

From 'Broken Heroes' to Public Servants: Transforming Persistent Myths about Post-9/11 Veterans

Rosalinda Maury ▪ Corrinne B Zoli ▪ Danny Fay

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Agenda



- ▶ Overview
- ▶ Who We Are
- ▶ Common Myths
- ▶ Discussion

INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES (IVMF)

OUR MISSION

To advance the post-service lives of America's service members, veterans, and military families

WHO WE SERVE

- Individuals
- Organizations
- Communities

PRIORITIES

- Deliver impactful, best in class programs and services, informed by research, measurement, and evaluation
- Advance practice and policy through rigorous research, measurement and evaluation, and data solutions that empower action

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



FOCUS AREAS

- ✓ Career Preparation and Employment
- ✓ Entrepreneurship and Small Business Training
- ✓ Community-Based Support and Care Coordination

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION



FOCUS AREAS

- ✓ Employment and Entrepreneurship
- ✓ Higher Education
- ✓ Gov't. & Community-based Services
- ✓ Measurement, Evaluation, and Data Analytics

Research Team: Who We Are



Corri Zoli, Ph.D.

Director of Research | Assistant Research Professor, Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism (INSCT)
College of Law/Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs
Syracuse University



Rosalinda V. Maury

Director of Applied Research and Analytics
Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF)
Syracuse University



Daniel L. Fay, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Public Management
Reubin O'D. Askew School of Public Administration and Policy
Florida State University

Motivation for this Research Effort

Overview

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- We provide a data-driven series of analyses to debunk persistent and inaccurate myths in the media and public debate about veterans
- Our research reveals a far more accurate, complex, nuanced and interesting picture of veterans' contribution to American culture, one that warrants retiring the “broken hero” myth and recognizing their ongoing commitment to public service
- The intent is to inform others about these inaccurate myths, and begin to have robust discussion about veterans contributions and support mechanisms needed for continued success

Framing/Motivations for Research

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

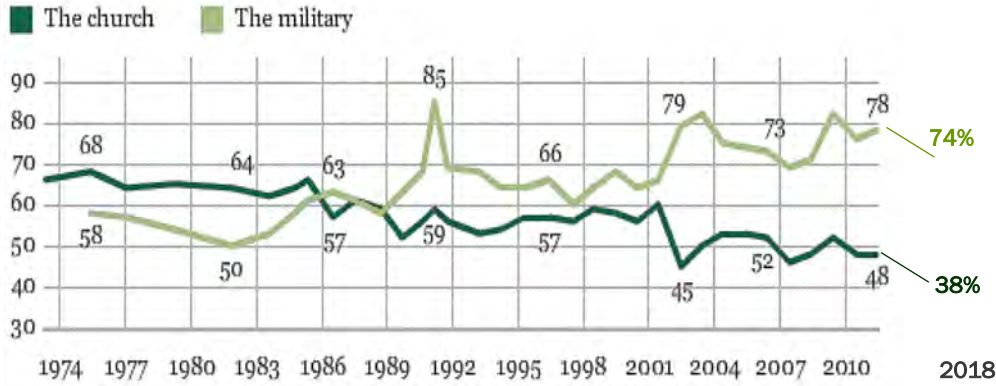
- **Paradox:** Broad, public “support for troops” but too little understanding, especially of post-service life—beyond stereotypes
- Research on student veterans tends to focus on academic performance (e.g., graduation rates) and challenges adapting to campus life
- Gap in knowledge in service members’ experiences, needs, expectations, and aspirations in transitioning to campus life
- Clear need to identify leading institutional support systems, processes, and practices that best promote long-term student veteran success

Public Support for Military

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

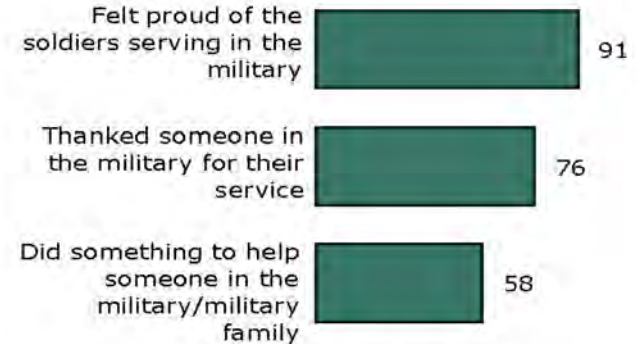
Trends in Confidence in the Church and the Military

Figures represent % Great deal/Quite a lot



Civilians and the Post-9/11 Wars

% saying they have done or felt the following since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began



Note: Based on general public, N=2,003.

