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indicated I would examine whether Congressional advocates adjusted their narratives to harness exogenous and endogenous public opinion to garner necessary support for post-9/11 GI Bill passage, with endogenous opinion focused on veteran support specifically, while exogenous opinion would be tailored toward more traditionally liberal values/beliefs, such as enhancing educational opportunity. This research supports a Congressional focus almost entirely on endogenous opinion, specifically for veteran support, without much discussion at all tied to broader, but related topics. At a very basic level, a number of factors I had anticipated were not significantly present. There were limited references to the dual-income status of military families or the increasingly high rate of enlisted personnel completing college courses during their military service, especially in the 2000s era. These are factors that I personally remember hearing, and I anticipated they would have been incorporated at a higher rate during Congressional debate. There were tangential references to both, such as advocacy for in-state tuition rates for military dependents and acknowledgement that military personnel pursued higher education through other-than-GI Bill options while serving. But these were minimally frequent and did not clearly highlight the limitations these in-service programs presented to military personnel.

Another item that especially surprised me were the limited references to Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) and the absence of the Higher Education lobby from this debate. Certainly, I had anticipated education advocates would beat the drum for improved veteran education benefits, over time, if only because it would free up funds for a larger number of students. Later, as the Higher Education Act was being reauthorized for passage as the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, I expected that IHE

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representatives would have contributed more overtly to the discussion about the relevance of veterans in the classroom, of separate funding streams to support this growing population (perhaps so as to not impact funding resources that other student populations were limited to using). Alternately, if the IHEs were not testifying in support of veterans' educational benefits in military/veteran committees, they would at least make these arguments in front of Congressional education committees. While not an exhaustive search, I found only token mention of military students in educational hearings, and no representatives present from the Educational Lobby testifying in hearings specific to the Armed Forces. Comments in the Armed Forces hearings noted higher education's increasing costs, generally in the upper top 10 of nodes for each era, but more as an undercurrent of reality, vice a primary concern. There was even a blip of support for transferability during the 1990s era where the Senate Report for the 1999 Bill of Rights Act argued that transferability was justified as a retention incentive precisely because service members "reluctantly leave the service to take advantage of more lucrative opportunities so they can afford a college education for their family members" (*Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's and Marines' Bill of Rights Act of 1999*, 1999).

Considering these factors, it may have been that the Higher Education lobby wanted to focus limited time for testimony in front of their respective committees, not being invited to address military or Veterans Affairs hearings – which, admittedly, often covered a variety of topics rather than being narrowly focused on just educational matters alone – or they may have felt the military lobby had sufficient power without their input, especially as funds were limited and all interest groups sought to achieve their constituents' best positions. Perhaps, however, this absence just reflects Kingdon's

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(2011) research that advocacy groups put more effort into blocking actions harmful to their goals than supporting beneficial efforts.

Additionally, I had set out to contribute toward hypothesis three (H₃) – that “groups heresthetically employ policy narratives to manipulate the composition of political coalitions for strategic benefit,” but was unable to achieve this (McBeth et al., 2014, p. 245). It is clear that Congressional conversation surrounding veteran educational benefits evolved over time and garnered additional supporters for including transferability and full-tuition payment in those benefits, however, there is insufficient data to ascribe a deliberate manipulation of language to acquire these additional supporters.

It is worth considering, here, whether this conversational evolution was a constraint of circumstances or imagination. More specifically, is the more impassioned language of the 1990s present because 1990s advocates were more aware or attuned to relevant recruiting needs, or, had the 1990s and 2000s advocates made their same arguments in the 1980s, would policy change have happened sooner? I believe it is a matter of both circumstances and imagination. Regarding circumstances, realities present in the 2000s simply were not in place in the 1980s: military personnel were not overwhelmingly married, already holding high school diplomas and potentially even graduate degrees upon enlistment. Expectations for college attendance in the 1970s and 80s were not the same as in the 2000s, when entry-level secretarial staff are expected to have bachelor’s degrees, not just excellent dictation and typing skills.

