UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Thank You for Your Service: The Rise of the Veteran Nonprofit Sector

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by

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The Dissertation of Erica Bender is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandfathers – Gideon Smith, Guadalupe Felan, Ron Bender, and Billy Thornbury – the first veterans I ever knew. Their military service inspired a curiosity in me from a very young age and this research would not have happened without them. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Thank You for Your Service: The Rise of the Veteran Nonprofit Sector

by

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In this dissertation, I explore the changing landscape of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations in the United States in the post-9/11 era. I show that the field of nonprofit veterans' services has recently seen the rise of 501(c)(3) public charities, professional service-delivering firms, and that this change has initiated disruptions in the veteran-focused nonprofit sector. Through an ethnographic study of veterans' charities in San Diego, California, I explore how

actors in these new organizations are shaping the meanings that surround veteran-focused nonprofit work. I highlight how veteran-focused charities establish themselves within a local context while navigating institutional logics from both the nonprofit sector and the military. Emerging logics and practices, informed by the military backgrounds of the actors involved, are shaping how these organizations engage in intra-sector collaboration and the ways they negotiate the gendered logics behind the military and nonprofit sector. Although veterans' supportive services are an important issue in American consciousness, little scholarly attention has been paid to the private-sector agencies that provide for veterans' welfare. Attention to these organizations can yield important insights for scholars of veterans, the military, and nonprofit organizations. Not only are veteran-focused charities generating novel organizational practices, their work underscores veterans' status in American society.

Chapter 1: Thank You for Your Service

It is 5:00 a.m. on a Saturday morning in July. Even at this early hour, it is a hot summer day in San Diego. The clouds of the nightly marine layer hang thick overhead, making the air clammy. I stand outside a football field at San Diego High School, in the heart of downtown San Diego. It is quiet; the city is just waking up. I wait at the gate for my volunteer supervisor to let me onto the field, which has been reconfigured into a sizable encampment. Up and down the field are rows of olive green awnings, beige camouflage tents, and American flags. The field looks like a miniature military base, a fully operational camp designed for the weekend's event – an annual comprehensive service fair for homeless veterans called "At Ease."[1] The name purposefully invokes the image of a commander telling troops to rest.

My supervisor, a slight and friendly social worker, greets me at the gate with a wide smile. She has been volunteering with Vet Town San Diego, the organization that puts on the event, for many years. She lets me through the gate and shows me to the first of four shifts that I will work that weekend, which is at the service provider check-in table. Here, I help check in the many organizations participating in the event. They range from local government offices, to large hospital groups, nonprofit organizations, and local posts of veteran voluntary associations (e.g. the Veterans of Foreign Wars or VFW). All have come to At Ease to provide some service to the homeless veterans participating in the event.

After four hours at provider check-in, it is now 9:00 a.m. and time for the event to start, and time for me to go to my next shift. While walking to my post at the kitchen tent, I pause for a

[1] All names that appear in this dissertation are pseudonyms, including the names of individuals, organizations, and programs. In this example, I use a name that conveys similar meaning as the real name. There are a few organizations that are mentioned by their real names because they were not formally part of my study. See the Appendix for more information.

moment to take everything in. I turn and look back at the provider check-in, where so many different organizations have lined up waiting to be of service to veterans. The volume and variety of services strike me: “What fantastic coordination,” I think to myself, feeling an odd sense of accomplishment.

As the event begins, I observe the homeless veterans beginning to enter through the main gate. Like many Americans, I know that veterans make up a significant proportion of the homeless population. But seeing them here, in this context, the sadness of that fact is arresting. Against the backdrop of American flags, camouflage tents, and an endless array of stars and stripes, I had been feeling a surge of patriotism. But when juxtaposed with the sight of dozens of homeless veterans coming through the gates, their bodies weathered from living on the street, I feel a sense of pain, a sense of failure. I sit for a moment with these emotional contradictions, trying to reconcile the excitement of patriotism, the accomplishment of wide-ranging service provision, and the cutting sadness of seeing so many veterans setting up camp. I know that these emotions are related, but I am not yet sure how or why.

The parking lot outside the football field has been turned into a mobile kitchen where over 30 people are scrambling to assemble food. Once there, I am directed to an assembly-line for preparing instant mashed potatoes. On the line are four retired Marines of the Vietnam era, all members of a local VFW post. We each have large aluminum trays filled with dehydrated potato powder; the Marines and I stir the paste while another volunteer comes around to pour boiling water into the trays until the mashed potatoes reach the right consistency. In no time, the Marines and I are covered in potato dust that turns to cement on our skin and clothes. As we stir, they tell me their stories. I ask them why they think some veterans end up as volunteers for At Ease, while others end up as beneficiaries. It is a question no one can answer on the spot, but they concur that

what matters most is having supportive services available for veterans when they separate from the military. One of them gestures emphatically to the field full of service providers, “Imagine if we had this when we came home!” He tells me that there is a greater effort to recognize and assist today’s veterans, and he hopes it will last.

The next day, I spend the morning at the clothing tent. I help organize the mountains of donated clothes and assist beneficiaries with “shopping” for themselves and, for many, their children. In the afternoon I head to my last shift in the final hours of the event: staffing the luggage area at the main gate, where beneficiaries are required to check in their possessions before entering the camp. While there, I help a young man with a nonfunctioning right arm re-pack his things to accommodate his new supplies. While we are re-packing he says he has just been admitted to the rehab center at Vet Town. He is visibly excited to start a new chapter.

As the event draws to a close, I cannot help but notice that the beneficiaries look so different from yesterday – they have received care from doctors and nurses, consulted with lawyers, gotten haircuts and new clothes, and even had a massage or acupuncture treatments. Today, it is harder to tell who is a volunteer and who is a beneficiary. The service providers look both weary and exhilarated, having spent nearly 48 hours mobilizing their organizational resources for the beneficiaries at camp. It is in these final moments that I recall the emotional tension I had felt the prior morning. I begin to understand how my conflicting emotions are related. At Ease beneficiaries leave the field as *living proof* of the power of organizations. It is organizations that leverage their position in the community, that amass resources, that provide the support that the potato-stirring Marines had all agreed was so necessary. I think to myself that if veterans’ life chances sit somewhere between national pride and national shame, so too do the organizations that serve them.

My time at At Ease catalyzed a new awareness for how I think about veterans' issues. In the weeks and months after At Ease, I kept replaying the revelation I felt in the final moments of the event. At Ease offered a snapshot, a cross-section of a service landscape that was multi-faceted, well-networked, and relatively comprehensive. Yet, in my years of studying the military I had never encountered scholarship on these veterans' service providers. I became increasingly aware of the fact that an organizational analysis of veteran programs was not only missing from most sociological literature on veterans, it was absolutely essential for understanding the future of veterans' support in the United States.

In this dissertation, I explore a segment of the organizational landscape of which I caught a glimpse that July morning. In particular, I turn my attention to the nonprofit organizations that are at work in the veteran services space. After interviewing 35 nonprofit organization leaders in San Diego, observing several meetings and events for service providers, spending 9 months working part-time for a veteran-focused nonprofit organization, and compiling multi-level organizational data, I have unearthed some of the trends, norms, constraints, and logics that are influencing this sector of nonprofit organizations.

The underlying thread that unifies each of the ensuing chapters is that the veteran-focused nonprofit world has begun to shift in the post-9/11 era.[2] Throughout the 20th Century, the organizations at the core of veteran-focused nonprofit work were voluntary associations, commonly called "posts" of war veterans, legally categorized as 501(c)(19) tax-exempt entities. The veterans on the potato-stirring line at At Ease were members of this kind of organization. But in the contemporary veteran nonprofit landscape, a new kind of organization is on the rise:

[2] "Post-9/11" refers to the social, political, and military environment following the September 11, 2001 attacks. These events inspired new military operations in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom, OEF) and Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom, OIF). The post-9/11 era continues through today through the Global War on Terror, now formally named Operation Inherent Resolve.

501(c)(3) public charities. These organizations are the professional service-delivering firms we often think about when we imagine a "nonprofit organization," and for good reason. Public charities make up nearly two-thirds of all tax-exempt entities in the United States. Many scholars have documented how and why public charities catapulted to national prominence during the 20th Century (c.f. Hall 1992; Salaman 2002; Skocpol 2003). I do not reproduce those historical accounts here, suffice to say that the end result of these forces is that, in many ways, the nonprofit sector has broadly shifted from a culture of "doing with" to a culture of "doing for" (Skocpol 2003).

The rise in public charities has only just begun in the world of veterans' services. Where public charities comprise the vast majority of organizations in the nonprofit sector generally, they account for only a small minority of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations; still largely overshadowed by veterans voluntary association posts. But though they may be few in number, veteran charities are mighty. While veterans posts are on the decline, public charities are on the rise. Between 2001 and 2016, veteran-focused public charities went from about 2 percent of this sector to over 15 percent. Fueled by philanthropic contributions and public contracts, they are quickly rising to prominence as *the* purveyors of veterans' services outside of government programs. In each of the chapters that follow, I ask how these organizations are taking root in the veteran-focused nonprofit realm, and the ways in which these organizations are creating the meanings and practices that govern private-sector service provision for veterans.

In this introductory chapter, I will set the stage for understanding veteran-focused charities as unique organizations worthy of systematic inquiry. My goal in this chapter is to offer the background information that I have learned to be most necessary for interpreting and understanding the shifts currently underway in the veteran-focused nonprofit sector. I will first

offer a brief discussion of key interactions I experienced during my field work that alerted me to the cultural boundaries being enacted within these organizations. Then, I will trace the necessity of understanding veterans' needs through attention to the organizational service apparatus that surrounds them. A remnant of civil-military relations, the veterans' service industry is the organizational manifestation of veterans' status in American society. From there, I will define what I mean by "veteran-focused" nonprofit organizations, discuss the relationship between the public and nonprofit sectors broadly, and highlight how a robust public sector for veterans is connected to emerging trends in the nonprofit sector. Following an influx of contracts from the public-sector, the veteran-focused nonprofit sector is changing shape, shifting away from the war veterans posts of the 20th century toward professionalized charitable firms. But this shift complicates the taken-for-granted wisdom in the nonprofit literature that "nonprofit federalism" is a neoliberal strategy that precedes a decline or transfer of public sector spending. For veterans, public spending is increasing alongside increases in contracts for nonprofit organizations.

Finally, I will make the case for situating veteran-focused nonprofit organizations in between the institutional constraints of the nonprofit sector and those of the military. These organizations are socially adjacent to the military in terms of their clientele as well as their staff and leadership. As a result, individuals in this sector bring military-informed repertoires to their nonprofit work. Military backgrounds not only give them substantive knowledge or "street credentials" (Suarez 2010) for understanding veterans, but also a social and professional past on which they draw when making decisions. To that end, I will make the case that studying these organizations requires a theoretical lens that accounts for the spaces where institutional demands are negotiated by real people in local contexts. In addition, I will briefly explore how the cultural proximity to the military also provides these organizations with a powerful, but risky, meaning

system. Because veterans are symbolically important for national identity, veteran-focused organizations can become the symbolic keepers of their welfare. I will conclude this chapter by previewing what is about to come: an exploration of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations *as organizations* and the ways in which this sector is changing in the post-9/11 era.

MEETING THE VETERANS IN VETERAN-FOCUSED CHARITIES

Before I present a theoretical framework, delve into an analysis, or present any findings, I need to start by offering some information about the *kinds* of people at work in these organizations. Soon after starting my fieldwork with veteran-focused charities, which I call "VNPOs," I noticed something curious: almost everyone I encountered was a veteran. Many of these veterans spent decades in the military and had been involved in veteran-oriented work for much of their lives. Some of these veterans had formed or began working for a VNPO directly after serving in the military, literally going into a VNPO straight from the military. Almost half of the VNPOs in San Diego were led by veterans, while another third were led by veterans' family members.[3] This preponderance of military-affiliated individuals also extended to Boards of Directors; three quarters of San Diego VNPOs had Boards where at least half of the members are military-affiliated and most of these individuals were veterans.[4]

On the surface, the preponderance of veterans in "veteran-focused" nonprofit organizations makes sense; veterans may be better able to perceive what other veterans need and build programs to address those needs. The experiential knowledge of veterans can answer the relatively straightforward question of *why* there are so many veterans in this sector. But a bit deeper, beyond the surface, the concentration of veterans in VNPOs begets a bigger question:

[3] This figure is based on a sub-sample of local veteran-focused nonprofit organizations for which I could discern the military affiliation of top leadership (n=75). See the Appendix for more information.
[4] This figure is based on a sub-sample of organizations that maintained biographical information about Board Members on their (n=41). See the Appendix for more information.

what effect is this concentration of veterans having in this nonprofit sector? One of the first things I observed upon entering the field was that individuals were "doing military" with each other. That is, they were interacting in a way that emphasized their military membership. When veterans in these organizations interacted, they asserted their "military-ness" by telling tales from their service, poking fun at other military branches, and even changing their embodiment. As Lande (2007) and Hockey (2009) have observed, military personnel often "switch on," by changing their posture, gaze, tone of voice, and tempo of speech. I observed similar behaviors among the veterans in VNPOs. They stood and walked with the bearing characteristic of military personnel. They spoke with the booming projection often heard on military installations. During a meeting of service providers that I observed, every single veteran in the room refused to use the microphone when addressing the audience, even though civilians did use the microphone.