Source, Gallop News Service, *Confidence in Institutions*: June 9-12, 2011

Figure 2. Source: Pew Research Center, *War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era* (2011): 13.

Myths

Common Myths

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Need to debunk stubborn myths about today's military veterans as the "broken hero" and ascribe to veterans, instead, more accurate representations that feature their historical and ongoing commitments to national and public service.

SOME COMMON MYTHS

MYTH #1 Veterans and the military are a small subset of the population

MYTH #2 Veterans join the military because they could not get into college; they are uneducated

MYTH #3 The military is a homogeneous population; they are all the same

MYTH #4 Veterans have a limited skillset and pursue careers similar to their military specialization

MYTH #5 Veterans are broken heroes

MYTH #1 Veterans and the military are a small subset of the population

Debunk Myth # 1

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

POPULATION



OVER 20 MILLION
LIVING, US MILITARY SERVICEMEMBERS

OF TOTAL POPULATION 18 AND OVER

8% ARE VETERANS (OVER 20.4 MILLION)
AND

**1% ARE ACTIVE DUTY/ACTIVATED NATIONAL
GUARD AND RESERVES (OVER 2.1 MILLION)**

9% (or just roughly 1 in 10) of the total population



Period of Service

39% WWII, Korean War, and Vietnam eras

40% Gulf War I and Other Service Periods

20% Post-9/11 Veterans (4.1 million)

Period of Service	Total	
	Estimated Number	%
All Americans	246,006,000	
Nonveterans	225,619,000	
All Veterans	20,387,000	8%
Gulf War Era II (post-9/11)	4,116,000	20%
Gulf War Era I	3,279,000	16%
WWII, Korean War and Vietnam Veterans	8,052,000	39%
Other service period veterans	4,941,000	24%

Data Source: BLS, Current Population Survey, 2017 annual averages, population 18 and over

MYTH #2 Veterans join the military because they could not get into college; they are uneducated

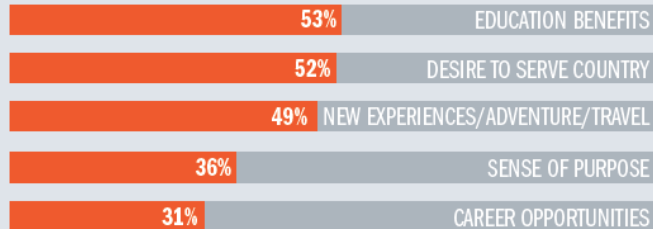
Debunk Myth # 2

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

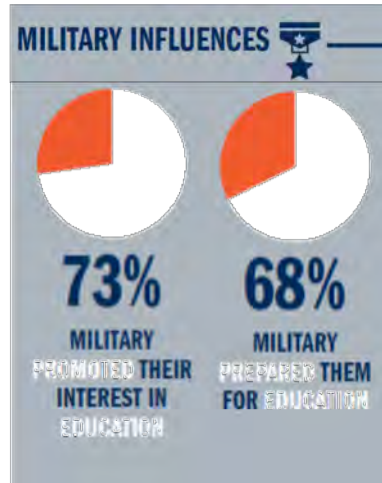
MILITARY SERVICE

MOTIVATION FOR SERVICE

TOP REASONS FOR JOINING



88% REPORTED THAT JOINING
THE MILITARY WAS A
GOOD DECISION



- A top motivation for joining the military is and has always been for education benefits
- While in service the military is promoting and preparing service members for their education

Debunk Myth # 2

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Education

- On average, post-9/11 veterans achieve higher educational attainment than earlier generations and the general U.S. population

Education Attainment	All Veterans		Gulf War Era II (post-9/11)		Total US	
	Estimated Number	%	Estimated Number	%	Estimated Number	%
Total	20,387,000		4,116,000		246,006,000	
Less than a high school diploma	891,000	4%	64,000	2%	26,441,000	11%
High school graduates, no college	6,006,000	29%	915,000	22%	71,283,000	29%
Some college or associate degree	7,112,000	35%	1,701,000	41%	69,789,000	28%
College graduates (Bachelors or Higher)	6,378,000	31%	1,436,000	35%	78,493,000	32%