From this circumstantial perspective, then, the arguments to be made for transferability and full-tuition payment simply were less compelling in the 1980s – the

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nodal frequency of “Limited Need” well represents this reality. Policy change is incremental. Much like teens do not ask their parents to drive three hours to a concert with friends for the first time borrowing the car, big, creative conversations addressing the ideal end state cannot be held before addressing smaller, more easily plucked fruit. This is what we see in the evolving conversation regarding transferability and full-tuition payment. It likely was just as probable that children receiving transferred benefits in the 1970s could have seen those benefits as a reason to join the military as those in the 2000s with the right messaging, but intellectually, advocates were not ready to make that argument. They were constrained by their own creative limits and focus on addressing the bare minimum of building and sustaining the All-Volunteer Force. Should 2000s-era advocates have returned with such an argument to the 1980s, they would have found it quite difficult to garner like-minded supporters. Each new person would have to be convinced into the argument’s rightness, rather than having minds already open for potential options. And this is really what Kingdon (1984) argues – that problems, solutions, and policy entrepreneurs exist – potentially even simultaneously, but it must be at the right moment before crossing the streams can lead to an effective and meaningful result.

Reconsidering my original research design, I believe that it, too, would be insufficient to have supported H₃. To have supported H₃, I would have needed a similarly extensive examination of Congressional influencers via interview. A combined version as I had originally planned would not be sufficient. However, this requirement establishes a potential way-ahead to further develop the investigation. Additionally, a close study of other resources and influences is necessary, such as examining the political

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maneuverings between Democrats and Republicans across budget decisions throughout the 2000s era, as well as the potential influence of the 2008 Presidential campaign, occurring across the same time period that the Post-9/11 GI Bill was introduced and passed into law. Further, my original design anticipated delving deeply into the changing nature of specific pro-veteran advocacy groups to see if these particular stakeholders internally discussed adjusting their narrative strategies to garner additional support for desired outcomes in Congress. However, my naïveté regarding how available materials would be outweighed the available time. Each major pro-veteran advocacy group decidedly could be its own monograph or dissertation, requiring access to paper documents or archived digital files. As a result, I developed an exploratory dissertation that opens the door for currently serving military personnel to better understand the evolving discussions surrounding relevant policy matters and sets the foundation for future potential research.

This dissertation is entitled, “Harnessing Policy Windows: Using Lessons from the Post-9/11 GI Bill Passage to Garner Support for US Military Requirements.” With that in mind, what lessons should stakeholders draw from this case study? How can advocates use these lessons to garner Congressional Support for US military requirements? First, this dissertation demonstrates the importance of paying attention to the language Congressional stakeholders are using when discussing pertinent policy matters. By considering the core question that Congress is trying to address (in this case, recruitment and retention needs) and significant levers weighing on that questions, military advocates can tailor their engagements with Congressional staff and leadership more effectively tailor to reinforce or even shape the language of debate. Second, it is

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critical to take a long look at policy transformation. As we see in this dissertation, just as Kingdon (2011) identified, there were policy problems (recruitment and retention) and policy solutions (of which transferability and full tuition payment were only two) in place for over 20 years before the appropriate policy entrepreneurs were able to harness relevant circumstances into policy change. This essentially means that military advocates must identify a strategy and address it like a campaign plan, connecting a series of engagements both near and far term toward their desired goal. This particularly is true when one considers the limited amount of time advocates have interacting with decision-makers. Being invited to testify before Congress can be a regular event for Executive personnel, but third-party elements must use all opportunities available, and be prepared for short notice or happenstance opportunities to press their viewpoint. Thus, it is more critical that a communications strategy is laid down and rigorously adhered to and evaluated for necessary alteration.

