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From Quiver to Quill, veteran transition to higher education

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FROM QUIVER TO QUILL,
VETERAN TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

by

Mark L. Walch

A Thesis Submitted to the
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In Partial Fulfillment of the
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College of the Pacific
Communication Department

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Stockton, CA

2018

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VETERAN TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

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by

Mark L. Walch

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my children Isabella and Alexander. You are both so amazing.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Teresa Bergman for her steady guidance in achieving this academic goal. I would also like to thank all United States military veterans for their sacrifices.

From Quiver to Quill,
Veteran transition to higher education

Abstract

by Mark L. Walch

University of the Pacific
2018

Veterans do not receive a uniform out-processing in regards to education benefits information. Despite the VA providing ample education benefits to veterans, military branches do not prepare discharging service members for the benefits earned. To discover personal experiences of veterans at University of the Pacific, critical ethnography in expository documentary film methodology was used. The results of the film showed veterans do not receive ample preparation for benefit usage. The veterans in this film also provided advice for future transitioning veterans to avoid common benefit mistakes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	
Chapter 1: Introduction	8
The successes of veterans	8
Purpose of the non-traditional thesis	8
Feasibility of the project	8
Significance of the project	9
Chapter 2: Review of the literature	11
Context of the study	12
Critical ethnography	16
Rhetoric	21
Documentary film	22
Conclusion	24
Chapter 3: Hypothesis	25
Chapter 4: Method	25
Chapter 5: Working guide	25
Preproduction	25
Production	25
Postproduction	26
Chapter 6: Project	26
REFERENCES	27

I. The Problem

The successes of veterans

Veterans are many times left to figure out their complex benefits and personal feasibility for academic success on their own after leaving the military, which can lead to difficulties in the transition from the military into higher education. Providing transitioning veterans with realistic examples of what to expect after leaving the military and attending school is not a uniform process from station to station or service to service. This lack of a uniform process of out-processing can leave veterans without the proper knowledge needed to maximize their academic benefits, and this lack of communication and best practices can jeopardize veterans' ability to attend a university if they unknowingly misuse their academic benefits or are unfamiliar with the range of benefits available for higher education.

B. Purpose of the Non-Traditional Thesis

In an effort to understand and identify procedural methods for transitional success from the military into higher education, it is the purpose of this study to focus on best practices for transitioning veterans in order to simplify processes and consolidate knowledge. This study intends to create a documentary film illustrating best practices for transitioning veterans based upon the previous experiences of veterans involved in post-secondary education. The identification of these practices will be made through personal interviews and conveyed through a documentary film. This study addresses topics of social inequity by exposing both failures and solutions through the personal experiences of veterans in higher education.

C. Feasibility of the Project

This project will be completed with equipment owned by the Communication Department. The Department has lighting, microphones, video cameras and computer editing

software, which are available for the production of my project. I will be submitting an IRB application after successful defense of this proposal. The human subjects will consist of veterans attending school at Delta Community College and University of the Pacific in Stockton, California. I will interview faculty members regarding their interactions with veterans, and will interview transitioning military members via Skype. The production of this documentary does not require any additional money or accommodations.

D. Significance of Project

There are many reasons for producing a documentary film on veteran transition to higher education, and I will focus on the following points: the impact and history of the GI Bill in helping veterans, and identifying barriers to transitional success.

The post WWII GI Bill provided increased funding for veterans to pursue higher education; however, the transition from military service to higher education has been difficult for many veterans. By identifying and addressing the deficiency of service branches in preparing separating service members, the documentary will assist in veterans receiving their maximum allowable benefits. The GI Bill has enabled many people to attend college which previously would have had limited access to higher education, so there is a measure of personal liberation through the GI Bill education benefits. The power of higher education in the betterment of lives can be seen in results from the GI Bill. A constantly evolving and updating pool of knowledge is needed to help veterans fulfill their academic goals and maximize the benefits afforded by service. The political interest and recognition of veterans' assistance provides shows a tradition of veteran care as a national priority following conflicts. Therefore, it is important to discover the personal experiences of veterans receiving historically established VA benefits as a follow up

for large federal programs and academic institutions to identify and to address current and future needs.