The concentration of veterans in veteran-focused nonprofits also has deeper, more subtle implications. In my observations, military affiliation was a screen for evaluating a person's legitimacy, the sense that they were in the veterans' game "for the right reasons." After describing my research to folks in the field, almost all of them would ask me if my father was a veteran, or, more generally, who in my family had been a veteran. I regularly observed the "veteran status" screen at work during meetings of the Veterans Action Network, a coalition-building organization for VNPOs. I learned the hard way that it was crucial to get to these meetings at least 30 minutes before they began at 8:00 a.m. because the room would be completely full by 7:50 a.m. and spilling into the hallway by 8:00 a.m. After taking one of the last available seats 10 minutes before the start my first meeting, I joked with the stranger sitting next to me about having to arrive earlier next time. The stranger looked at me and asked rhetorically, "You weren't in the military, were you?" I affirmed that I was a civilian and he

laughed. He said, “When you’re in fleet you don’t show up on time. If you’re on time, you’re late!”

Another instance where individuals enacted boundaries by way of military affiliation was during the “sound-off” at the Veterans Action Network. Each meeting of the Veterans Action Network began by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a “sound-off,” during which every person in the room had to declare their name, the organization they were representing, and their “veteran status.” Those who were veterans not only asserted as such, but also included their rank, branch, even their military occupational specialty. Those who were not veterans would offer some other kind of military affiliation, such as being a military spouse, military parent, military child, and beyond. By the end of the sound off, almost everyone had made some symbolic gesture to belonging to the military, even if in a stretched or roundabout way. The ubiquity of military-affiliation among individuals in the sector meant either that being connected to veterans was *truly* important to these people, or that it was a necessary signal of in-group belonging.

These gestures may seem insignificant, but they show the enduring power of military membership. At the most basic level, veterans in this sector are enacting a kind of insularity that draws a line between people who know or are veterans, and are thus “in it for the right reasons,” versus those who are not. Even after veterans separate from the military, they retain strong military-affiliated identities (Castro et al. 2015). These identities influence not only how individuals interact in this sector, but also the deeper meanings that drive their work. As Hwang and Powell (2009) and Suarez (2010) have shown, the professional backgrounds of nonprofit leaders influence how their organizations function. Just as management experience or substantive

expertise matter for nonprofit organizations, the military experience of those in the veteran-focused nonprofit sector is an important factor in how these organizations go about their work.

VETERANS NEEDS AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

There are about 22 million veterans in the United States, and approximately 3 million of these veterans have served in the post-9/11 era. Today, only about 2% of the adult population in the United States has a military background. The transition to an All-Volunteer Force in 1973[5] transformed the military into a smaller, but more permanent, labor force compared to the military of previous eras. The transition to a smaller permanent force, fewer large-scale military conflicts, and the elimination of compulsory service meant that the majority of subsequent American generations did not *need* to serve in the military. As a result, older veterans make up the majority of the veteran population and younger veterans' proportion relative to the civilian population is at its lowest in American history. Though the veteran population is shrinking and aging, their cultural importance remains high. After the shift to an All-Volunteer Force, the notion of veteran virtue has only increased, precisely *because* new generations of veterans choose to join the military rather than join the military through conscription.

Researchers from a variety of fields, including sociology, have spent considerable effort studying veterans lives and life chances, but virtually none of them have examined veteran-focused organizations. The bulk of veteran-focused research is focused on individual outcomes, either leveraging large surveys to gauge the long-term effects of military service or employing qualitative methods to observe how veterans cope with life challenges. Though findings vary, literature has in common is the tendency to reveal trends in veterans' life chances while stopping

[5] This legislation marked the end of mandatory military conscription in the United States. Rather than drawing labor power from men who were drafted during wartime, the military was transitioned to a permanent, voluntary labor force.

short of exploring the organizational forces that may come to influence those outcomes. One particularly popular area of veteran-focused research in in social mobility. Veterans have higher rates of unemployment, but also have higher earnings and rates of educational enrollment than similarly-situated civilians (Kleykamp 2013). There are variations in this trend. Black veterans see a better return for military service on all measures of employment and education. (Hirsch and Mehay 2003; Greenberg and Rosenheck 2007; Routon 2014; Kleykamp 2007; Teachman 2007). Women veterans face negative employment effects of military service, but positive educations effects (Cooney et al. 2003; Prokos and Padavic 2000). More time in the military and/or combat exposure often correlates with lower earnings and higher unemployment (Bryant et al. 1993; Prigerson et al. 2002).

Other well-documented areas of veteran scholarship are that of mental and physical health and crime. In particular, highly-publicized stories of Post-Traumatic Stress, veteran suicide, and Traumatic Brain Injury has sparked considerable interest in these topics (Wall 2012; Xue et al. 2015). Neary one quarter of VA patients are diagnosed with a possible mental health disorder (Kang and Hyams 2005). Approximately 20 percent of all suicides (as identified on death certificates) in 2010 were committed by veterans (Kemp and Bossarte 2012). Aside from suicide, veteran mortality is generally 10-15 percent *lower* than the civilian population, a phenomenon labeled the "healthy soldier effect" due to the high levels of physical fitness required and instilled during military work (McLaughlin et al. 2008). However, veterans are also likely to experience military-related illness and disability, particularly in the areas of musculoskeletal disorders, Traumatic Brain Injury (O'Neil et al. 2014), digestive problems (Kang and Hyams 2005), and hearing problems (Theodoroff et al. 2015). Finally, literature on veterans also often documents the correlation between veteran status and crime. Approximately

10 percent of the nation's incarcerated population are veterans (Elbogen et al. 2012), a figure that is largely driven by the high rate of Vietnam veteran incarceration (Wright et al. 2005). In their analysis of over 20,000 retired and military separated veterans, Snowden et al. (2017) found that veteran lifetime incarceration rates are almost double that of civilians.

The trends documented in the veteran population are not necessarily unique to veterans. Many individuals in the United Sates suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress, joblessness, incarceration, barriers to education, homelessness, or suicide. But unlike many civilian populations, veterans can take advantage of a constellation of public and privately-funded benefits. Veterans have access to an astounding number of services, from federal programs like the G.I. Bill or VA Home Loans, to state-funded programs such as vocational training and counseling, to private programs like hiring and education assistance at local businesses and universities. There is an impressive service infrastructure built around veterans in the United States, despite shrinking numbers of veterans relative to the American population and continued efforts to make social welfare programs more austere.

Ask a casual observer why veterans receive so many services while other populations are denied social welfare, and they will likely respond with a variation of the same answer: veterans *deserve* services. Something about military participation sets veterans apart from the rest of society and changes the service provision equation. To understand why veterans "deserve" more than the average civilian, it is necessary to take a brief detour and situate veterans within the broader logic of *civil-military relations*, or the relationship between the state, the military, and civil society.

In Western democracies like the United States, civil-military relations generally refer to the social and political mechanisms that ensure civilian control of the military or, put another

way, the forces that prevent the military from forcibly overpowering the state. In order to maintain civilian control of the military and protect a "culture of civilian supremacy," the military is intentionally designed to be structurally distinct and separate from other institutions (Huntington 1957; Janowitz 1964; Rukavishnikov and Pugh 2018). The removal of the military from the fabric of civil society instills in military leadership "that they are the servants, not the masters, of civilian society" (Rukavishnikov and Pugh 2018: 129). This separation also has benefits for the military; it is, as Owens (2011) has described, a *bargain*. The state and public sequester the military as "apart" from society, and in return the military is entrusted with resources, decision-making power, cultural valorization, and relative autonomy in pursuing its mission. The military operates fairly unencumbered by the surrounding society and is transformed into the enduring keepers of national identity (Tomforde 2018).

The separation of the military from society is a familiar concept in American consciousness. Though it is unclear the extent to which military personnel ever really "leave" society, joining the military involves a symbolic departure from social institutions (Moskos 1973; Segal et al. 1974). This is why new military recruits have to "ship off" to basic training, why personnel work in compounds guarded by electrified fences and armed guards, why military bases have an "other world" quality to them, and why "getting out" of the military initiates a process of "re-joining" or "transitioning" to society.

The act of making veterans and servicemembers distinct from their civilian counterparts is a crucial first step for rhetorical valorization; civil-military relations enable veterans and servicemembers to be seen as a kind of "other." The state and civil society are then able to valorize military personnel by transforming mere employment in the military into "military service." Regardless of the individual's intentions or conditions for joining the military, the

public symbolically constructs what is often an instrumental decision into one of patriotism and sacrifice (Rostker 2006). This tendency has been particularly salient in the post-9/11 era, where the fallout from the treatment of Vietnam War veterans, the full realization of the All-Volunteer force, and the known traumas of war in Iraq and Afghanistan have exacerbated the tendency to view military enlistment as a sacrifice (Stahl 2009; Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991).

The logic of civil-military relations is the cultural foundation for the vast service infrastructure for veterans, whose military membership signals both a distinction from civilians as well as relative valorization. Services for veterans are not deemed "handouts," they are earned advantages paid on behalf of the state and the civil society (Coy et al. 2008; Schwartz and Bayma 1999). As a result, the service infrastructure for veterans can expand in relation to public support for veterans, which remains steadily high in the post-9/11 era (MacLean and Kleykamp 2014; Williams 2017). Veterans' services become an organizational manifestation of veterans' status in society.

Yet inquiry into this service infrastructure is almost entirely absent from sociological scholarship on veterans. This is surprising because, for every major need area outlined in scholarly literature, there are dozens of federal, state, county, municipal, and nonprofit programs designed to assist veterans with those exact problems. Scholars seem to be aware of these services; nearly every scholarly investigation of veterans' needs concludes by making recommendations for veteran support programs and service providers. To speak of veterans' needs is to tacitly invoke the concept of organizations that mobilize to address those needs.

Service-providing organizations are the implied but invisible extension of discourse on veterans' issues. Despite the clear connection between veterans' needs and veterans' services, there have been few scholarly studies of those *providers*. Scholarship on veterans' service

providers have often taken the form of program assessments and evaluation reports conducted by the VA and other state-run agencies. However, beyond these evaluations, the literature on veteran service providers is surprisingly scarce. While sporadic case studies of a few veteran service programs exist (c.f. Pederson et al. 2015; Russell 2009), these programs are treated phenomenologically, rather than as entry points to the broader organizational apparatus that mobilizes on veterans' behalf. There has been virtually no scholarship on veteran services providers *as organizations.* In other words, there has been little attempt to systematically understand veterans service providers as members of a field where different kinds of actors vie for resources, legitimacy, and the authority to shape reality. There is a proliferation of field analyses on organizational arenas in which veterans also exist – healthcare, education, and housing – yet not for the organizations that are *in the business* of serving veterans. For a truly sociological understanding of veterans' support, it is necessary to step back and set these organizations, their actors, and their behaviors against a broader structural and cultural context. It is crucial that events and programs such as At Ease are not viewed phenomenologically, but rather as social actions that are enabled and constrained by inter-organizational and institutional forces.

DEFINING THE VETERAN-FOCUSED NONPROFIT SECTOR

As my volunteer experience with At Ease revealed, there is a robust sector of private-sector nonprofit organizations working in veterans' support. These agencies range from general-focus organizations that offer some services to veterans, to organizations that devote all of their programming to veterans. I call the latter of these "veteran-focused nonprofit organizations" or VNPOs. While VNPOs may make up only a small segment of the massive nonprofit

organizational sector in the United States economy, they can be a major center of gravity for veterans and, as I will show, are taking shape as a unique sub-sector unto themselves.