Using the Army's Design methodology would be an effective way to understand these parameters and keep up with necessary adjustments through reframing. Readers will recall that the Army's Design methodology requires thoroughly understanding and the environment and the problem before designing an operational approach to achieve the desired end state. In this study, transferability and full tuition payment were floated periodically as potential options. Until the 2000s, that was the limit of discussion – just potential options. Advocates did not put forth compelling arguments to address factors that had been – and remained – true, such as excessive cost, increasing higher education fees, and an increasing focus on college degrees for even the most entry-level semi-professional jobs. This indicates that those advocating for transferability and full tuition

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payment adjusted their approach over time – which may have been a result of improving their understanding of the environment, or more likely, problem. Ideally, though, these advocates would have achieved situational understanding earlier, pinpointing the core concern as one of recruitment and retention, and then developing a plan to build support for their approach. Just as military units Red Team¹⁴ expected enemy responses to their initial actions, advocates should reasonably be prepared for counter-arguments to their proposals. These factors were not present in the 1980s, and when present in the 1990s, they were not effectively linked to address counter-arguments. To illustrate, while High OPTEMPO, Adult Influencers, and Support for Family increased over each era, these factors were ineffectively connected to full tuition payment and transferability. Instead of stating that adult influencers needed to see a reason to recommend military service during a period of High OPTEMPO, in the 1980s stakeholders just acknowledged that OPTEMPO and influencers were relevant. In the 1990s, stakeholders lamented the significance of these factors. In the 2000s, stakeholders presented more direct and explicit connections between factors and proposed solutions, which correlates with Congress incorporating transferability and full tuition payment into the Post-9/11 GI Bill. With these lessons in mind, future advocates for military legislative change should apply Design methodology at the earliest possible point to fully understand the situation and develop a plan to address the core problem. This sounds quite easy as written, but it involves time, analysis (and re-analysis), and steady application to achieve the desired end state.

¹⁴ “Red teaming provides units and organizations an independent capability to fully explore alternatives in plans, operations, concepts, structures, and capabilities in the context of the operational environment and from the perspectives of our adversaries and others” (U.S. Army, 2009, p. n.p.).

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Regarding future research, options include examining how narrative strategies evolved within the VFW or another long-term veteran advocacy organization, as it grappled with the purpose and use of educational benefits to war and peacetime service members. I posited above that perhaps the VFW was comfortable supporting the Post-9/11 GI Bill due to the wartime status of most of the expected beneficiaries. It would be interesting to examine how and whether their initial view that educational benefits for recruitment/retention purposes did not require the same commitment or longevity as wartime veterans' educational entitlements changed over time, and what factors contributed to these potential changes. Also, it would be useful to conduct the intended interview portion of this research design, to determine what, if any, lobbying efforts occurred outside Congressional hearing rooms, that might have influenced how legislators understood the recruitment/retention problem over time, and the degree to which transferability and full-tuition payment were viewed as solutions or perhaps just tentative promises for a more immediate recruitment/retention result.

While my recommendations are designed for – and speak to – the military advocacy population, they have applicability across topic and populations. Most interests before Congress have identified advocates, and their ability to take a long look at policy, agreeing to make incremental changes toward their desired end state, to maintain a conversation that continuously heightens decision-makers' awareness to broader nuances within their own topic, and to remain attentive to evolving conversations should be a point of interest for citizens looking to make big changes. It is important to have strong repetition, hammering home a consistent message about what the problem is, and how it can be solved. This need lends itself to individuals joining third-party elements that

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effectively represent their positions, vice starting up an alternative advocacy entity.

APPENDIX A: CODING PROTOCOL

Coding Procedures. I coded based on paragraphs and proximity. Regarding paragraphs, that was the smallest unit of measure I used. For each paragraph presenting relevant information, I coded the whole paragraph. If the speaker/writer has multiple paragraphs that elaborate on a precursor paragraph, then we may see higher rates for a particular node. Alternately, given my use of written documents, some ideas were published as a single long paragraph, and in this instance, the paragraph would be coded just once per node, even though the speaker/writer may have reiterated the concept multiple times.

Proximity. Congressional Record, many items are included in the record associated with a single bill. For Veterans matters, a bill may include discussion of educational benefits as well as medical access, discussion of a proposed amendment that has nothing to do with veterans at all. Regarding proximity, then, I ignore the discussion of medical access or non-relevant amendments in their entirety.

Nodal Definitions. The following paragraphs describe the nodes I used when coding material for this dissertation. Nodes are listed alphabetically by major node; sub-nodes are alphabetical within the nodes in which they are subordinate.