66% of all veterans have some college or higher

76% Post-9/11 Veterans have some college or higher

60% of the general population have some college or higher

Data Source: BLS, Current Population Survey, 2017 annual averages, population 18 and over

Debunk Myth # 2

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Higher Education for Women Veterans

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

Women service members as a group achieved:



41%

BACHELOR'S DEGREE
OR HIGHER

40%

SOME COLLEGE OR
ASSOCIATE DEGREE

18%

HIGH SCHOOL
DEGREE

2%

LESS THAN
HIGH SCHOOL

- Education attainment higher for female veterans
- 81% of female veterans have some college or higher

“I Initially entered the military to complete my education and ended up making a career of it,”

“I'm glad I did it, because the military provided me skills and education, and a sense of accomplishment and pride”

MYTH #3 The military is a homogeneous population; they are all the same

Debunk Myth # 3

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Gender

- Veterans are predominantly male
- Female post-9/11 veterans fastest (17% vs. 10% overall)

Gender	All Veterans		Gulf War Era II (post-9/11)		Total US	
	Estimated Number	%	Estimated Number	%	Estimated Number	%
Total	20,387,000		4,116,000		246,006,000	
Male	18,387,000	90%	3,400,000	83%	118,688,000	48%
Female	2,000,000	10%	716,000	17%	127,318,000	52%

Race/Ethnicity

- On average, post-9/11 veterans have higher representation of African-Americans and Hispanic minorities.

Ethnicity/Race	All Veterans		Gulf War Era II (post-9/11)		Total US	
	Estimated Number	%	Estimated Number	%	Estimated Number	%
Total	20,387,000		4,116,000		246,006,000	
White	16,867,000	83%	3,133,000	76%	192,255,000	78%
African-American	2,587,000	13%	709,000	17%	30,970,000	13%
Hispanic	1,459,000	7%	527,000	13%	39,190,000	16%
Asian	336,000	2%	108,000	3%	14,804,000	6%

Debunk Myth # 3

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The U.S. military comprises high demographic diversity—more so than any other public institution, while it remains the largest public employer
- The military provides training and opportunities to service members that exposes them to many cultures as well as skills

73% SERVED OUTSIDE OF
THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES
operating across different cultures,
nations, and regions



TOP SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES STRENGTHENED BY MILITARY SERVICE:

WORK ETHIC AND DISCIPLINE	87%
TEAMWORK	86%
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS	82%
MENTAL TOUGHNESS	81%
ADAPTATION TO DIFFERENT CHALLENGES	78%
SELF-DISCIPLINE	77%
PROFESSIONALISM	78%

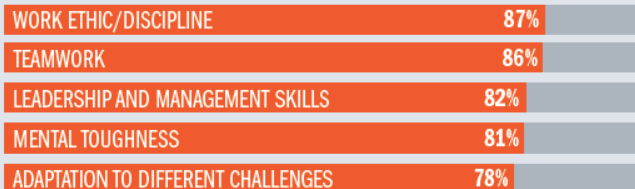
MYTH #4 Veterans have a limited skillset and pursue careers similar to their military specialization

Debunk Myth # 4

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

MILITARY SKILLS

SKILLS DEVELOPED DURING SERVICE



81%

indicated that their military specialty (MOS, AFSC, Rating, or designator) accurately described the military jobs that they performed during service

43%

STEM RELATED MILITARY SPECIALIZATIONS/JOB report that their military specialization, job, or training is science, technology, engineering, or mathematics related

MILITARY SERVICE

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

FROM THE MILITARY ON SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES FOR EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

71%

REPORTED THE MILITARY LEFT A LASTING IMPRESSION IN DEVELOPING SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES THAT WILL HELP SUCCEED IN EDUCATION

82%

REPORTED THAT THE MILITARY LEFT A LASTING IMPRESSION ON THEIR LIVES

MILITARY INFLUENCES



66%

MILITARY PREPARED THEM FOR THEIR CIVILIAN CAREER



71%

PROMOTED THEIR INTEREST IN TRAINING, CERTIFICATION, OR LICENSING PROGRAMS

Debunk Myth # 4

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

TRANSITION

TOP TRANSITIONAL CHALLENGES

60%

NAVIGATING
VA ADMIN.
OR BENEFITS

55%

GETTING A
JOB

41%

GETTING
SOCIALIZED
TO CIVILIAN
CULTURE

40%

FINANCIAL
STRUGGLES

39%

SKILLS
TRANSLATION

92%

INDICATED THAT EDUCATION
SHOULD PLAY A ROLE IN THEIR
POST-SERVICE TRANSITION

- ▶ Currently there are **4,1 million post-9/11 veterans**. This number is growing as service members transition.
- ▶ Nearly **200,000** veterans transition out of the military each year—and most eventually pursue civilian careers.