The educational opportunities afforded to veterans have led to the establishment of several other successful federal educational assistance programs. The GI Bill has democratized education in the US and is a relevant and current topic today as much as it was in World War II. Exploring veterans' experiences with the GI Bill offers insight into the operation of a large federally funded educational program, and how it serves non-traditional students.

I contend that it is unlikely people would join the military for the sole purpose of college benefits; the risk would be too high. There are other motivating factors contributing to military enlistment. Despite any initial reasons for enlisting, a dynamic and abundant veteran population uses education benefits. For the purpose of the documentary film, it is important to discover which motivating factors led to enlistment, and how the experiences of the subjects while in the military shaped their motivation to get out of the military and attend college.

Barriers to the student-veteran transition process include: injuries suffered during combat, family commitments outside of school, financial difficulties of attending college, cultural differences between military life and campus life and diminished camaraderie. Academic institutions not ready to deal with the influx of veterans or their diverse needs present challenges on an organized level. An additional problem facing veterans in their transition is an inequitable amount of information provided to them by their military branch during their discharge process. This lack of knowledge leads veterans to receive varying levels of assistance. These issues are varied to a point where it is clear a single solution cannot address the scope of problems facing veterans in their transition to higher education.

Veteran assistance bills are frequently brought up in Congress, and many programs are subject to budgetary restrictions. Laws change, benefits change, and different benefits are introduced. It is in a student-veteran's best interest to stay current on developments; because of the national scale and the diverse population these benefits are extended to, an equally diverse breadth of academic disciplines can be inspired to contribute. The GI Bill and associated educational programs for veterans pose a large investment by the U.S. Therefore, it is a process that needs to be transparent. The military needs to understand the influence the GI Bill has in the recruitment and retention of enlistees. By researching one aspect of transition, this documentary will contribute information into the experiences of individual veterans.

The military uses documentary films for recruitment. I was shown documentaries on laser disk to aid in picking a job when I enlisted. Anticipating the receptiveness of veterans to video is based on the success of recruiting advertisements, and the propensity of military training facilities to include documentaries as a training device. Training content can be uniformly distributed and applied through documentaries, therefore not allowing deviations from standards or improper technique. Documentary film has helped shape veterans while in the military, and I believe this receptiveness to film can be maximized for informative and persuasive purposes.

II. Review of Literature

As a basis for study on veteran transition, the literature review serves as a framework for the guidance of the documentary. The documentary will aim to influence veterans' decision making regarding their particular, albeit not totally unique, instances of transition from the military into higher education. First, aspects of the GI Bill are analyzed in order to understand what is available for veterans. Next, views on critical ethnography and rhetoric will be explored

and discussed in terms of how they inform my use of documentary film as an effective medium of communication for this research.

Context of the study

The transition of the U.S. military to an all-volunteer force has led to the current era where military service is seen as an occupational choice. The all-volunteer era of U.S. military service began in 1974 when then U.S. Congress and President Richard Nixon ended the draft, five years after he signed an amendment to the 1967 Selective Service Act, and after the unpopular Vietnam War continued to gain more criticism (Wambold, 2014). The establishment of the all-volunteer force meant that the U.S. military had to entice recruits with the expansion of benefit and training incentives to compete with the civilian job market. According to Runey and Allen - both of whom are army colonels conducting research for the U.S. Army War College - the all-volunteer force has created pay and benefits packages which exceed that of average 18 year olds, especially with the establishment of the Post-9/11 GI Bill (2015). These benefit packages are what has brought the veterans to college, but not what brought them to the military. Of the estimated 4.1 million Americans turning 18 in 2015, only 160,000 (4%) were both willing and qualified for military service despite the pay and benefit packages that the U.S. military offers (Runey & Allen, 2015). A small percentage of Americans join the military, and discovering the motivations of enlistment outside of the benefits will be key to discovering individual ideologies within the documentary. Runey & Allen continue their analysis of the shrinking pool of qualified recruits by addressing the 1,000,000 (25%) Americans turning 18 in 2015 who qualify for service, but are unwilling to join (2015). There is a fear of military service due to the dangers, so benefits alone cannot overcome the expected hardships. One of the efforts to gain more interest in military service by eligible individuals is by emphasizing educational