Cost inefficiency: This node is about “getting enough juice for the squeeze.” Basically, Congress is paying for these benefits but believe there is insufficient return on investment.

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GI Bill is Underfunded: This node was present particularly during the 1980s era, as artifacts reflected a belief that there simply was not enough money being provided through the GI Bill to make it attractive (e.g., the benefit was insufficient for recipients to find it valuable). I included it as a sub-category of the “Cost Inefficiency” node because it frequently appeared proximate to this node, and because it was offered as a causal reason that the GI Bill was not as successful as desired.

Ineffective Program: This node differentiated from cost inefficiency in that cost is not articulated as a concern, but the concern was simply that the program was not retaining or recruiting the desired population or at the levels necessary. Alternately, the argument was made that the GI Bill or its educational provisions were not the right way to achieve desired end states. This final context of this node was that it was the wrong means by which to use our fiscal ways. This node arose in the literature.

Need to Contain Costs: This node reflected that the GI Bill or specific provisions were viewed as expensive, whether generally or given the then-current economic realities. I included it as a sub-category of the “Cost Inefficiency” node because it, too, appeared frequently proximate to comments about Cost Inefficiency, and was frequently offered as a correlate – basically, that given the current or future projected budget requirements (whether limited revenues or higher expenditures), overall benefits associated with having the GI Bill did not outweigh the cost to fund it.

Debt to Veterans: This node reflects both the exact statement (e.g., "we owe our military personnel ...") or an implicit reference to a promise that must be kept (e.g., "we must uphold the promises that we made with America's sons and daughters").

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Education benefit as Troop Support: This node reflects the concept that educational benefits are part of a larger benefits package, all of which create the nation's support for troops. An example of this would be the statement, "S.4 goes a long way towards putting our military pay scale on the same footing as private sector wages. It improves the retirement and educational benefits available to our military personnel" (*Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's and Marines' Bill of Rights Act of 1999*, 1999, p. S1890). Since a pay scale simply is the monetary remuneration for work provided, this association of retirement and educational benefits as part of a larger benefits package represents a departure from previous testimony, where the purpose of educational benefits was for readjustment due to the disruption that military service had created. I viewed this as a sub-category or node of Debt to Veterans because it often was articulated as one of the ways in which Congress or the United States could satisfy its Debt to Veterans.

Investment: This node reflects an argument that adjustments to the GI Bill are needed because they constitute an investment in our military personnel or in our nation overall. This often was found proximate to discussions about the improved skills, abilities, and employment prospects that WWII veterans experienced after using the original GI Bill. Whether the argument was made that the investment is worthwhile of its own accord, because it would meet some obligation the nation had to citizens in military service, or simply a fiscal benefit from increased tax revenues, this argument was coded as reflecting the Investment node. This node was added as a salient node during document review. I included this as a sub-node of Debt to Veterans because of its frequent proximity to the Debt to Veterans node, which often was illustrated as a business

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problem: how do you take care of a business debt? You invest to strengthen your outcomes.

Dual income family: This node was one I pre-built, with the expectation that it would be relevant within the data. Conceptually, I anticipated that the increasing number of military personnel who were married with a spouse working outside the home would be identified as a reason to support transferability. In fact, although yes, military dual-income families increased over the research period (similarly to the national increased frequency during the same time), this node was rarely present in the documents reviewed. There was recognition of the increased number of spouses working outside the home, but typically tied to a push for improved cross-state reciprocity for professional licensure (e.g., teaching, nursing) and conveyance of in-state tuition rates for dependents attending public colleges and universities in the state where their military sponsor was stationed. This could be a result of personally mis-remembering the circumstances around that debate, a peculiarity of the specific documents I reviewed, or an argument that received greater highlight in the law's roll-out – rather than development.

Economic benefit to Nation: Often proximate to the Investment node, this coding represents an argument for – or recollection of a time when – the nation economically benefitted from veterans receiving education benefits. In some instances, it was quite descriptive, referencing increase work output or taxes that the nation received. In other instances, it was more about veterans who became leaders in business or industry, due to the entrance that higher education provided them in the workforce.