POST-MILITARY CAREER

55%

OF SERVICEMEMBERS SAID THAT
THEY ARE LIKELY TO PURSUE A
DIFFERENT CAREER THAN THEIR
MILITARY SPECIALIZATION

Debunk Myth # 4

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

THE GENERATION OF ORIGINAL GI BILL VETERANS ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDES:



14 NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS



3 SUPREME COURT JUSTICES

67,000
DOCTORS



22,000
DENTISTS

24 PULITZER PRIZE WINNERS



3 PRESIDENTS

★ **12 SENATORS** ★



MILLIONS

of lawyers, nurses, artists, actors, writers, pilots and entrepreneurs

238,000
TEACHERS



91,000
SCIENTISTS



450,000
ENGINEERS

17,000
JOURNALISTS



240,000
ACCOUNTANTS

MYTH #5 Veterans are broken heroes

Debunk Myth # 5

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- That is, one of the most destructive myths about Post-9/11 service members is the “broken hero,” the soldier who “once did incredible things but is now forever damaged and in need of help,” as Chris Marvin (retired Army helicopter pilot) put it in a recent [New York Times](#) interview. In fact, that broken hero myth is now a “dominant image of veterans on television and in Hollywood today”—despite the fact that “99 percent of us are neither heroic nor broken,” Marvin added, “we are people—people the public has invested in who have a lot of potential.” In fact, Martin started [Got Your 6](#) to capitalize on that potential and to actively lobby the entertainment industry to change their images about veterans in public culture.

Debunk Myth # 5

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

DISABILITIES

OVER **3.9 MILLION** DISABLED VETERANS ARE CATEGORIZED BY THE VA AS HAVING A DISABILITY. OF THOSE, 43% ARE OF GULF WAR AND POST-9/11 VETERANS

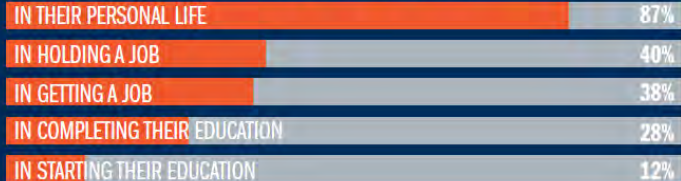
58%

REPORTED A SERVICE-RELATED DISABILITY

32%

REPORTED THEY DID NOT HAVE A DISABILITY

OF THOSE THAT HAVE SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES, 79% INDICATED THAT IT CREATES OBSTACLES:



The majority of service member (79%) indicated that their service-connected disabilities has created obstacles in various areas of their lives

88% REPORTED THAT JOINING THE MILITARY WAS A **GOOD DECISION**

79% INDICATED THAT THE MILITARY PLAYED A ROLE IN THEIR SUCCESS

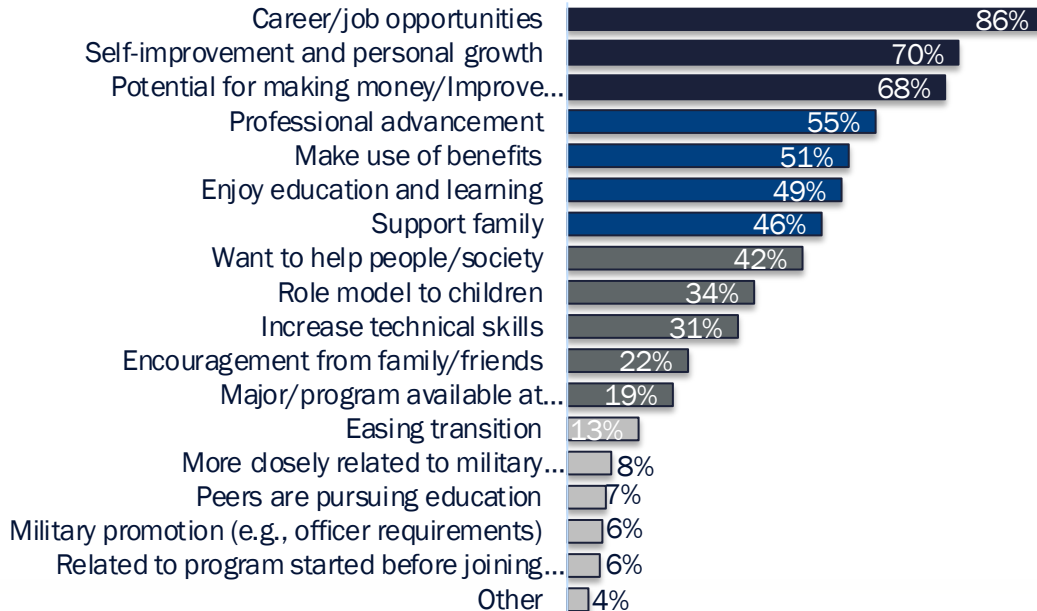
- In spite of these challenges, many view their military experiences positively and feel a deep sense of pride in their service
- The majority indicated that the military played a role in their success and 76% say their military experience helped them get ahead