benefits. However, there are marginal increases in enlistment which do not match the increased benefits according to Runey & Allen (2015). The statistics suggest there are alternate reasons besides pay and benefits packages to service, so the documentary will seek out reasons for enlisting. Educational benefits may not be a large factor in the decision to enlist as is shown in multiple studies, “It is shown that the Post-9/11 GI Bill has had a small increase on recent recruiting as determined in a 2017 RAND Corporation study,” (Wenger et al., 2017). Whatever the cause for enlistment may have been, a large population of veterans use educational benefits. Although the benefits are not a major factor in enlisting, there have been just over 1,000,000 veterans receiving educational benefits each year since 2012 (VA, 2017). Discovering the phases of decision making a veteran went through while deciding to enlist, deciding to get out, and deciding to go to college will allow for better understanding for people encountering a similar experience. These individual motivations will provide a background for each veteran in the documentary.

Veterans of the armed forces have been subject to decision making at the highest of political offices. In recognition of that sacrifice, there has been a social and political tradition of providing assistance to veterans. Providing educational and social assistance to contemporary veterans of the US armed forces can be traced back to Plymouth colonists providing for disabled veterans injured in battle with the Pequot Indians through a law passed in 1636 (US Department of Veteran Affairs, 2017). The modern effectiveness of veteran benefits in providing a better life after service will be measured in my documentary. I want to see if the veterans perceive their benefits as having a traditional aspect to their issuance. The tradition of social responsibility for veterans as a measure of healing can be seen in the final paragraph of Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address on March 4th, 1865:

“With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations” (Abraham Lincoln, 1865).

Lincoln’s conciliatory plea to the Union and Confederacy at the conclusion of the US Civil War recognized the sacrifices made by war veterans would need to be addressed as part of a national healing process. Part of Lincoln’s above quote, “to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan,” became the Department of Veteran Affairs’ motto, and is in bronze plaques at the entry way to VA hospitals and facilities (US Department of Veteran Affairs, 2017). The care of veterans in education is the issue which the documentary focuses on. The importance of offering benefits to veterans is also an issue of importance in our current Senate, with Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont stating, “As a nation, we have a moral obligation to provide the best quality care to those who have put their lives on the line to defend us (Sanders, 2017).” The student-veterans in the documentary will be asked about their feelings regarding politicians and their place in educational benefits.

Another aspect informing the context of my documentary is the importance of the GI Bill in creating educational programs, and serving as a standard for the democratization of higher education within the U.S. Veteran benefits in the form of college assistance programs stemming from the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill), brought immediate and lasting changes to higher education in the U.S. (Greenberg, 2004). Before World War II, access to higher education was limited for individuals without great means. Higher education had served as an exclusive resource for wealthy families until the onset of the GI Bill (Greenberg, 2004). World War II veterans were attending school in such high numbers that the education system had to change. The GI Bill was the federal government’s most comprehensive educational assistance

program enacted at the time, and allowed many people to enter higher education that otherwise would not have been able to afford the costs (Strach, 2009). Students receiving these educational benefits afforded by their service represent a diverse population and my documentary will seek a diverse group of veterans. Initially, there were some racially-motivated concerns about providing assistance to veterans because of the large number of African-Americans that served during World War II that would be entitled to education benefits. Congressman John Rankin of Mississippi voiced his concerns, “If every white serviceman in Mississippi could read this so-called GI Bill, I don’t believe there would be one in 20 who would approve of it” (Selby, 2012). Another opponent to the GI Bill based his criticism on the idea that poorer people would now be afforded the opportunity to attend college, when Robert Maynard Hutchins, president of University of Chicago, thought veterans would turn colleges and universities into, “educational hobo jungles” (Katz, 2015). Despite initial misgivings about the GI Bill, other educational programs were modeled to reflect the GI Bill due to its success. Federal work study programs, Pell Grants, the Hope Lifetime Learning credit and state financial aid programs are modeled in many ways after the GI Bill (Strach, 2009). This group of programs are directly related to the GI Bill. The success of veterans in school and any stigmas faced by veterans will be sought out in the documentary.