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Economic Downturn: This node was used both for current commentary and future projection or concern, so "the economy is bad" or "the economy may turn bad" were both coded as economic downturn. As a result, this node was used for instances where the speaker discussed how economy was good, but also cautioned about the temporal nature of the economy, whether or not they explicitly stated a concern that the economy may turn downward.

Family Education Level: I developed this node before starting the study, anticipating family member educational levels or background would be identified as a reason or context for supporting the transferability component. From my standpoint, the increasing need for college degrees across the research period would be a reason to support transferability. This turned out to be the argument used, but not for the reason I expected. This node was not frequently coded, but when coded in the 90s and 00s, Family Educational Level was tied to transferability as a retention matter. I expected the argument to be that offering transferability would support retention because it would keep military personnel in the service so they could gain transferability to improve their family members' educational levels. Instead, it was argued that transferability was important because it supported family members' educational levels by retaining military personnel who wanted to remain in the service but had to depart to earn a higher income to pay for their family members' higher education. Rather than being a stick to retain people who would otherwise leave, it was argued that transferability was a carrot to retain people who did not want to leave but were forced to due to high tuition rates.

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Force Education Level: I started the study with this node already developed. I expected that the current force education level/background would be referenced as a reason or context for supporting improved GI Bill educational benefits or not, especially with regard to full tuition payment. I believed this to be a potential node due to my personal experience with highly educated enlisted personnel – a growing number of whom enter the service with all or part of college completed. This would make it relevant, then, to be able to pay graduate school costs at the full tuition rate, to limit further educational indebtedness. This was not the case, however. Force education level – from the standpoint of being a reason to support full-tuition payment – was not highly referenced. Instead, when servicemembers' educational levels were discussed, it almost always was tied to the desire that a high percentage of new recruits be high school graduates.

Force Shaping: This is a node that I reasonably should have started the study with but did not. Force shaping describes actions undertaken to ensure the right number of personnel with the desired skills are present at the specific rank to meet the mission. Force shaping actions usually come in the form of monetary bonuses and increased individual control over assignment units or locations, either selecting from a pool of units/locations or open to any unit or location. I should have anticipated this node because recruitment and retention is entirely about force shaping, and so the relevance of whether the GI Bill (in its current or proposed format) was sufficient to enable desired force shaping results would be likely. Examining my efforts to articulate relevant nodes ahead of time, it was a bit of a struggle to work from a point of knowledge. Ideally, the methodology was just

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to let the salient nodes bubble up of their own accord. However, working from a position of knowledge on this topic, I felt it was important to ensure I had catalogued nodes representing potential pre-conceived notions. As a result, I articulated nodes I already held in my mind but did not further pre-analyze the topic to develop other likely nodes.

Full Tuition Payment: This node was used for any statement discussing full tuition payment, whether for or against the proposition.

Greatest Generation: This node codes any reference to the WWII-era veterans who received the first educational benefits under the GI Bill. The passages did not have to use "Greatest Generation" but must call to mind or create some parallel between the current/future veteran population and those who served in WWII.

High OPTEMPO: Operational tempo (OPTEMPO) is a military term addressing the frequency, length, complexity (e.g., full spectrum operations), or uniqueness of the military mission. High OPTEMP, then, references commentary where the writer or speaker emphasizes the OPTEMPO as something beyond normal, whether due to limited personnel requiring more frequent or lengthy operations (usually away from one's home station) or unusual mission requirements (e.g., peacekeeping or other humanitarian missions not typically considered "military" in nature). Regarding the military mission itself, this discussion usually pertained to the limited number of U.S. citizens who join the military, and thus, they are performing a unique mission just by serving, because they are willing to die for the nation. This node arose within the literature.

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Increased education costs: This node is specifically tied to statements about rising college attendance costs, such as tuition, fees, books, and housing as a relevant factor for improving the GI Bill educational benefits.

Limited Need: This node catalogues assertions that the bill or its educational provision(s) are not needed (or on the scale being proposed).

Retirement Benefit: This node denotes places where the artifacts recorded an argument about the relative merit or importance of retirement benefits as they pertain to facilitating recruiting or retention. This is incorporated as a sub-node to Limited Need due to consistent correlation and proximity between the two. Retirement Benefits typically were cited as sufficient for recruitment or retention, such that additional educational benefits were not required.