Debunk Myth # 5

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Q: Identify your motivations for education or training programs?

Select all that apply.



- When asked about their top motivations for pursuing education, in addition to job opportunities, self-improvement, advancement, and benefits use, 43% of our respondents said they wished to help people and society

Debunk Myth # 5

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- When we asked service members what they wanted to major in at university, where they wished to work, or how they viewed post-service life, a consistent answer came up: public service.
- Qualitative answers to such questions echoed this public service and community-oriented theme, as respondents explained a desire to pursue certain majors, like Social Work, “to help underprivileged teens,” or “become a Veterans Advocate to help represent Veterans with Governmental agencies.” Still other respondents wished to use “my computer skills to help friends, family, and community,” and many mentioned attaining professional degrees—in medicine, accounting, and the law—to “see if I can't find a way of helping people” and “to do something that makes a difference.”

Discussion:

What Common Myths Are We Missing?

What Can We do to Move Past them?

**What is Missed When Myths get Substituted for
Actual Veterans' Perspectives & Experience?**

Some Initial Thoughts,,,



1. If we believe MYTH #5 of the broken hero, we miss the bigger picture: namely, we're in a **new era of global security challenges & asymmetric warfare**—Post-9/11 cohorts have more **direct, up close & personal experience** with these transformative trends than virtually any other U.S. “expert” group. Judging from recent MENA conflicts, we need such security & strategic insights.
2. If we believe MYTH #4 about veterans limited skillsets, we miss how today's global affairs have created seasoned, adaptive leaders at the lowest level in the traditional military hierarchy (e.g., the “strategic corporal”); such **leadership talent**, tested and shaped under duress, is sorely needed in our academic and public institutions.

3. If we believe MYTH #3 of the homogenous military, we miss how recent veterans' military experiences are jammed packed with **OCONUS & profound cross-cultural experiences**—again, making Post-9/11 vets underappreciated authorities on diversity issues (inside & outside the armed forces); as such, a huge asset for college campuses & beyond.
4. If we believe MYTH #2 of the uneducated veteran, we miss how veterans, particularly on college campuses—and in careers beyond—represent a vital opportunity to **leverage the “rare, valuable, & differentiating attributes of veteran talent”** and to demonstrate how “the characteristics and competencies generally representative of military veterans” often “confer enhanced performance and organizational advantage” for those who recruit, hire, and develop veterans as a human capital resource.

5. Last and by no means least, if we believe MYTH #1 of veterans as a marginalized rather than robust component of the U.S. population, we miss how **veterans exemplify** an ongoing, life-long commitment to **public service, civil engagement, and service leadership** in prioritizing the welfare of the community over individual interests.

For more information contact:



Institute for Veterans and Military Families

Rosalinda Vasquez Maury
Director of Applied Research
Phone: 315.443.0172
Email: rvmaury@syr.edu
Website: ivmf.syracuse.edu



Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism (INSCT)

Corri Zoli, Ph.D.
Director of Research, Assistant Research Professor, Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism (INSCT)
College of Law/Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs
Phone: 315.443.4523
Email: cbzoli@syr.edu
Website: <http://insct.syr.edu/>



Florida State University

Daniel L. Fay , Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Public Management
Reubin O'D. Askew School of Public Administration and Policy
Phone: 850.644.7397
Email: dfay@fsu.edu

STUDENT VETERANS
of AMERICA



**Thank
You**