It should be stated directly that there is no widely agreed upon definition nor term for the social space in which nonprofit organizations exist, though is quite clear that they constitute an organizational field or sector (Dimaggio and Powell 1983; Scott 2014). Scholars who study nonprofit organizations have called this sector by many names, such as the third sector, the voluntary sector, or charitable sector. I choose the term "nonprofit sector" because it most highly invokes the crucial factor that separates these organizations from others – that they do not distribute excess revenue as profits to stakeholders. Going forward, my use of the term nonprofit sector is based on Anheier and Salaman's (2006) operational definition of this sector as one that is organized, private, self-governing, non-profit-distributing, and non-compulsory.

Throughout this dissertation, I define a VNPO as an organization in line with the above operational definition with two important additions. First, my use of VNPO generally refers to organizations that are 501(c)(3) public charities. Though sometimes I will qualify VNPOs as either veteran charities or veterans' voluntary associations, I highlight the former in my study because they are emergent in this sector. Second, this term refers to charities that devote a significant proportion of its staff, resources, or identity to supportive services for veterans. By "significant," I mean that at least half of the programs offered by the organization are exclusively designed and offered to veterans or military servicemembers. These organizations put veterans at the core of their missions. Unlike service agencies that happen to enroll veterans in their programs, VNPOs intentionally build programs uniquely suited for veterans and veterans only. There is a veteran-centric exclusivity to both the services they offer as well as their organizational identities.

THE STATE AND THE VETERAN-FOCUSED NONPROFIT SECTOR

Like other arenas of the nonprofit sector, VNPOs exist in relation to the public sector, or government-led programs and resources. But while other areas of public sector spending have either dwindled or risked being cut in recent decades, public spending on veterans is on the rise. Veterans can receive services from a variety of public-sector organizations, which often leverage institutional data to access veterans and deliver programming even if a veteran does not personally seek services. For example, every separating military servicemember is required to attend a "Transition Assistance Program" (TAP) that covers comprehensive challenge areas (housing, employment, disability, etc.) and gives veterans the opportunity to enroll in programs. TAPs are federally-mandated and bring together a variety of service providers and information. In 2011, Congressional lawmakers passed legislation to open more funding streams to revamp TAP programs. Today, TAPs engage multiple public-sector agencies including the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Labor, and Education as well as the Small Business Administration. TAPs that are delivered through military contractors will also often feature private-sector business programs and nonprofit service providers.

Once a veteran is officially separated from the military, they are able to take advantage of the enormous service infrastructure at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The VA consists of three wings: the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), and the National Cemeteries Association (NCA).[6] About half of post-9/11 veterans utilize the VBA to access G.I. Bill benefits, and nearly 60 percent of all veterans

[6] VHA centers provide comprehensive physical and mental healthcare programs to over 9 million veterans and their families. In addition to general health care, the VHA also sponsors several long- and short-term health programs and provides funding for veterans to attend private-sector programs. The VBA oversees provision of disability, pension, and educational (GI Bill) benefits and provides programs in employment, vocational training, financial and budget management, home loans, and insurance. The NCA provides burial space, a headstone/marker, and Presidential Memorial Certificates for deceased veterans as well as grief support programs for their surviving family members.

utilize VHA health care or collect disability benefits. In addition to these federal programs, state- and local-level governmental agencies also offer publicly-funded veterans support programs.

One consequence of the robust public sector services for veterans is that the veteran-focused nonprofit sector looks quite different than service arenas with less governmental support. As Weisbrod (1975) and Hansmann (1980) have argued in what has become knowns as the "Three Failures" theory, nonprofit organizations form in response to state and business sector programs; if the public sector or private sector are not adequately meeting the needs of some population, the "third sector" of nonprofit organizations mobilizes to provide supplementary support. Contemporary scholars have re-conceptualized the public-private-nonprofit relationship as less adversarial and more integrative (Dimaggio and Anheier 1990; Smith and Gronbjerg 2006; Steinberg 2006). These theories consider the nonprofit sector as the result of individual-decision making, wherein nonprofit entrepreneurs form organizations in response to perceived openings and individual motivations. The public sector can enable more nonprofit organizations through tax incentives or public funding, or hinder nonprofits through weak leadership, uneven enforcement of law, or overzealous regulation. In this way, the public and nonprofit sectors are mutually reinforcing: a thriving nonprofit sector provides cost-offsetting social welfare while public sector support for a population or service area can empower nonprofit organizations to thrive (Smith and Gronbjerg 2006).

In the history of veteran-support services, strong public-sector support enabled veterans associations to flourish. Veterans associations, like the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and the American Legion, are among the largest and most enduring nonprofit organizations in the United States (Skocpol 1995 and 2003). These organizations have also had a profound impact on public sector veterans' services, leveraging their status and large member

base to pass the G.I. Bill, VA eligibility reforms, veteran mortgage programs, and beyond (Glantz 2009). For decades, veterans' voluntary associations have co-existed with the public benefit apparatus and have been instrumental in shaping that apparatus to be more comprehensive.

But beginning in the 1980s, the nonprofit world began to change, though the effect of these changes were not immediately seen in the veteran-focused nonprofit sector. Once characterized by voluntary associations, the nonprofit sector expanded and eventually became saturated with professionalized service-delivery firms (Skocpol 2003). One major catalyst in this shift was the government's move to "contract" public sector services to nonprofit providers rather than directly engage in service provision, a trend since labeled as "nonprofit federalism" (Boris and Steuerle 2006). Literature on nonprofit federalism traces its intellectual roots to resource dependence, or the tendency of organizations to strategically manipulate their missions, structures, and practices in order to secure the resources they need (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). As Anheier and Salaman (2006) explain, the move toward nonprofit federalism was an artifact of the "new public management" advocated by neoliberal public policies. On the heels of the elections of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, the shift toward nonprofit contracts reflected skepticism that the state should be the primary provider for social welfare. Once federal and state governments became a funder, rather than provider, of social welfare services, the constraints of public contracts altered how nonprofit organizations went about their work. Contractual conditions of accountability, reporting, and formalized practices moved nonprofit organizations to become more rationalized and business-like. Scholars have long documented the relationship between resource dependence and nonprofit federalism in arenas such as childcare (Gronbjerg 1998), the arts (Wuthnow 2006), hospitals (Proenca et al. 2000), and activism (Minkoff 2002).

Nonprofit federalism did not necessarily create an automatic, top-down coupling effect in organizations; rather, it blended with the lived experiences and sense-making that occur day-to-day in nonprofit organizations and has slowly altered the sector over time (Binder 2007; Minkoff and Powell 2006; Salaman 1995). Evidence of this alteration is the unprecedented growth in 501(c)(3) public charities, organizations that fundraise via tax-deductible donations to provide "public benefit" services. These organizations are the primary recipients of public sector contracts and thus the most subject to the constraints of resource dependence. As a result, these organizations are more likely to be technical-rational bureaucracies compared to "mutual benefit" organizations, or associations that advocate on behalf of members (e.g. unions, homeowners associations, or posts of war veterans). Since the 1980s, the overall growth of the nonprofit sector has largely been driven by the proliferation professional service-delivering organizations, which grew by 77 percent between 1989 and 2000 and today comprise over two-thirds of all nonprofit organizations (Boris and Steuerle 2006).

The trend of nonprofit federalism often taken-for-granted in nonprofit literature did not happen for veterans' services. At the same time that new public management made nonprofit organizations and philanthropy the new purveyors of social welfare, public expenditures on veterans remained consistently high. To date, the federal Department of Veterans Affairs remains the primary service and welfare provider for veterans. As reviewed above, VA healthcare and benefits cover well over 60 percent of veterans. Moreover, the VA budget only continues to rise; between 2008 and 2015, the VA budget more than doubled. Despite the VA's perceived failures and inefficiencies, the VA is widely popular among veterans and some have argued that this example of socialized welfare offers the "best care anywhere" in the United States (American Customer Satisfaction Index 2018; Longman 2007).

But the trend toward public sector contracts hast started to take hold in veterans' services. Alongside consistently high VA spending, the post-9/11 era has also seen an increase in public contracts for nonprofit veterans' services. The most obvious of these is the overhauling of the post-9/11 G.I. Bill, which opened more revenue for educational institutions that enrolled veterans and expanded eligibility to different kinds of educational programs. Another notable example is the "Supportive Services for Veteran Families" program, or SSVF, which has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in grants to nonprofit entities providing assistance to at-risk and low-income veterans or their families. In general, grants from the VA have exploded in the post-9/11 era. Between 2008 and 2014, VA-issued grants increased by almost 600 percent, from $205 million in 2008 to $1.4 billion in 2014 (Carter and Kidder 2015).

The explosive growth in federal grants for veterans' services is a remarkable departure from prior eras. This proliferation of public contracts has been the driving force behind a pronounced shift currently underway in the veteran-focused nonprofit world. As witnessed in other areas of the nonprofit sector, 501(c)(3) organizations are beginning to take root in the veteran-focused nonprofit sector. At the same time that the behemoth veterans associations of the 20th century have started to decline, veteran-focused public charities are on the rise. I detail this phenomenon in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Even though the veteran-focused nonprofit sector appears to be moving in the same direction as other nonprofit sectors, it is not clear that veteran-focused organizations will simply mimic other nonprofit sectors. One reason is that public sector contracts are not being used to "transfer" public funds to nonprofits. The rise in VA grants is occurring *alongside* overall increases in public sector spending for veterans. In the veteran service sector, the state is not turning to nonprofit organizations as the new suppliers of veterans' welfare. Rather, contracts to

nonprofit organizations are used to supplement public programs. Many contracts will often require nonprofit organizations to also enroll more veterans in public benefits.

The coexistence of public spending and public contracts to nonprofits is another product of civil-military relations. To a degree, states are *indebted* to veterans and servicemembers for their roles as the enforcers of state interests and the purveyors of legitimate violence (Weber 1946). Through their fulfillment of the state's obligations, service members and veterans become entitled to state protection and benefits (Desch 2009; Nielsen and Snider 2009; Snyder 1999 and 2003). The state, in turn, becomes institutionally bound to veterans (Skocpol 1995). This is one reason why the state faces difficulty transferring veteran welfare obligations to the private sector, even when confronted with neoliberal calls to privatize veterans' care.

The intricate public-nonprofit relationship regarding veterans complicates some of the taken-for-granted wisdom in scholarship on nonprofit organizations. Most scholars have noted that nonprofit federalism has been a tool in the neoliberal agenda. In veterans' services, the push for privatization and transfer to nonprofit organizations has not only been delayed, but also quite minimal. While the increase in public contracts is spurring changes in this sector with the growth of public charities, it remains to be seen how veteran-focused nonprofits will evolve in the post-9/11 era and whether they will begin to resemble organizations in other nonprofit sectors.

VNPOS AND MILITARY ADJACENCY

Another reason why VNPOs may not evolve in the same direction as other nonprofits is their cultural proximity to the military. As I detailed at the beginning of this chapter, the individuals that work within VNPOs often have intimate experience with the military institution. This experience matters because it provides alternative forms of background knowledge and

institutional logics that can inform how VNPO leaders and staff go about their work in nonprofit organizations.

One of the few things that sociological and cultural theorists agree upon is that individuals can cognitively maintain multiple "schemas," "repertoires," or "frames," essentially the array of background knowledge individuals accumulate and employ throughout their lives to make sense of themselves and others in interaction (DiMaggio 1997; Garfinkel 1967; Sewell 1992; Swidler 1986). The multiplicity of individual experiences and the agency of individual actors to strategically use this knowledge makes for the continued change and evolution of human society. This is not to deny the power of social structure; individual action is most certainly constrained by institutional norms, regulations, and logics (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Friedland and Alford 1991; Scott 2014). Rather, understanding strategic action often rests on observing the micro-macro interface: how actors embedded in local contexts interpret and negotiate broader institutional constraints.

In what has now become known as the "inhabited institutions" approach, recent scholarship has focused on organizations as sites where macro and micro forces collide. This research evolved from the critical shortcomings of new institutional theory, which documented how institutional forces shape individuals and organizations through patterned scripts, rules, and logics that are necessary for cultural legitimacy (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Meyer and Rowan 1977). New institutionalism dramatically altered the way social scientists perceive and study organizations, but its critics have emphasized how new institutionalism could eventually evolve into an overly prescriptive and deterministic view of institutions. The inhabited institutions approach establishes room for agency within institutional constraints. It rests on the assertion that individuals maintain the capacity for creative interpretation, translation, and application of

institutional logics, which are multiple and contradictory to begin with (Friedland and Alford 1991). As Binder (2018) has articulated: "Logics are not purely top-down: real people, in real contexts, with consequential past experiences in their own local environment, play with logics, question them, combine them with institutional logics from other domains, take what they can use from them, and make them fit their needs" (377-378).