Other Student Aid Impact: This node was used when documents articulated that other ways of funding education were a) more desirable, b) more easily accessible, c) covering the costs better. To a lesser extent, this node was used for assertions that the GI Bill educational benefits (as structured) impacted recipients' ability to access other student aid, and so some change was needed

Personal Desire: I was rather surprised that this node arose in the artifacts. In essence, this coded instances where the speaker/writer argued that transferability should be supported simply because military personnel might just want to pass along their

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educational benefits rather than use them. This surprised me because transferability reasonable increases the likelihood that the GI Bill educational benefits will be paid out. And given the exceptional costs associated with fully paying out GI Bill educational benefits, the idea that decision-makers might be compelled to vote for an expensive provision just because it was wanted seemed light on the convincing.

Quality Military: This node was used wherever the documents highlighted the need for a better-quality military, to maintain the high-quality military that presently existed, or to support the general requirements (i.e., training, equipping, maintaining, etc.) necessary for a military to be effective.

Readiness: This is a sub-node of Quality Military, where the artifacts posit a deliberate or direct connection between what the bill/provision entails and the ability of the military to do its job. In other words, the people could be great, but if they do not have the right equipment to do their jobs, then the military is not ready. The converse also might be true – the military equipment might be sufficient in number, repair, and technological advancement, but insufficient people (or at the right ranks) or a high turn-over could create a Readiness problem. Additionally, this node was used also to denote statements like, "impact to military/men & women," alluding to longer-term impacts of the bill/provisions on future modernization, etc., such that taking up increased educational benefits might be fine at this point, but exponential cost increases would ultimately tie Congressional hands in the future and limit its ability to provide equipment or personnel.

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Quality of Life: This node was identified in the artifacts as being instances when recruiting and retention problems were broadened from their most basic aspects of providing personnel at the right time and place to overall commentary about how personnel were treated during the time in which they were serving. This usually referred to services' ability to provide comparable salaries and benefits to those individuals with similar qualifications and training would receive in the civilian world, but also included bonuses, housing (or housing allowances), and medical care. Most frequently, this node was found near arguments that additional educational benefits were unnecessary or too costly – what was needed was ensuring a comparable lifestyle to what the service member would experience in the civilian world – and the best way to enable this was providing a direct cash flow to services so they could determine when and how frequently to offer bonuses.

Readjustment: Readjustment was added as a node due to some artifacts including emphatic assertions that educational benefits (or other GI Bill provisions) were explicitly were for use in re-integrating military personnel in the civilian workforce. Specifically, it was necessary to compensate for the disruption to the individual's "regular" life, when s/he served in the military. This was used both as a narrowing statement – that only if the individual's life was disrupted – for instance, by war – would Congress have a need to provide for the person's readjustment. Alternately, military service was underscored as 'not the norm,' and so others argued that every type of military service is a disruption to citizens' regular lives.

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Recruitment Needs: This node was used any time the artifacts addressed what was necessary to meet military intake levels in the immediate, near, and slightly longer term.

Lack of available recruits: In this node, for whatever reason, the speaker/writer attests that there are insufficient number of people available for recruitment. Examples include assertions that the population is low for the target age group during this period, the economy/parents/social factors make potential recruits unwilling to join the military or be part of the recruitment population, and in more recent documents, assertions that potential recruits' education, criminal history, and obesity are factors reducing the potential recruitment pool.

Need better quality: This sub-node referred specifically to the quality of recruits, asserting that, while there is a sufficient pool of people interested in joining the military (e.g., not an issue of Lack of Available Recruits), the pool population is not up to snuff (e.g., non-High School graduates, individuals requiring waivers to entrance requirements, etc.).

Retention Needs: This node was used any time the artifacts addressed what was necessary to keep the right number of existing military people in the ranks, and at the right ranks and seniority (e.g., the military does not want to keep 100% of people at year 7, but only 35% at year 12 if it needs 65% of the available forces)?