Veterans are recipients of financial benefits for school, but there are challenges to academic success which may not be experienced by other student groups. The challenges veterans face in their transition to higher education can be varied, so for the purpose of my documentary I will discover individual challenges. Many veterans of the United States military face transitional challenges from military to civilian status, which can obstruct completion of their educational goals at post-secondary institutions (Ahern, Worthen, Masters, Lippman, Ozer,

& Moos, R. 2015). The concept of challenges been identified, and these challenges will be explored to show the varied needs of veterans. With increasing student-veteran attendance because of the Post-9-11 GI Bill, the problem of addressing transitional needs in a uniform fashion becomes difficult as veterans' unique needs diversify (Radford, Bentz, Dekker & Paslov, 2016). For the purpose of my documentary, it is important to understand challenges for success. Some of the main challenges are identified; previously identified barriers to the student-veteran transition process included injuries suffered during combat, family commitments outside of school, financial difficulties of attending college, cultural differences between military life and campus life and diminished camaraderie (Ahern et al., 2015). Besides the individual challenges, there is also consideration for how well a college or university is prepared for veteran services. Post-secondary institutional structures are not generally designed to meet the needs of veterans, which include the convoluted processes of identifying veteran-specific benefits as well as inadequate guidance through existing campus support networks (Ahern et al., 2015). In discovering individual transition experiences for veterans the documentary will seek out challenges on an individual basis and challenges presented by institutions.

Critical Ethnography

The documentary project will rely upon the personal accounts of individual veterans' transition experiences, and addressing researcher bias is critical in telling a complete story. Additionally, critical ethnography will bring authenticity to a subject on a personal level with the exposure of the individual accounts. While critical ethnography is meant to free individuals from "oppression and domination" (May, 1997), it is also meant to "disrupt the social narrative" (Basquait, 2016). The disruption of the social narrative regarding perceptions of veterans is a goal of the documentary. Critical ethnography as a research method requires a researcher to

approach socially unorthodox subjects with objectivity as Basquait highlights, “Polygamy, even fundamentalist Mormon polygamy, cannot be categorized by one sweeping (and extremely negative) generalization” (2016). Treating all stories from all individuals equally will be the most effective measure to assure all veterans disclose their personal experiences in the documentary. Social perception cannot influence treatment of the human subjects. I want to develop the idea of a separation from social stigma and researcher bias to best represent my subjects. It is important to enter the production of the documentary without any bias that could bring doubt to my findings. In instances where there are controversial subjects, establishment of research boundaries must be set to differentiate subject identity from researcher bias (May, 1997). The approach of my research is to hear individual stories and relay those stories to the audience without injecting too much of myself. May continues to explain researcher intent: “The intent is not to change ideologies but to discuss them. Intent is not creating a consensus in thinking, but to discover aspects undiscovered” (1997). My documentary will emphasize the importance of a researcher reporting their findings in a way that is not authoritarian, but understanding of the sensitivities of the human subjects. The documentary will be informed, but not portray its findings as the definitive answer for veteran transition to higher education. Additionally, Basquait highlights the importance of recognizing cultural norms affecting research. This applies to the documentary, for there is an intent to let the veteran speak for themselves without any norms being imposed. In an effort to provide a more accurate depiction of the veterans’ experiences, application of critical ethnography in the documentary will not apply labels, but to start a conversation. It is for the purpose of a more accurate depiction of veterans in higher education. Furthering the importance of lessened bias, Basquait speaks of her own research as a method to explain a marginalized group separate from Western cultural norms