Many scholars have incorporated the inhabited institutions framework into their research on nonprofit organizations, most notably in the study of how the nonprofit sector has shifted toward professionalization. As Skocpol (2003) argues, American civil society, "once centered in nationally active and locally vibrant voluntary membership federations," now organizes most of its civil and charitable activity through memberless, professionally-managed nonprofit firms (127). Though first catalyzed by nonprofit federalism, the shift to professionally-managed firms, has taken root in the nonprofit sector and engendered a new mode of organizational behavior. Namely, today's nonprofit organizations have largely embraced a rational bereaucratic "enterprise culture" that increasingly resembles for-profit firms:

> Nonprofit organizations are increasingly "marketing" their "products," viewing their clients as "customers," segmenting their markets, differentiating their output, identifying their "market niche," formulating "business plans," and generally incorporating the language, and the style, of business management into the operation of their agencies. (Salaman 2002: 38)

The move toward rationalization and professionalization has led some nonprofit organizations scholars to explore how the professional backgrounds of nonprofit staff influence the way they manage and negotiate within their organizations. For example, Binder (2007) found that divergent staff backgrounds created differences between three departments in a transitional housing community. The housing department, staffed by individuals with minimal professional experience in housing and nonprofit work, was more closely coupled to the bureaucratic

mandates of public funding contracts, partially because they did not have alternative professional logics informing their practices. By contrast, staff in the children's center and family support unit had backgrounds in early childhood development and social work. As a result, these staff were not always compliant with institutional mandates and creatively blended these demands with the ethics of their professional backgrounds.

Similarly, Hwang and Powell (2009) have explored how the bureaucratic rationalization of the nonprofit sector is related to the professional backgrounds of nonprofit executives. They note that the economic trend toward "managerial professionals" has begun to make its way into the nonprofit sector. Nonprofit leaders generally exhibit either substantive backgrounds, what Suarez (2010) calls "street credentials," or managerial backgrounds. Hwang and Powell (2009) find that nonprofit organizations are much more likely to be rationalized when they are led by individuals with management backgrounds. In their sample, the effect of managerial backgrounds was even more significant than the demands from funders, leading them to conclude that organizational rationalization "is not explained by funding exigencies but by the imprint of specific carriers—managerial professionals and semi-professionals, as well as foundation officers" (287).

As demonstrated by both Binder (2007) and Hwang and Powell (2009), the backgrounds of nonprofit staff provide alternative and additional logics for interfacing with the constraints of nonprofit organizations. These professional backgrounds provide expertise, experiences, and ethics that, in turn, shape organizational practices. But to date, I have not found any scholarship that discusses the military as a professional background for nonprofit professionals. While some scholars have investigated nonprofit executives with experience in the public sector, these

individuals have generally been administrators for public agencies, not military personnel (Bromley and Meyer 2014; Carman and Nesbit 2012; Suarez 2010).

This is an important oversight because, as entire cohorts of military sociologists have demonstrated, the military is a kind of profession. Despite the differences between military and civilian careers, the topic of the military as a profession is a long-studied and fruitful area of sociological research (Huntington 1957; Janowitz 1975 and 1977; Moskos 1977). Generally, these scholars agree that while military personnel maintain strong institutional orientations, in practice they also consider their military service as part of their career trajectories and treat military membership as an occupation (Blair 1980; Cotton 1981; Faris 1983; Manly et al. 1977; Segal et al. 1983; Stahl et al. 1980).

Though unrepresented in scholarship on nonprofit organizations, former military personnel are making their way into the nonprofit sector and one of the primarily avenues for doing so is through veteran-focused nonprofit organizations. Veteran-focused organizations provide a space where military backgrounds are immediately relevant and seen as useful "street credentials." In addition, idividuals with a military background come from a background rich in managerialism and professional ethics. As a result, the move from the military to the nonprofit sector provides an opportunity to import professional dynamics of military organizations into the nonprofit sector. But doing so is not without difficulty. In a 2014 personal essay in the journal *Leader to Leader*, retired Major General Robert Ivany outlines three particular difficulties of transitioning from a military career to nonprofit leadership: the inability to have demands executed without question, the lack of pre-defined metrics of success, and the trepidation military officers feel regarding fundraising and donor relationships.

Major General Ivany (2014) is making reference to the fact that military professional practices are informed by a unique culture, where the ultimate expression of bureaucratic rationality combines with the brutish, hyper masculinized practices of executing mass violence. Military professionals are enculturated into a "strong culture," a highly rational, de-personalized set of meanings and practices that help to ensure "all noses point in the same direction" (Soeters et al. 2006; Weber 1946; Winslow 1999). The military also instills professional practices that are rooted in insularity, out-group exclusion, and elitism (Huntington 1957; Segal 1986; Soeters 1999; Webb 1997). In addition, military professional culture is also profoundly masculine, where masculinity "is not only rewarded but is the primary construct around which resocialization as a soldier takes place" (Herbert 1998: 10). In this environment, empathy is valued only insofar as it catalyzes unit camaraderie and feelings of fictive kinship with other military personnel (Woodward and Jenkings 2011).

The professional culture of the military can be quite different from the nonprofit sector. While the nonprofit sector is generally moving towards bureaucratic rationalization and professionalism, such practices have reached their zenith in the military institution (Weber 1946). But even in the face of rationalization, the nonprofit sector still maintains an informal, expressive, and altruistic character (Barman 2016). Such features are nearly the opposite of the highly formal, insular, and collectively-oriented character of the military. As military personnel enter the nonprofit sector, they bring these alternative and additional logics for approaching their work.

The effects of military background were quite noticeable during my field observations with VNPOs. As discussed above, the individuals in these organizations often interacted in a way that I began to call "doing military." But if military style can easily influence the gestures and

interactions of individuals in the VNPO sector, how else might the military experience of VNPO leaders influence their organizations? If managerial professionals have managed to move nonprofit rationalization to a new level (Hwang and Powell 2009), how might military professionals shape the nonprofit sector even further in that direction? If actors are able to draw on the logics of their professional backgrounds to shape their organizations, what other effects could military experience have in the nonprofit sector?

The veteran-focused nonprofit sector provides a site for exploring these questions. Military experience is common among VNPO staff and thus part of the professional and personal backgrounds that shape VNPOs. But as my interactions in the field also demonstrate, military experience is also important for legitimacy. Military affiliation becomes a shorthand for "street credentials," or the substantive background that is also necessary in nonprofit organizations (Suarez 2010). The study of VNPOs can further scholarship on nonprofit organizations by showing how both managerial and street credentials converge in the military-affiliated individuals that work in these organizations.

THE DEEPER MEANING OF VETERAN-FOCUSED CHARITY

The adjacency of VNPOs to the military has another important effect: it provides a salient meaning system for how VNPOs can engage with donors and the civilian public more generally. Most nonprofits mobilize resources for some kind of "needy" population, but VNPOs serve a population that is not only "needy," but also symbolically powerful and deserving. As described above, the logic of civil-military relations separates and valorizes the military institution. Veterans, by virtue of their military membership, are also marked as distinct and deserving relative to civilian society. This cultural distinction gives veteran-focused nonprofit organizations a risky opportunity. By mobilizing on behalf of a symbolically important

population, VNPOs have the opportunity to tap into currents of national identity and patriotism. But if the public loses trust in these organizations, the cultural importance of veterans can hasten an organization's fall from grace.

In their fundraising and outreach efforts, VNPOs are not only able to appeal to funders' altruism, they are also able to sell the concepts of veterans and veteran support as uniquely American. These organizations can invoke the "nation" as an imagined community and veterans as its symbolic representatives (Calhoun 1998). VNPOs give civilians the chance to engage with veterans in a way that re-affirms their membership in the American community. For example, a VNPO in San Diego sorts its civilian donors into different levels of valorization based on the size of their contributions. Civilian donors can be labelled as "Guardians," "Defenders," "Stewards of Liberty," and "Patriots." While all nonprofits situate their services as collective goods (Kendall et al. 2006), VNPOs can also situate themselves as stewards of veterans and, by extension, American patriotism.

But the heightened cultural salience of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations also comes with a risk. Scholars have noted the idea of a "success paradox" for nonprofit organizations. As Brody (2002) argues, nonprofit organizations that successfully fundraise and occupy a larger and richer space in the public's eye often inspire calls for more robust accountability. The need for nonprofit organizations to communicate their effectiveness is thus omnipresent. Without it, nonprofits can quickly lose the trust of the public, who are unfamiliar with the true complexity of the sector and the difficulty in measuring impact (Salaman 2002). This presents a paradox for nonprofits: "The more successfully nonprofit organizations respond to the dominant market pressures they are facing… the greater the risk they face of sacrificing the public trust on which they ultimately depend" (Salaman 2002: 48).

This need to signal accountability opened space for third-party charity rating agencies, such as the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance, Charity Navigator, and the American Institute of Philanthropy (Lowell et al. 2005). These rating agencies use financial data to track the effectiveness of organizations, and to date, the metric most routinely used in providing this accountability is a simple annual ratio of administrative costs (including fundraising costs) to service-provision expenditures (Lowell et al. 2005; Stearn 2013). As many critics have argued, the "overhead-to-service" metric is frustratingly oversimplified but, ultimately, institutionalized:

> What gets measured is what is most easily measured, and since the outcomes of charitable organizations are more difficult to measure than their inputs, it is the inputs that get the attention…the assumption that the effectiveness of charities is inversely proportional to their overhead expenses leads to underspending on overhead and the degradation of organizational capacities. (Muller 2018)

For VNPOs, the paradox of success and need for accountability is intensified by the symbolically important constituency they serve. As one philanthropist put it: "Having already taken risks in uniform to protect our society, [veterans] should not be exposed to risks from government policy or private philanthropy which could harm them after their service" (Gade 2013: 14). VNPOs must navigate this success paradox against the backdrop of public support for veterans. In the wake of the Vietnam era, Americans' re-negotiation of national identity, collective memory, and veterans' status have slowly ritualized and commercialized support for veterans (Berdahl 1994; Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991). Today, "supporting the troops" is a cultural currency (Coy et al. 2008; Huiskamp 2011). Failing or, even worse, cheating veterans is a cardinal sin to many Americans. VNPOs who mis-manage their funds are not only seen as inefficient, but ultimately damaging to veterans' lives and national interests.

The Wounded Warrior Project, a VNPO with the mission to assist and rehabilitate veterans with severe military-related injuries, provides an instructive example of the heightened cultural salience of VNPOs. Founded in 2003 in response to returning combat veterans, the Wounded Warrior Project offers an array of programs and services for veterans classified as "wounded." After building a widely recognized program, the Wounded Warrior Project was lauded as a shining example of the possibilities and opportunities for nonprofit veterans' services (Phillips 2016). Local businesses and major corporations alike flocked to support the organization, even the White House recognized the organization and hosted a number of its events. Then, in 2016, reporting from the *New York Times* alleged that the organization had an unacceptable overhead-to-service ratio, showing that it had lavishly spent over 40 percent of donations on operational costs (Phillips 2016). In the ensuing months, the Wounded Warrior Project tumbled through controversy: firing its two chief executives, reducing its workforce by 15 percent, and witnessing is donations drop by 30 percent (Shane 2016). The CEO for the organization was even called to testify before Congress.

Following a robust investigation, the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance cleared the Wounded Warrior Project. The agency noted that the Wounded Warrior Project's expenditures were consistent with industry norms, and that, despite the accusations made in media reports, the organization had *not* engaged in "lavish spending" (Better Business BureauWise Giving Alliance 2017). But the damage was done. Once the poster child of a vibrant and reputable VNPO, the Wounded Warrior Project became a cautionary parable for how veteran-focused nonprofits can come under intense public scrutiny.