Transfer to Dependent(s): Transferability was an obvious node when I began coding. Specifically, this node was used any time the artifacts described the transfer of educational benefits to dependents. Almost universally, transferability was discussed as a component of retention (e.g., we will offer this provision, but only for people who stay

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beyond a certain year of seniority, or for x length of time), and thus, I incorporated it as a sub-node to Retention Needs.

Social Mobility: This node was added through coding, with variations that were explicit, such as, “An enhanced MGIB would increase the Nation’s social mobility by providing a way for high school graduates from low-income families to finance an education at the finest post secondary schools for which they qualify” (Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, 1999, p. 27). In other instances, social mobility was referenced more adroitly, with statements about how the GI Bill’s educational benefits were credited with allowing individuals to achieve at a level higher than they would have ever been able to access (*Veterans' Education Programs*, 1983). This latter format often entailed access to not only college, generally, but exceptionally high-end colleges and universities – those that were more expensive or prestigious.

Support for Family: The Support for Family node was included during the research due to artifacts documenting speakers who were including military family members in their statements about honoring military personnel as well as those highlighting the need for supporting military spouse career aspirations. These assertions were present along with the idea that military benefits are benefits for the family writ large, not just an individual on contract, and that, while individuals are recruited, by the time they are at a retention point, many military personnel have families. Thus, the services must plan to recruit the individual and retain the family.

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Adult Influencers: I first added this node when reviewing documents from the 2000s. Speakers were discussing the importance of parents, teachers, counselors, religious leaders, and other adults who were likely to weigh in on young people's decisions to enlist in the military. Subsequently, I found these same concerns present in the 1980s era, but not the 1990s era to a significant level.

There's a Better Way: This node reflects a broad belief that, with or without other factors, achieving the desired ends (quality military, sufficient recruitment/retention, etc.) should be pursued by using means in some other way. Additionally, this was used for broader arguments about the way the bill/proposal is being handled in Congress (e.g., an argument that insufficient transparency is present, or that the "cart is before the horse").