and to listen critically to a group defining itself (2016). In recognition of my own status as a veteran, I will not disclose too much of my own military or transition experiences in the interviews. Researchers can unknowingly influence the reactions of subjects, and I want to assure answers are not influenced by my experiences. Despite the intent of critical ethnography to reduce inequity, the “relationship between researcher and subject is an imbalanced power relationship” leading to unknown influence (May, 1997). It is for this reason my documentary will include accounts, pictures and narration from people other than myself. For greater validity, I shall emphasize the experiences of the subjects. To mitigate researcher influence, May suggests using standard research methods for greater acceptance, and to reduce the influence a researcher may have on the subject in defining their experience (1997). May provides guidance in conducting sound research which will be applied to my data collection during production.

Military veterans have a distinct cultural presence in society and within universities and colleges. The unique aspects of military service creating its own culture are evident through customs, behaviors and specific language amongst veterans. Therefore, the following definition of a specific, unique culture applies to veterans, “Culture can be understood as shared knowledge, language, styles of communication, values, and beliefs that groups use to manage relationships with others and to interpret their environments” (Viveros-Guzmán & Gertler, 2015). To best understand individual experiences within this culture, the documentary will employ critical ethnographic theory, because critical ethnography is social research based on the lived experiences of individuals. Critical ethnography also focuses on social control over people who may have been marginalized because of beliefs, socioeconomic status, occupation, or nationality (Viveros-Guzmán & Gertler, 2015). The previous explanation emphasizes reasons for researching in relation to social status. My documentary seeks to improve the lives of people

to prevent them from becoming even more marginalized. This position is supported by Francis & Kraus when they speak about the social status of veterans in the following passage, “Their status as veterans revealed many of the same challenges of other historically marginalized populations around access, oppression, power, and identity” (2012). These challenges pose the greatest risk to student veteran success. Social bias and misunderstanding of campus culture are present in many veterans’ college experiences, as I will seek to further discover. Veterans access and persist in college at lower rates than nonveterans, and they can encounter social dynamics on campus that are shaped by bias and stereotypes (Francis & Kraus, 2012). The aspects of social bias and misunderstanding of student-veterans are main factors in the upcoming documentary film. The application of critical ethnography will allow me to discover potential solutions to existing problems, through the analysis of patterns within the veteran responses in the documentary. Exposure of systematic deficiencies in veteran transition will come through personal accounts.

Critical ethnography deals with the personal experiences of individuals. Within a group as large and diverse as U.S. military veterans, there are variances in experiences and life outcomes. Homelessness has been problematic for many veterans, and it is an experience which has many negative life effects. According to Tsai, Mares & Rosenheck, “Research has found veterans are at increased risk for homelessness compared to the general population, particularly among veterans who have served in the all-volunteer force, which began effectively in 1975 following the Vietnam War” (2012). The experiences of these veterans is markedly different than veterans who transition to college or trade school and become professionals. One example of veterans becoming professionals through education is becoming teachers through the Troops to Teachers (TTT) Program. Parham & Gordon (2016) introduce their qualitative study

regarding TTT and the individual experiences of veteran-teachers, finding that these veterans have different experiences from their teaching colleagues, “Former service members can be bewildered by teachers who aren’t willing to share successful lesson plans or instructional materials and by the cliquishness and rivalry among faculty subgroups sometimes present in schools” (Parham & Gordon, 2016). The camaraderie of military service is many times absent from civilian culture, and this will also lead to different reactions from different veterans. The differences between a veteran who has become homeless and a veteran that has become a teacher include very different stories of transition, and it is the researcher’s responsibility to hold both accounts equally contributive to discover variances in adjusting. There are also differences between jobs and experiences in the military; one example is between the reserve and active duty. Zelcer introduces the concept of a military needing to shape its own culture to serve its own purpose, and to foster societies and communities with very specific socio-cultural dynamics with “shared rules, norms, traditions, texts, history, lore, hierarchies, vocabulary, and values” (2012). This shows how important it is to get an individual culture of people willing to serve in the military and the importance of those serving to buy-in to the culture. Zelcer then goes on to illustrate the differences between active duty and reserve experiences, highlighting occupational differences between the reserves and active duty. The social differences of living on a base and being submersed in military culture, versus that of living within a civilian community and being part-time military, creates different experiences (2012). Recognizing this difference between different experiences will help shape the questions to ask the subjects and the method in which the material will be presented. Both successes and failures in transition to higher education will be analyzed in the production of this documentary in consideration of the different experiences