The deeper meaning of VNPOs arises by virtue of the fact that these organizations are connected to the military in ways both explicit and implicit. Not only do VNPOs provide a rich

empirical site for observing trends in the nonprofit literature, they can also show how cultural notions of national identity and militarism inform organizational practices. In the remaining chapters of this dissertation, I attempt to show how VNPOs are co-constructing organizational identities and practices. I contend that the veteran-focused nonprofit sector is on the rise; as the sector shifts toward professional firms rather than traditional voluntary associations, new practices are being introduced, negotiated, and resisted.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this dissertation, I review and explore some of the major trends occurring in the veteran-focused nonprofit sector. Chiefly, I explore how VNPO public charities are taking root in the sector and the ways in which these organizations decide upon (and resist) emergent meanings and organizational practices. My findings are based on an in-depth study of the VNPO sector in San Diego, California. As a locality with a high number of military-affiliated[7] residents, San Diego is an exemplary site for seeing the VNPO sector at work. While other localities may not have comparably sized or similarly active VNPO sectors, San Diego displays the large-scale trends at work in the sector and is a likely preview for trends about to take hold in smaller veteran communities. As a case in point, At Ease was invented by Vet Town San Diego during the 1980s but has since been replicated across the country and now occurs in more than 200 locations every year.

Between 2015 and 2017, I embedded myself within San Diego's VNPO sector.[8] I both observed and participated in the veteran-service landscape and tried to understand its contours, nuances, and meaning-making. One of the primary ways I did this was through attending events

[7] Military-affiliated refers to residents that are either active-duty service members, veterans, military dependents, or veteran dependents.
[8] For a more comprehensive review of my data and methods, please see the Appendix: "Data and Methodological Considerations."

and meetings where stakeholders in this sector interacted and exchanged information. In two years of data collection, I observed and participated in 21 veteran-focused events, public forums, service showcases, and meetings. During this time, I also interviewed 35 local VNPO leaders as well as 5 similarly-situated individuals in Sacramento, California to corroborate and double-check some of the trends I was observing. Finally, for nine months I worked part-time for a local VNPO that had been founded in 2012 and remains a highly-reputable organization throughout the San Diego sector. During this organizational ethnography, I was tasked with leading some of the organization's collaboration and assessment projects which provided me with perspective into the organization's procedures, practices, and guiding principles. It was through this experience that I not only deepened my involvement with the VNPO sector generally but also learned how trends in the sector became lived and negotiated by individuals within organizations.

In Chapter 2, I investigate whether the VNPO sector has grown in the way that many observers and stakeholders claimed it has. Hwyrna (2013) argues that the VNPO sector grew by 41 percent between 2008 and 2013, while the overall nonprofit sector grew by only 19 percent. Yet, the total number of nonprofit organizations categorized with the IRS as "military and veterans organizations" has been steadily declining since 2010. As I previewed above, the growth observed in the VNPO sector has largely been driven by one organizational type, 501(c)(3) public charities. I argue that the growth in these kinds of organizations signaled a shift in the organizational forces and necessities shaping veterans-focused nonprofits. The move toward professional service firms needed to be reconciled with a sector long-dominated by veteran voluntary associations and through military mindset towards how VNPOs should be organized. As they grew, these organizations leveraged institutional logics from the military

institution and forged a new logic for VNPOs called "The Sea of Goodwill." The result of these cultural and structural forces was the creation of a new kind of organizational behavior that partially centralized the sector and confered legitimacy: coalition building and membership in collaboratives.

However forceful these sector-level trends were, the inhabited institutions approach recognizes that institutional and sector forces are then lived, contested, and enacted within organizational environments. As much as The Sea of Goodwill created a logic for behavior and legitimacy, it was not all-powerful in shaping organization's practices. On the ground, organizational leaders and staff needed to square their participation in sector-level centralization efforts while still maintaining strategic individualism for themselves. In Chapter 3, I explore how individuals within these organizations negotiated and loosely coupled with these constraints. I tell the story of the Enlisted Support Initiative, the organization I studied in-depth, in order to illuminate how actors within organizations make sense of and couple with sector-level prescriptions. I argue that while the military centralization logic took hold sector-wide, organizational practices "on the ground" more closely resembled the logic of nonprofit institutions, prioritizing organizational interests over sector-level communality.

In Chapter 4, I explore a facet of the VNPO sector that highlights the institutional tension between the nonprofit sector and the military. At the outset of this project, I sought to understand how these organizations delivered programs for women veterans. However, soon after I entered the field, I learned that there were effectively no programs designed exclusively for women veterans. In fact, I could only find one program in the entire San Diego VNPO sector that had a women-specific program. But even in the absence of programs for women veterans, gender was still a powerful force in veteran-focused nonprofits. In this chapter, I explore how newly-

formed VNPOs negotiated contrasting gendered logics from the military and nonprofit sector. I present three manifestations of this negotiation. First, I show how traditional veterans voluntary associations have historically been sex-segregated and how the shift toward public charities created space for more women to lead veteran-focused organizations. Second, I show how most of the men executives in this sector are veterans while most of the women executives are veteran family members. Women veterans are largely absent not only in programming but also in the top leadership of these organizations. In line with the gendered logic of the military, the gendered division of labor in this sector has inadvertently marked "veterans" and "veteran families" as essentially gendered distinctions, with implications for how organizations come together in coalition-building. Third, I show how VNPOs interpret women-specific programming through a military-informed logic of "gender blindness" and their deliberations regarding how to create programs for women veterans in a way that did not reify their essentialized otherness in the military. Taken together, I conclude that each of these forces reinforce a notion of "veterans" as a masculine concept.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I conclude by exploring the "bigger picture" of veteran nonprofit organizations in American society. I organize this chapter around three main questions: what have we learned, why should it matter to scholars, and what does it mean? I recap the crucial lessons of the preceding chapters and also outline how these lessons contribute to existing fields of scholarship. I also highlight how my study of VNPOs raises new questions. In particular, I address how attention to VNPOs can extend scholarship on veterans, military sociology, and nonprofit organizations. I conclude this chapter by discussing how VNPOs reflect a deep yearning for national identity in contemporary society.

Chapter 2: The Sea of Goodwill

In 2016, a curious and contradictory narrative was circulating about veteran-focused nonprofit services and philanthropy. Some argued that the sector was "crowded" due to a "swirl of cash" created by philanthropic donors who were "very sympathetic towards veterans" and gave emotionally to veteran causes (Schmidt and Fandos 2016). Others were sure that veterans organizations were "struggling" under the weight of flat revenue, rising costs, and a "growing civil-military divide" that was "getting in the way of giving" (Carter 2016). Depending on one's vantage point, the veteran-focused nonprofit sector was either in a state of growth or decline, of boom or bust.

In some ways, both were true. Much of the recent fervor in the VNPO sector, including this contradictory confusion about growth and density, is due in large part to the growth of a particular kind of organizational type. Contrary to many accounts about sector "boom," the overall number of organizations in this sector has been shrinking since 2001. But at the same time, the number of 501(c)(3) "public charity" organizations within the sector has been on the rise.

Though still a numerical minority, 501(c)(3) public charities are slowly becoming dominant players in the veterans' service sector, both in terms of their annual revenue as well as their public recognition. As I explained in Chapter 1, the primary organizations in this sector have long been 501(c)(19) voluntary membership associations – local posts of former armed service members such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) or the American Legion. These organizations are less popular with the younger generation of post-9/11 veterans (Maples 2018), which may be one reason why their numbers have been steadily declining since 2001. More broadly, this decline in veterans' voluntary associations mirrors national trends, albeit a bit

delayed for the veterans nonprofit sector. As Skocpol (2003) has argued, membership associations have been on the decline since the post-World War period, replaced by professional "memberless" charitable organizations. In the post-9/11 era, the organizational landscape of the VNPO sector is shifting; once dominated by local chapters of membership associations, it is beginning to bend toward professional nonprofit firms.

The ascendency of public charities disrupted the VNPO sector – these new organizational forms engendered new rationalities and modes of organizational behavior. Public charities are primarily dependent on private contributions and public contracts and thus are more susceptible to the constraints and isomorphic pressures of resource dependence. These organizations generally must develop a more rational-bureaucratic organizational form, often adopting an "enterprise" culture in order to be competitive in the nonprofit marketplace of potential donors and contracts.

On one hand, VNPO public charities formed in the post-9/11 era must adapt to the institutional constraints of the nonprofit sector. But as many sociological theorists have argued, the prescriptive power of institutional forces is often mitigated by the agency of individuals and the limits of local contexts (Tolbert 1988; Zucker 1988). While prescriptive forces for organizational behavior are pervasive, actors can negotiate these forces and draw upon their varied cultural repertoires in doing so (Swidler 1986). Actors neither "custom-tailor" their own cultural accounts nor do they blindly inherit them "ready-to-wear," they strategically interpret and negotiate institutional forces when deciding how to act (Creed et al. 2002). This leads to an important question: as public charities began to ascend among VNPOs, how did actors in these organizations interpret and act strategically in the face of new institutional pressures?

In this chapter I argue that the introduction of 501(c)(3) veteran-focused public charities created an opportunity for actors to assess their constraints and imagine the "rules of the game" for veteran-focused nonprofit organizations. In particular, these organizations rejected the self-interested "enterprise culture" of nonprofit organizations in favor of a collectively-oriented, inter-agency "community culture" of veteran-focused nonprofits. As their public charities began to take root, VNPO leaders creatively blended the resource dependent logic of organizational survival with the collective and bureaucratic rationalities of the military to envision a new, "ideal" path for veterans service organizations. Alongside powerful voices from the Department of Defense, sector leaders advanced a new logic, "The Sea of Goodwill," which combined multiple logics to provide a narrative for understanding the sector and issued a prescription for organizational behavior. The Sea of Goodwill blended the mandates for nonprofit organizations with the sensibilities and rationale of the military, not to resist technical-rational bureaucratization, but to extend it to the sector writ large. The Sea of Goodwill called for veterans' charities to collectivize and centralize into one large, bureaucratic service network.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I foreground the theoretical perspectives I use to make sense of my empirical case, highlighting how a shift to 501(c)(3) public charities signaled a disruption in veteran-focused nonprofit organizations and created an opportunity for new organizations to create rules of the game for veterans' charities. I problematize the idea that these organizations would simply mimic other kinds of public charities by highlighting facets of new institutional and inhabited institutional theory and discuss how institutional pressures are "coupled" within organizational contexts. After briefly reviewing my data and methods, I demonstrate the rise of 501(c)(3) public charities in the VNPO sector. Then, I trace the emergence of the "Sea of Goodwill" logic, which creatively blended logics for technical-rational

nonprofit behavior with the centralization logic of the military, ostensibly extending the bureaucratization logic to the entire sector, not just particular organizations. This logic was intended to move veterans' charities away from the potentially disruptive effects of organizational self-interest and toward a more collective orientation. The Sea of Goodwill defined a new reality for actors in the veterans' service arena, gave meaning to action, and created new rules of the game. Finally, I conclude the chapter by tracing these structural and cultural developments onto the San Diego case and discussing the implications of these developments at the local level. In particular, I note that the push by certain 501(c)(3) organizations to centralize the sector was a way to create "structural embeddedness."

BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Within the nonprofit sector are many different kinds of organizations, ranging from social welfare organizations to political lobbying firms, professional associations, and social clubs. The number and variety of organizational types in this sector emerged from the reform of the 1954 Internal Revenue Code, which occurred following social and political shifts before and immediately following the World War era, such as welfare capitalism, incorporation doctrines, civil procedural rules, and civil rights movements (Hall 1992). The new code formed Section 501(c), an "elaborate classificatory scheme that accorded different kinds of tax privileges and degrees of regulatory oversight to the various types of non-proprietary entities" (Hall 2006; 53).

The 1954 reform expanded the scope of tax-exempt economic activity. Where charitable entities were once constrained to fairly narrow purposes, the 1954 reform simply required organizations to be non-profit-distributing and in the service of some general category of people. Consequently, the nonprofit sector grew dramatically. In the late 1960s, there were approximately 350,000 nonprofit organization of all types (Burke 2001). Today, that number is

closer to 1.6 million (National Center for Charitable Statistics 2016). In their review of the size and scope of the sector, Boris and Steuerle (2006) compare IRS data between 1989 and 2000 and find that, in that 11-year period, the total number of nonprofit organizations grew by 27 percent, from 990,000 to 1.35 million.

However, the growth in this sector is largely being driven by just a few of the 27 types of 501(c) organizations. Organizations designated as 501(c)(3), which provide "public benefit" functions, are the undisputed engines of growth in the nonprofit sector. The 501(c)(3) designation encompasses two sub-types of organizations: public charities and private foundations. The distinction is largely based on how organizations raise and spend their funds; public charities offer goods and services that are funded by "the public" (i.e. philanthropy and public contracts), while private foundations are generally donor-controlled grant-making philanthropic organizations (Smith at al 2006). In the 11-year period studied by Boris and Steuerle (2006), 501(c)(3) organizations grew by 77 percent, while all other nonprofit types grew by an average of just 3 percent. In 2016, these kinds of organizations made up about three quarters of the 1.6 million nonprofit entities in the United States. Public charities alone made up nearly 70 percent of all nonprofit organizations in 2016.