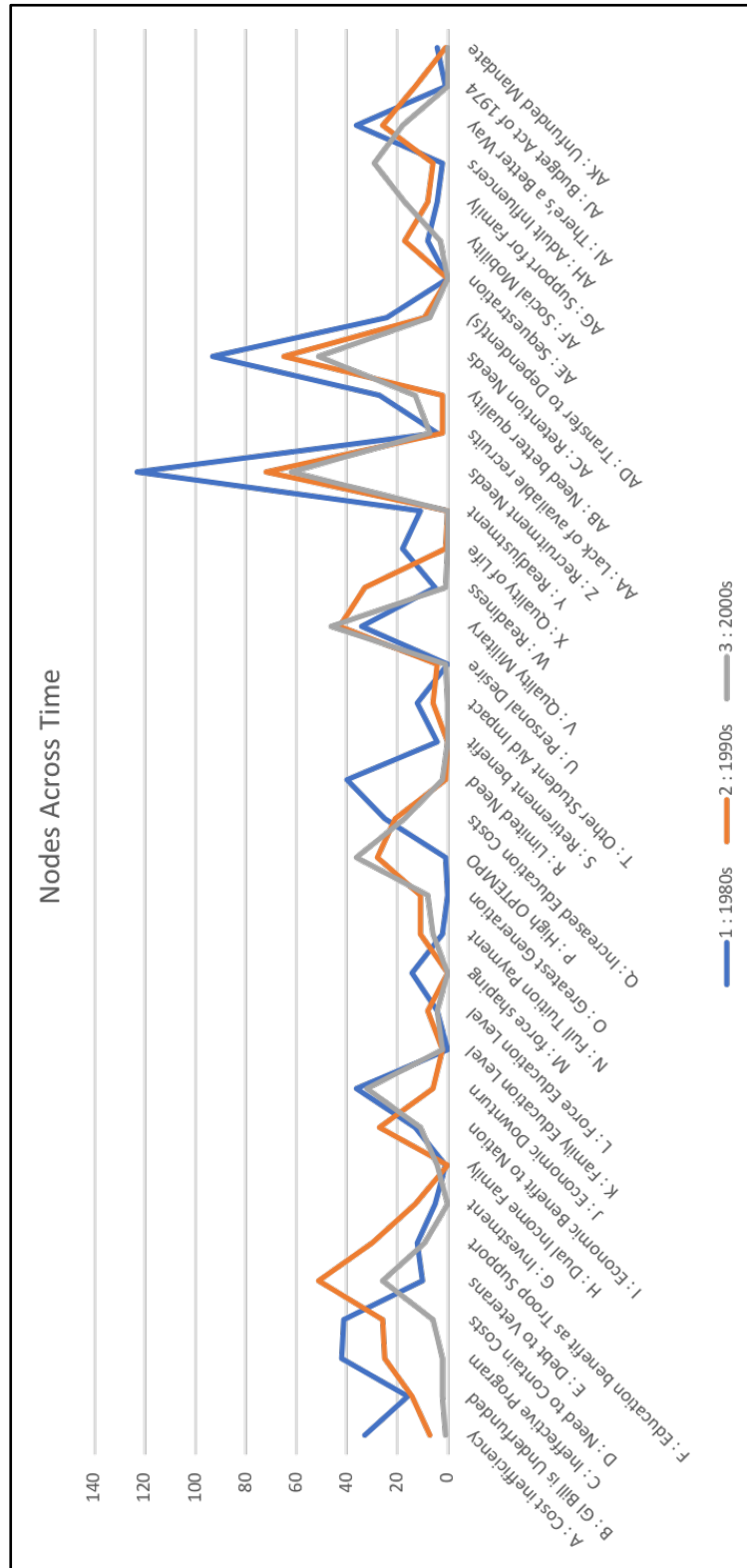
Budget Act of 1974: This node was added during review of 1990s material, especially as the U.S. Senate was considering increased educational benefits for benefits without having received impetus to consider this from the U.S. House of Representatives. Discussion in this node addressed the Budget Act of 1974's requirements that spending bills originate in the House and that Congress must "pay-as-you-go" (PAYGO) by identifying funds to cover proposed expenditures. I included it as a sub-node of "Better Way," because of the node's secondary emphasis, related to handling bills/proposals in accordance with established Congressional procedures.

Sequestration: This node was used any time the artifacts pointed toward the Budget Control Act or Sequestration as a reason to support further educational benefits or not. As it incorporated similar arguments as the Budget Act of 1974 regarding appropriate Congressional handling, I included it as a sub-node to "Better Way."

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Unfunded Mandate: This node is closely related to the Budget Act of 1974, and thus presented as a sub-node of “Better Way” for the same reasons. The node was used any time a stakeholder argued that a bill or proposition could not be supported because it created an unfunded mandate – a requirement to pay out funds without having identified a clear and legal way to cover those payments.

APPENDIX B: NODES BY ERA



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VITA

In over twenty years of US Army Reserve service, Katherine Obradovich has been assigned at nearly every tactical, operational, and strategic level and completed three overseas deployments supporting OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. As a Strategist and Planner, Katherine was assigned as US Army Reserve Command G-35 Plans Officer, US Africa Command (AFRICOM) J3 Branch Chief and J5 Deputy Division Chief, and US Army Cyber Command Division Chief.

At AFRICOM, she led or participated in all major planning, including the Ebola Virus Response (OPERATION UNITED ASSISTANCE) and military support for President Obama's visit to Kenya during the Global Entrepreneurship Summit. Her duties culminated as the Deputy Division Chief for Multinational Coordination Center and Strategic Outreach, and she now serves as US Army Cyber Command Chief of Plans.

Prior to full-time military service, Katherine served with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, beginning as a Special Education Supervisor and culminating as the Director of Effective Practices. She was actively involved with teacher and administrator professional development, working to deliver easily accessible technical assistance and training, whether written, on-line, or in person. Across civilian and military experiences, she remained interested in contrasts between policy intent and implementation.

Katherine Obradovich holds three master's degrees (Education, Public Administration, and Theater Operations) and has completed professional military education commensurate with her career including the Army's School for Advanced Military Studies. She lives with her husband in Virginia.