of veterans. A former or current reservist will respond much differently than a veteran who was active duty, so this variance of experiences will be accounted for.

Rhetoric

For the subject of veteran transition to higher education there is a shortage of information for best methods of success. This shortage of information has served as the impetus for the documentary. Essentially, a rhetorical situation presented itself due to my proximity to and knowledge of veterans and veteran issues. Lloyd Bitzer introduces the concept of a rhetorical situation as the basis for any rhetorical discourse. Bitzer points out Rhetoric as a response to a question, or, “an exigence that strongly invites utterance” (1968). For my documentary I want to help veterans avoid common mistakes other veterans have made in the past while transitioning to college. And, since I have recognized these mistakes, I will act on it due to a need for current solutions. A definition of rhetoric is needed to offer insight into why the documentary is being created. Rhetoric can be defined as an “art for finding or inventing all available means to persuade an audience” (Portolano, 2012). I am trying to persuade veterans to attend school with success and to persuade an audience of non-veterans to define veterans on the veterans’ terms with an artistic creation. The persuasive nature of rhetoric is based upon the initial need for discourse. Timing is also important in delivering a rhetorical work. The rhetorical situation can “expire” (Bitzer, 1968), and efforts to mitigate an exigence will be diminished. In recognition of a rhetorical situation having an expiration attached to it, the documentary will be brought forth with current information. Rhetoric is a “response to a situation of a certain kind” (Bitzer, 1968). The documentary is a response to the situation of inequitable transitions presenting challenges to veterans.

The rhetorical situation for my documentary is attributed to the experiences of veterans in post-secondary education and the information they were given as they left the military. Veterans that have sought out support groups and interaction with other veterans on campus have had more success in adapting to college (Gregg, Howell, & Shordike, 2016), so part of the documentary will be to measure veterans responses to their particular campus networks. The documentary will also measure the effectiveness of veteran communities on campus and provide insights into using veteran services. Gregg, et al. inform the documentary by identifying veterans as a distinct group on campus with unique problems (2016). It is important to convey methods of success to mitigate educational obstacles in transition within this unique group. Veterans with college educations adapt to life outside the military with a 5% greater rate of life satisfaction than veterans with high school educations (Morin, 2011). Inspiring veterans to achieve their maximum benefits in college will enable a veteran to transition more easily through education. The U.S. Veterans Administration was budgeted \$12.6 billion for 1 million veterans in 2016 (VA, 2017). The VA's education program is too large to not uniformly address best methods for student success. The rhetorical situation for my documentary is that there is no clear method offered to transitioning veterans to best approach the campus veteran networks.

Documentary Film

The documentary will engage the viewer with both historical references and personal stories as evidence of a certain situation that can be mitigated. In addition to documentary film acting as a rhetorical device, it also serves as an educational method. Bill Nichols describes a documentary as informative, rhetorical and intriguing (2010). Creating a documentary which addresses these three topics in veteran transition to higher education will best be served as an expository documentary. The expository mode of documentary is an informative style of

documentary where the narrator is speaking directly to the viewer (Nichols, 2010). The purpose of the documentary is to provide a best methods approach to veterans. To accomplish this transition of knowledge, it is important to speak directly to the target audience.