The growth in 501(c)(3) public charities coincided with the neoliberal policies of the 1980s that sought to privatize or transfer government provisions to the business and nonprofit sectors. Thus, nonprofit federalism largely drove the rise in public charities (Smith and Lipsky 1995). Another potential explanation for the growth in public charities is the tax deductibility of donations, or the ability of individual and corporate donors to include donations to these organizations as itemized deductions on their tax returns. As a result, these organizations

generate more tax subsidies than any other type of nonprofit organization and are thus a popular recipient for philanthropic contributions (Boris and Steuerle 2006).[9]

The majority of scholarly research on nonprofit organizations is focused on 501(c)(3) organizations, public charities in particular. However, in scholarly work public charities are often presented as interchangeable with the more general term "nonprofit organizations." The literature's implicit focus on public charities is likely a product of the ubiquity of these organizations in the nonprofit sector. But in addition to this ubiquity, the prevalence of 501(c)(3) organizational research is also due to the tendency of scholars to rely on publicly-available data from the IRS (Boris and Steuerle 2006). This kind of tax data is most robust for 501(c)(3) organizations; as the only nonprofit type eligible for tax-deductible donations, the IRS most heavily tracks their organizational and financial information. Methodologically, studying nonprofit organizations through attention to 501(c)(3) organizations is both practical and empirically relevant. However, the over-reliance on public charities as sources of data in nonprofit literature obscures that there is a profound amount of intra-organizational complexity within the nonprofit sector and leads to the misleading conclusion that the constraints that act on their behavior are universal to the nonprofit sector.

One such area of nonprofit scholarship that is overwhelmingly focused on 501(c)(3) organizations but implicitly treats them as general "nonprofit organizations" is the study of how nonprofit organizations have become "rationalized." Barman (2016) writes: "one prevailing discourse has been that the non-profit sector's original and unique culture of voluntarism,

[9] As Smith et al. (2006) argue, the deductibility incentive is only applicable to those who choose to itemize deductions (rather than opting for the standard deduction), which generally occurs among wealthier taxpayers. Still, econometric data suggest that the deductibility incentive accounts for a significant proportion of public charity donations. Brody and Cordes (2006) argue that "if contributions were not tax deductible, private contributions [to charities] would decline by approximately 30 percent" (147).

altruism, and philanthropy is being replaced by technical-rationality, bureaucracy, and hierarchy" (450-451), a shift that coincided with the rise in public charities and nonprofit federalism. As scholars have noted, the trend in "business-like" forms of behavior for public charities has now become an institutional isomorphic pressure – the technical-rational bureaucratic organizational form, so common outside the nonprofit realm, has been thoroughly integrated into the nonprofit sector to the point that nonprofits must now resemble business and governmental firms to signal their legitimacy (Hwang and Powell 2009; Maier et al. 2016; Marshall and Suarez 2014; Meyer and Rowan 1977; Simon et al. 2006).

But the constraint of rationalization may not apply to all nonprofit organizations universally. Importantly, the tax code recognizes that the scope of organizational activities and fundraising differs for 501(c)(3) organizations relative to other nonprofit types. The tax code considers the former "public benefit" organizations that orient their activities to the benefit of the general public or community. These organizations must seek private contributions (from individuals, corporations, or private foundations) or public grants that are then "redistributed" to the public (Smith et al. 2006). Because of their "public benefit" charge, 501(c)(3) organizations are forbidden from engaging in political campaigns or lobbying. By contrast, many other nonprofit types are classified as "mutual benefit" organizations that orient their activities to the benefit of their members (Bittker and Rodhert 1976). Mutual benefit organizations are a sizable proportion of the nonprofit sector, ranging from fraternal orders, civic and professional associations, labor unions, homeowners associations, social clubs, etc. Mutual-benefit organizations generally fall into the larger category of "voluntary associations," collectivities where members define and enforce membership criteria in pursuit of a particular goal (Gordon and Babchuk 1959). Harris (1998) writes that "voluntary associations are conceptually and

organizationally distinguishable from the bureaucratic service-delivering agencies of the broader nonprofit sector" (144). She notes that, more than professional nonprofit firms, voluntary associations must navigate several conflicting agendas, including conflicts between individual members and larger organizational goals, between member-serving and community-serving projects, between factions within an organization, and between volunteers and paid staff.

Voluntary associations are not necessarily constrained to "business like" behavior and may be able to resist the pressures of bureaucratic rationalization that is persistent among 501(c)(3) organizations. Their financial solvency is largely sustained by member buy-in, rather than fundraising, which can insulate these organizations from the pressures of resource dependence. Second, most local-level voluntary associations are largely run by volunteers or amateur staff, rather than paid professionals, and thus resist the normative forces of professionalization (Hwang and Powell 2009). Finally, voluntary associations are generally oriented toward mutual-benefit and community activities rather than service-delivery programs that require accountability metrics and scalability, thus insulating them from marketization and nonprofit federalism. As a result, these organizations can have "dual organizational identities," comprising blends of managerialism and volunteerism (Kreutzer 2009; Kreutzer and Jager 2011).

Voluntary associations used to dominate the American civic landscape, proliferating in the post-Civil War era prior to the creation of tax-exempt public charities in 1954. But voluntary associations that derive most of their revenue from member dues shrank in size, frequency, and clout in the latter half of the 20th Century, replaced by professionally-run firms that derive their revenue from patrons, other organizations, and fundraising (Skocpol 2003: 173).

The bend toward professional charitable firms is currently underway in the veteran nonprofit sector. As I will later demonstrate, veteran-focused 501(c)(3) public charities are

starting to rise. This ascendency is occurring in a field that is still, relatively speaking, dominated by voluntary associations classified as 501(c)(19) under the tax code: posts of past or present members of the Armed Forces and their auxiliaries. These kinds of organizations, often called "veterans service organizations" or VSOs, are some of the earliest and most influential voluntary associations in American history.

As I detailed in Chapter 1, the growth in 501(c)(3) public charities was delayed in the realm of veterans services because of the robust public sector that exists for veterans support, a consequence of civil-military relations. Veterans' support services have been insulated from the neoliberal agendas evident in other service sectors. The provision of veterans' services is a uniquely state-centric activity because of the role civilian-controlled militaries play in modern democracies. Even after the VA began issuing millions of dollars in grants to nonprofit organizations, the goal of these federal programs was not to transfer public funding to professional nonprofits. While VA grants stipulate that organizations should have more formal structures (such as accountability metrics and financial audits), their grants are also a strategy to extend VA outreach and enroll more veterans in VA services.

In addition to the delay in public contracts, the delayed onset of veteran-focused 501(c)(3) public charities is a consequence of the relatively sudden military conflicts of the post-9/11 era. Fligstein (1991) hypothesizes that fields change in response to exogenous shocks, particularly through the state and economy. Fligstein and McAdam (2012) conclude that "macroevents" (such as war or economic depressions) are major sources of external change for organizational fields because they alter the larger society in which fields are embedded. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq were macroevents that brought the military to the fore of American social and political

consciousness (Brooks 2016). American military ranks swelled, creating a steady stream of post-9/11 veterans. At the same time, political actors pushed for a discursive separation between the individual service members of the military and the larger military institution (Coy et al. 2008; Stahl 2009). Thus, "supporting the troops" and the veterans who served as troops became a powerful cultural currency in the United States (Huiskamp 2011). The result of these exogenous forces was *not* the proliferation of veteran-focused voluntary associations, which had been the case in previous war eras. Rather, these changes occurred *after* the nonprofit world had shifted from a voluntary "mutual benefit" model to a technical-rational model of professional service-delivering firms. As a result, starting a 501(c)(3) public charity was a palpable strategy for translating veteran's support into action in the post-9/11 era.

As public charities began to form, they faced different kinds of institutional pressures compared to other kinds of nonprofit organizations in the veterans nonprofit sector. Unlike voluntary associations, public charities had to embrace repertoires of enterprising bureaucracies, the necessity of running their organizations "like a business" (Koch et al. 2015). But as inhabited institutional theorists have argued, organizational actors do not blindly adopt the top-down prescriptive power of institutional forces in practice. Rather, these actors can creatively "couple" isomorphic pressures with organizational practices in a way that makes the most sense to them, connecting institutional mandates to organizational practices according to their own situated realities (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Hallett and Ventresca 2006).

A crucial factor in the coupling literature has to do with how individuals employ institutional logics, which are "symbolic systems through which [actors] categorize activity and infuse it with meaning" (Friedland and Alford 1991: 232). Logics are multiple and contradictory throughout society and conflicting beliefs engendered by different logics coexist in constant

tension (Fligstein 1990). Though the presence of multiple and contradictory logics often constrains behavior, it also enables strategic action (Binder 2007; Creed et al. 2002; Hallett and Ventresca 2006; Reay and Hinings 2005). VNPOs are overwhelmingly led by veterans or veterans' family members who join or start veteran-focused charities as a way to "continue the mission" (Junger 2016). As a result, the actors' building these new public charities had "toolkits" informed by military logics (Swidler 1986).

There is reason to be skeptical that veterans charities would simply mimic other kinds of charities in their efforts to become "business-like," because to do so required coupling with at least two different kinds of nonprofit logics, one of which was quite disagreeable to military logic. First, public charities must embrace a technical-rational form and structure. The largely military-affiliated leaders of VNPOs did not view rational bureaucratization as problematic or conflicting, as has been the case in other nonprofit arenas (Smith and Lipsky 1993). In his seminal essay "The Meaning of Discipline," Weber (1946) argues that the military is the bedrock institution for mass (collective) discipline and, by extension, the rationalization and bureaucratization in modern societies. The development of discipline in pre-modern armies and the monopolization of weapons of war were one of the primary mechanisms behind centralized, bureaucratic states. In turn, bureaucratization and rationalization proliferated throughout modern society. As Meyer and Rowan (1977), among others, have shown, the proliferation of formal organizational structures is largely a product of the ceremonial legitimacy conferred upon bureaucratic organizational forms. While the appeal of rationality has certainly taken hold in nonprofit organizations, the myth and ceremony of rational bureaucracy reaches a zenith in military organizations. For military-affiliated individuals in VNPOs, the logic of technical-

rational bureaucratization in public charities did not conflict with the organizational practices and principles they encountered in the military.

But the second demand of becoming a "business-like" nonprofit entailed embracing a logic of self-interest. Without member dues, public charities are generally under constant pressure to fundraise. As a result, the constraints of resource dependence weigh heavily on these organizations as they exhaust avenues for organizational survival. Even though public charities are not profit-seeking, they still face competition in their bids for resources and must act strategically to secure their organizational survival (Barman 2002). But self-interest is the antithesis of military logic. Military personnel are enculturated to emphasize group discipline, uniformity, collectivity, and centralization. Unit cohesion is prized over individual interests and inter-unit coordination is central to the military mission (Dunivan 2002; Titunik 2000). For military-minded veterans in these charities, pursuing individual self-interest may have been necessary to be business-like, but it was also ultimately ineffective for achieving the bigger mission: helping veterans.

In the years following 2001, veterans who were forging a path for 501(c)(3) public charities could creatively blend logics of nonprofit legitimacy with military rationality in order to establish their organizations within the field. As public charities came to take hold in the veteran-focused nonprofit sector, leaders of organizations picked up on trends of rationalization and extended them even further: not only should organizations rationalize their approach, the whole sector should be more centralized due to the unique dynamics of serving veterans. VNPOs advocated a collective, multi-agency approach to veterans services; too many individuated organizations was counterproductive. In what follows, I first outline the data I use to demonstrate that public charities have begun to rise in this sector. I then show how these developments were

interpreted as a "Sea of Goodwill" and how, following this new logic, organizational actors began to advocate for sector-wide centralization that minimized individual self-interest.

DATA

In the next section, I present a compilation and analysis of data from the Internal Revenue Service's Business Master File, generated by the Urban Institute's National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS). Using the NCCS "Table Wizard" tool, I compiled sector-level tax information for organizations registered as "military and veterans" tax-exempt entities between the years 2001 and 2016. From these queries into the NCCS database, I built a year-by-year snapshot of the total number of registered tax-exempt entities that designate themselves as "military and veterans organizations," recording their rates of tax filing and broad overviews of their financial trends. I was also able to separate these data points into two broad organizational categories: 501(c)(3) organizations and other nonprofit types. I use these data to show how 501(c)(3) organizations came to occupy an increasing share of the sector.

In the following section, I draw upon a sample of 11 secondary sources, authored by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and notable military-oriented thinktanks, that provide the basis of the Sea of Goodwill concept. The sample includes 5 papers authored by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and 6 papers from military-oriented thinktanks. I generated this sample, first and foremost, from interview respondents in the San Diego field who sent me copies or mentioned some of these papers during their interviews. In particular, my respondents referred me to 2 papers from the Joint Chiefs, 1 paper from the Center for a New American Security, and 1 paper from the Institute for Veterans and Military Families. I built upon this initial corpus by following-up on the citations used in these papers and looking for any other papers within these agencies that mentioned the Sea of Goodwill. This resulted in a sample of 11 papers.

In addition to these documpents, I use themes, excerpts, and quotations from my interviews with 35 VNPO leaders in San Diego throughout the chapter. I initially interviewed individuals whose organizations and/or public profiles were highly visible during my field observations in San Diego. I then used snowball sampling to connect to other individuals and organizations who were well known in the field. In addition to snowball sampling, I also recruited interview participants by attending veteran-focused events in San Diego and approaching the panelists, speakers, and other attendees. A more comprehensive discussion of my data and methods is in the Appendix.

THE RISE OF VETERAN-FOCUSED PUBLIC CHARITIES

In order to observe the rise in 501(c)(3) public charities in the veterans-focused nonprofit sector, it is crucial to first understand how the IRS categorizes nonprofit organizations. As reviewed above, organizations are categorized into to various 501(c) designations in the tax code. The IRS also classifies nonprofit organizations based on the populations they serve. The "National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities" (NTEE), is the categorization system used by the IRS to classify tax-exempt organizations by types of services and targeted beneficiaries. Developed during the 1980s, the NTEE uses a combination of alphabetic and numeric characters to group organizations into "codes" based on their service and organizational type. Tax-exempt organizations self-select up to three NTEE codes at the time that they register with the IRS. Within this classification system, organizations with the NTEE code "W30" are classified as organizations that coordinate beneficial activities for military servicemembers and veterans.

It should be stated explicitly that the W30 NTEE code is a rather blunt instrument for tracking nonprofit organizations in the military and veterans space. First, NTEE codes are self-selected by organizations when they file for tax exemption, so there is no definitive way to know

whether organizations within the code offer similar programs to one another. Second, organizations who offer programs for veterans may just as likely select a different NTEE code when they file for exemption and thus not be represented in this classification. Finally, there are also many organizations that offer programs to veterans as one of many programs or initiatives in a broader mission. These organizations play a role in the veteran nonprofit space, but are unlikely to designate themselves under the W30 code if veterans are just one part of their programs. However, despite these limitations, using this code is the most straightforward way to get a sense of the sector aside from combing through several thousand organizations individually. The time and resource constraints of dissertation research makes that kind of thorough review impossible. Thus, I rely on this code to make general but measured claims about the sector, with the caveat that it provides just a snapshot of a sector that is likely even more complicated and dense than described here.

The only systematic study using data from W30 organization is a report authored by Philip Carter and Katherine Kidder (2015) for the Center for a New American Security, one of the papers in my sample of secondary sources that respondents often referred to during our interviews. By pulling together a substantial amount of data from the IRS and the GuideStar charitable database, Carter and Kidder (2015) show that there were slightly over 42,000 organizations designated as W30 in 2015, and that most of these organizations had operating budgets of less than $100,000 per year. Because this paper was well-read among my respondents, those figures were commonly cited, almost verbatim, in my interviews and observations. The “45,000” figure was often invoked as a way to signal the growth and density of the sector. The number was spoken as if it were an indictment, a signal of too much

duplication in veterans' services. During an event I observed where local VNPO leaders were meeting to discuss the state of the sector, I recorded the following incident in my fieldnotes:

> One of the panelists was the CEO of a veteran entrepreneurship organization. During a discussion of how many people are working in the sector, she emphatically stated that 45,000 organizations is a lot, even too many. To her, the fact that there were that many organizations all within the same space meant that the field of veteran services was extremely crowded. She emphasized that the number was a warning: Don't duplicate, collaborate. (February 2017)

To follow up on this number, I compiled and analyzed tax information for W30 organizations from 2001 to 2016 using the National Center for Charitable Statistics and IRS Business Master File. When I traced the number of registered organizations under the W30 NTEE code, I found that not only had the number of organizations been relatively stable since 2001, it had actually been *declining* since 2010. Figure 2.1 shows the year-by-year trends in the number of tax-exempt organizations registered under the W30 NTEE code.

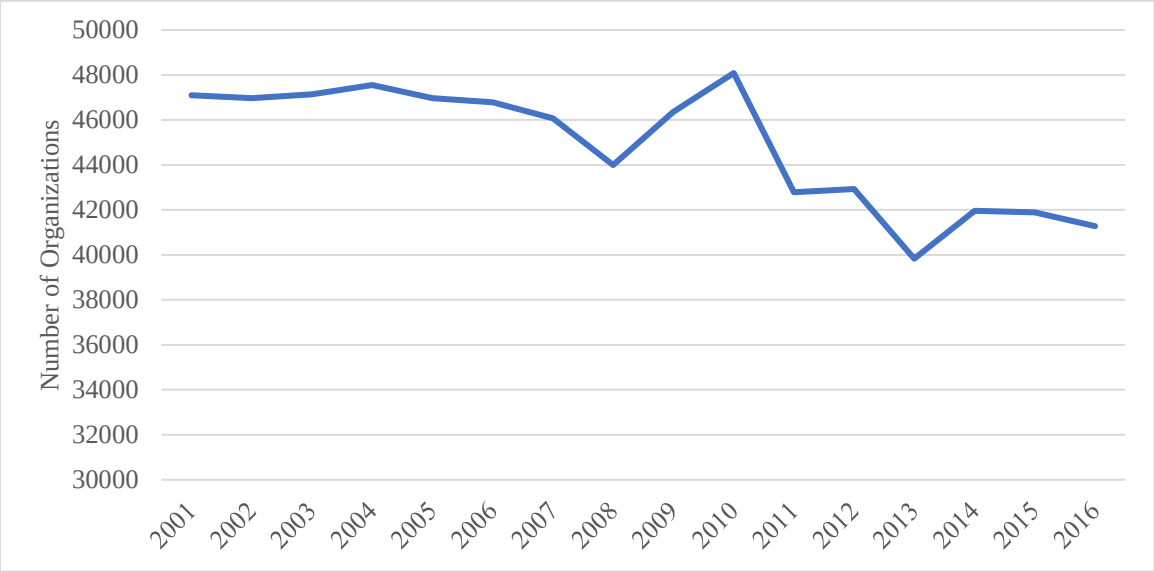

Figure 2.1: Tax Exempt Organizations Registered with W30 NTEE Code by Year
Source: Internal Revenue Service, Exempt Organizations Business Master File; Retrieved from The Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics

Following a period of decline beginning around 2004, the sector saw a sudden spike in organizations in 2010 and has been declining even more sharply in the years since. The notion

that there are 45,000 organizations suddenly vying for space in a newly-crowded and duplicative veterans' service sector is not accurate.

I explored whether there were different trends for 501(c)(3) organizations in the sector by running year-by-year queries of W30 organizations for three separate categories: the overall sector of W30 organizations, 501(c)(3) public charities within the sector (excluding private foundations), and all other nonprofit types within the sector (which would encompass 501(c)(19) veteran voluntary associations). Figure 2.2 shows trends in the number of organizations by organization type.

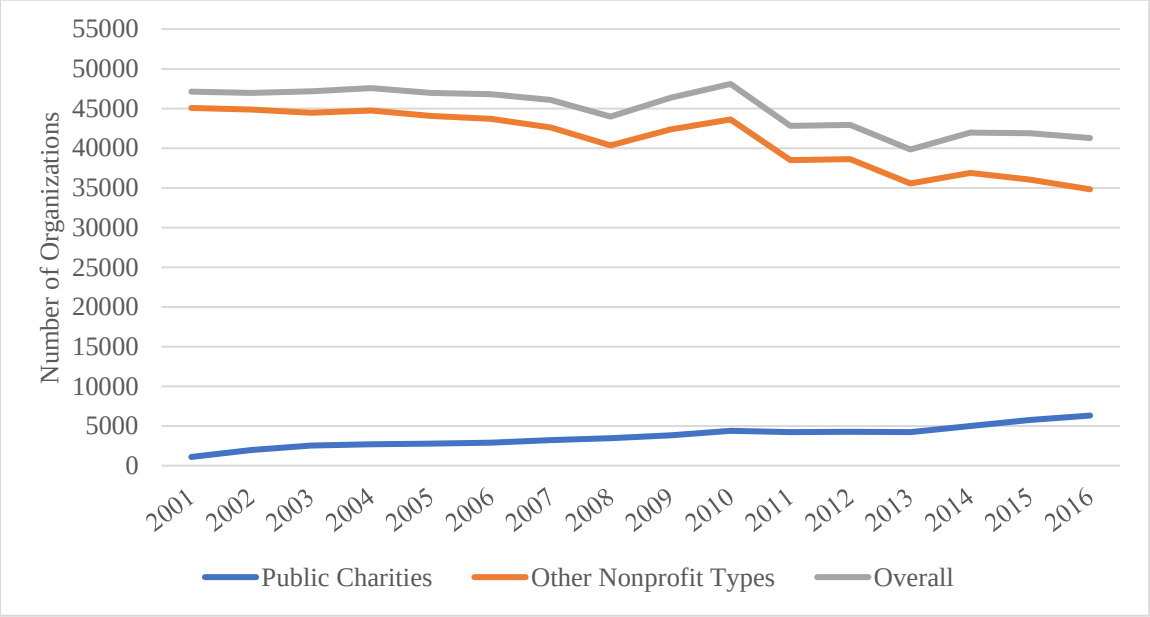

Figure 2.2: Tax Exempt Organizations Registered with W30 NTEE Code by Organization Type and Year

Source: Internal Revenue Service, Exempt Organizations Business Master File; Retrieved from The Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics

The overall decline in the number of organizations is driven by a decline in organizations that are *not* public charities. By contrast, public charities are on the rise. Though charities are still the numerical minority, there is an undisputed growth in these organizations. There were about 1,000 registered public charities in 2001, but by 2016 that number had grown to well over 6,000.

Most of the organizations in the W30 sector are, as Carter and Kidder (2015) pointed out, relatively small enterprises. Nearly three quarters of all organizations in this sector report less than $50,000 in gross receipts per year.[10] The remaining quarter of W30 organizations that exceed that threshold (and file Forms 990 or 990-EZ) have seen steady revenue growth since 2001 (Figure 2.3). However, in recent years, public charities have begun to generate a growing share of the sector revenue.

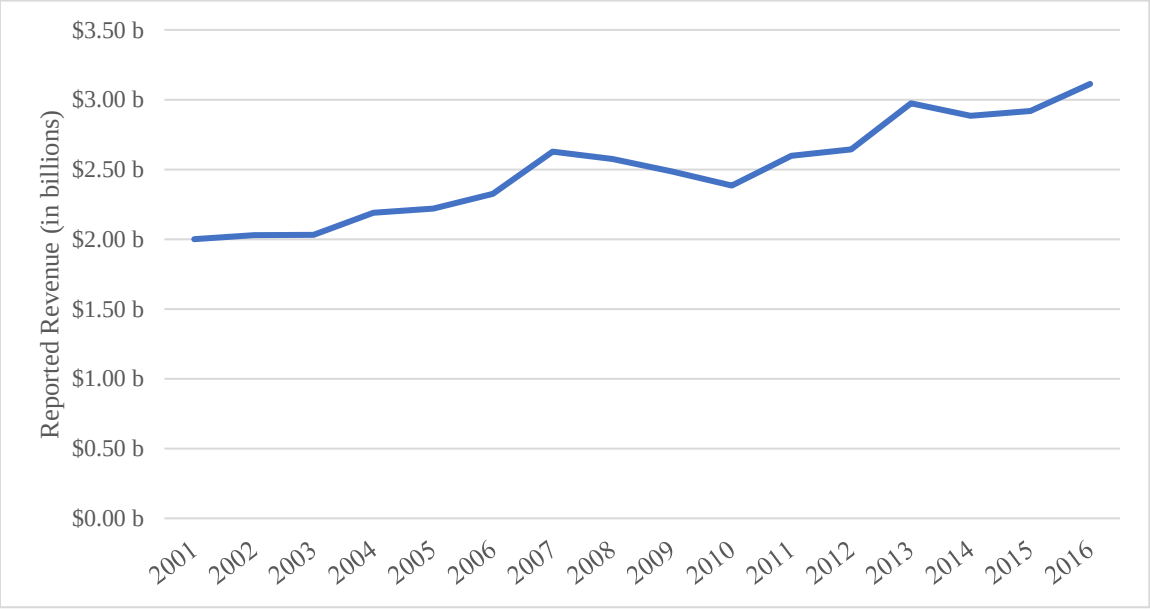

Figure 2.3: W30 Sector Revenue as Reported on Form 990 by Year
Source: Internal Revenue Service, Exempt Organizations Business Master File; Retrieved from The Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics

Figure 2.4 shows the annual revenue generated by public charities versus other nonprofit types. In 2001, public charities generated only 16 percent of the total revenue. By 2016, they were generating nearly 45 percent. In fact, while other nonprofit types have seen a small decline in their revenue, public charities have seen an sizable increase.