In addition to the expository mode of documentary, I will introduce the five other modes of documentaries to offer an idea of why expository was chosen for this documentary. Nichols describes the additional five modes of documentary as poetic, observational, participatory, reflexive and performative (2010). Applications of poetic documentary may serve veterans in expressive ways, but in the instance of my documentary it would not be effective in a direct message approach. Poetic documentaries concentrate on the art of filmmaking and may offer convoluted narratives that are more abstract in nature (Nichols, 2010). An observational documentary would not serve viewers as there needs to be an explanation to the activities a viewer would see on screen. Certain documents and methods for success would be best conveyed by direct address and could not be explained by the viewer simply watching. Nichols describes observational documentaries as people going about their lives as if the camera were absent (2010). Participatory documentary would be effective in describing veteran benefits and experiences in education because of my status as a student-veteran. Although I will keep my participation to a minimum due to the critical ethnography aspect of my film, I will be doing voice-overs and participating in parts of the film. I will be incorporating aspects of participatory documentary due to the practical nature of producing a student documentary. Nichols says participatory documentary is when the filmmaker interacts with the subjects (2010), and I will be interacting. Documentary film does not have to adhere to a strict definition of any of the six documentary modes identified, so incorporating aspects of other types of documentaries may be planned or inadvertent. Nichols recognizes incorporating aspects of other modes of documentary

shows the creative nature of documentary film. He attributes this to the lines between modes being “blurred” (Nichols, 2010). The documentary will be about a subject other than the movie production, so reflexive documentary would not deliver the intended message. Reflexive documentary can inform about a subject because it augments the information in the other film and can allow a film producer to speak directly to an audience (Nichols, 2010). Performative combine other aspects of filmmaking in different ways. I will not employ this method because it appears to be contrary to critical ethnography. Nichols points out the central role of the filmmaker in the film itself (2010). It is not my experiences that should be foremost. My documentary employs critical ethnography which will seek out themes and potential solutions from the experiences of multiple people. It is these emerging themes which will guide the expository documentary.

Conclusion

Veteran educational benefits serve a large number of people and are a pillar of veteran care in the U.S. Other educational programs have been based on the GI Bill, and the democratization of higher education has been enhanced by the establishment of these benefits. The VA has a multi-billion dollar program that is meant to serve millions of veterans’ educational needs, but the military has yet to contribute consistent information about the best access of these benefits for soldiers transitioning out of the military. The veterans in the documentary will shape the themes within the research. Combining critical ethnography and expository documentary will allow the viewer to be exposed to multiple experiences of veteran transition to college. Artistic treatment of the insights of veterans will serve as information to future student-veterans.

III. Hypothesis

The information gap concerning GI Bill benefits can lead to a disadvantage for veterans entering higher education. The goal of this documentary is to offer experiences of veterans and those that work with veterans in higher education in order to develop practices that enhance veterans' successful transition to higher education.

IV. Method

I am making a documentary film with an estimated run time of twenty five minutes.

V. Working Guide

The following section will include the three-part process of preproduction, production and postproduction with general timelines associated with the production of a twenty to thirty minute documentary film.

Preproduction

The preproduction phase of this project will begin after I have received approval from the IRB for the use of human subjects. This phase will take approximately two weeks to complete. November 7, 2017 is estimated beginning date for preproduction. I will gather equipment on November 7. I will compile the human subject roster, receiving signed informed consent forms from the human subjects and arranging times for the veterans to be interviewed on November 8.

Production

Production will begin on November 9, 2017. I will film veterans until November 13. I will film B Roll on November 14. Production will be completed on November 14.

Postproduction

Postproduction will begin on November 15, 2017. I will compile themes and have an outline of documentary sections on November 18. I will conduct final editing and sound from November 19 through November 24. A final, defensible copy of the documentary will be ready On November 27. I will submit the documentary for defense at that time.

VI. Project

Twenty five minute documentary film. The title of which is: *From Quiver to Quill: U.S. military veteran transition to higher education.*

Requests for the completed version of *From Quiver to Quill: U.S. military veteran transition to higher education* can be made by contacting Mark L. Walch, MA at m_walch@u.pacific.edu.

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