[10] Again, some information on IRS procedures is necessary. All tax-exempt entities are required to file annual tax returns with the IRS, regardless of their financial activity. Organizations that generate more than $50,000 or $200,000 in gross receipts are required to file Forms 990-EZ and 990, respectively, in which organizations must list yearly revenue and assets. Organizations that generate less than $50,000 in gross receipts are required to file Form 990-N, an electronic postcard that does not list actual revenue but simply "testifies" that the organization's gross receipts did not exceed $50,000.

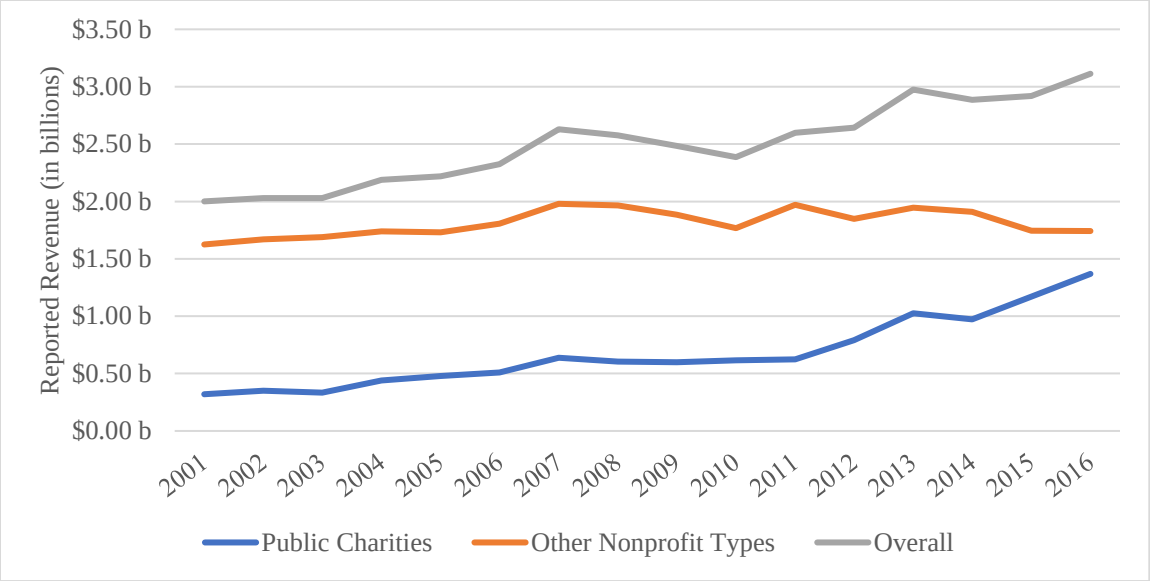

Figure 2.4: W30 Sector Revenue as Reported on Form 990 by Organization Type and Year
Source: Internal Revenue Service, Exempt Organizations Business Master File; Retrieved from The Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics

While public charities have seen a dramatic rise in revenue compared to other nonprofit types in the sector, these organizations are still facing the precarity of "newness" (Hager et al. 2004). Notably, public charities have not been able to grow their financial assets, which are a crucial factor in charitable sustainability. Figure 2.5 shows how assets are distributed across the W30 sector.[11] While public charities' share of sector assets is growing, it is not growing at the same rate as revenue and has recently begun to stagnate compared to other nonprofit types. Stagnating assets generally mean that organizations are spending all their revenue, which places these organizations in a difficult predicament because of the reliance on the ratio between contributions and overhead costs as a metric of nonprofit legitimacy. For public charities, there is a constant need to balance donations with services and to "scale" their services to match financial growth. Scaling services can be risky: scale up too much and organizations may quickly

[11] Note: Figure 2.6 excludes asset information for the year 2003. During that year, the assets of the sector suddenly spiked from $6.25 billion in 2002 to $273.4 billion in 2003. One year later, the assets went back down to $6.85 billion and increased steadily thereafter. Therefore, I excluded 2003 from this trend because it was a stark outlier.

drain their funds, but scale too little and they cannot justify their fundraising and lose legitimacy. A strong share of assets provides a financial cushion, a safety net that makes scaling programs less risky. Without growing their assets, public charities are locked into a state of constantly needing to fundraise, spend, and fundraise.

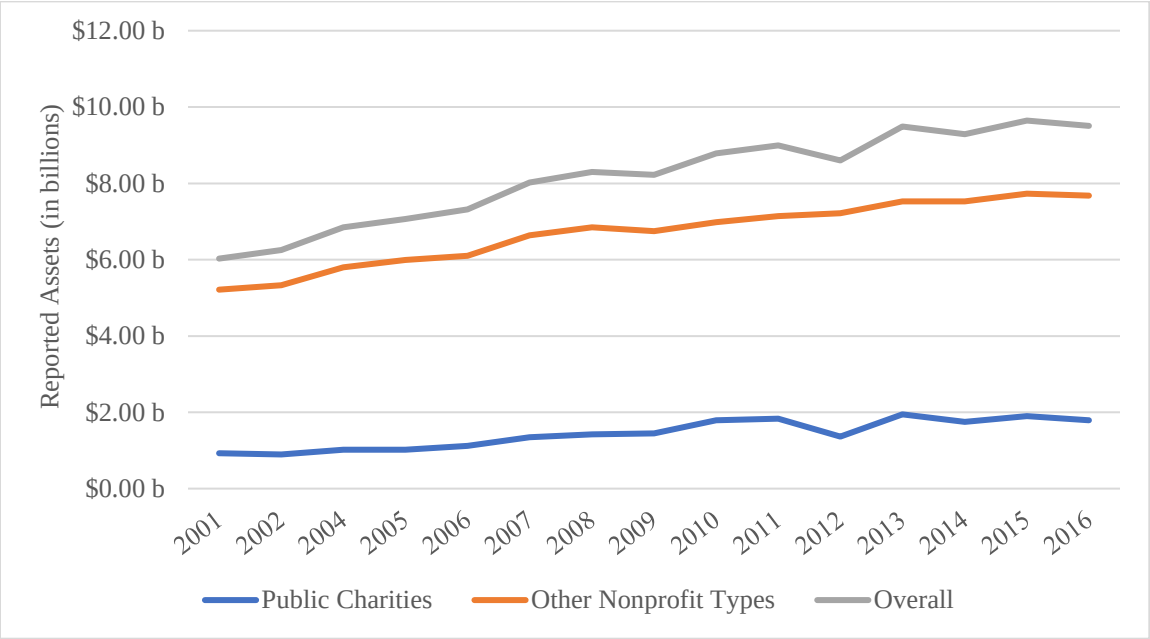

Figure 2.5: W30 Sector Assets as Reported on Form 990 by Organization Type and Year
Source: Internal Revenue Service, Exempt Organizations Business Master File; Retrieved from The Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics

In the veteran-focused nonprofit sector, public charities are emerging as a new organizational form in veterans' service delivery. These new and relatively precarious organizations have had to adapt to the "enterprise culture" of professional charities. But in building their organization, the leaders of veterans' charities could also creatively interpret and negotiate the "rules of the game." Together, the rise of public charities catalyzed a new negotiation of how to best "do" veterans' support, which advocated for sector-wide centralization.

THE "SEA OF GOODWILL"

Around the same time that public charities were ascending in the VNPO sector, a new term, "the Sea of Goodwill," began to circulate in the realm of veterans' support. I argue that the Sea of Goodwill represented a cultural response to the business-like culture that had long been observed in public charities but, until this time, had not yet taken root in veteran-focused nonprofit organizations. The Sea of Goodwill proffered a new rationality for how organizations in the veterans' service sector should behave by advocating for a sector-wide centralization of inter-organizational activity. In many ways, the Sea of Goodwill was a way to couple with and even extend the rationalization of nonprofit organizations, while de-coupling with the logic of self-interest that ensures organizational survival. In their calls for sector-wide centralization, Sea of Goodwill proponents relied on their experiential and cultural knowledge of the bureaucratic centralization of the military. Notably, the Sea of Goodwill emerged *directly* and *explicitly* from the Department of Defense. It was later picked up by powerful VNPO leaders and veterans-focused researchers and eventually became taken for granted by actors in the sector.

At the center of this logic were ideas about who veterans were, what they needed, and how to best help them. Proponents argued that veterans *deserved* to have a wide variety of services to help them reintegrate into society after bravely serving their country. But, they argued, veterans should not be burdened with the expectation of searching for quality services from overly self-interested and competing providers. I regularly observed VNPO leaders making the case that veterans were easily confused by nonprofit service options, that they did not know where to begin, and were reluctant to seek help in the first place. To remedy this situation, charitable programs needed to re-orient themselves. It was argued that nonprofit organizations that created veterans' programs were too myopically focused on their own survival, creating a

patchwork of disconnected providers that were too self-interested to make a real impact. While veterans deserved services, they did *not* deserve to have to wade through a disconnected mass of organizations searching for the one that could help them (while trying to avoid the ones that would take advantage of them). At the heart of these claims was that veterans were unable to navigate a growing field of non-VA, charitable services and that widespread "support" for veterans had to be more centrally organized in order to be effective. The Sea of Goodwill quickly morphed from a term into a logic; it became a prescription for legitimate organizational behavior for VNPOs.

To make their point, proponents of this logic often invoked nautical metaphors, referencing the growth in charitable programs with words like currents, waves, tides, crests, and chop. The Sea of Goodwill required "charting," "channeling," and "navigating." The following passage from a military and veteran research institute exemplifies the nautical imagery that accompanied the Sea of Goodwill discourse:

> Despite the rising tide of support for our veterans and military families over the last decade, the uncoordinated delivery of services and resources for this population has made the "sea of goodwill" a stormy one. Individual actors working outside of a collective framework are crashing against one another in the often well-intended, albeit blind, pursuit of individual goals and competition for increasingly scarce resources… The veterans navigating these waters can see the uncertain postwar future once the favorable tides recede… [we must channel our efforts] to create strong currents that will sweep our veterans and families to the shore that they seek, rather than leave them lost at sea. (Armstrong et al. 2014: 2)

As I reviewed above, public charities have to become "business-like" in order to be successful in today's philanthropic marketplace; the managerial professionals running public charities adopt a "business mindset" to market their programs, find revenue, and secure their self-interest and organizational survival (Hwang and Powell 2009; Salaman 2002). But as the quote above demonstrates, in the unique case of *veterans'* support, something about this business mindset invited skepticism and caution. The "well-intended, albeit blind, pursuit of individual

[organizational] goals" created a situation where organizations were "crashing against one another," inciting "competition for scarce resources," and leaving veterans "lost at sea." According to the logic, veteran-supporting organizations needed to move away from an "uncoordinated delivery of services" toward a "collective framework."

Importantly, this logic did not explicitly *resist* the business-like bureaucratization of veteran-serving organizations, which has been documented in other nonprofit sectors. Rather, the Sea of Goodwill advocated for the *extension* of bureaucratization into a collective, sector-wide coordination of service delivery. In many ways, the logic called on VNPOs to engage in the kind of highly formal, interorganizational centralization commonly seen in military institutions. In fact, the very notion of a Sea of Goodwill originated in the military.

Origins

By looking retrospectively at the origins of the Sea of Goodwill logic and comparing its rise with the trends in the IRS data, I discern that this discourse began circulating at the same time that 501(c)(3) public charities began to grow within the veteran-focused nonprofit sector. The term first emerged around 2008 and become increasingly popularized in the years that followed. The first reference to a "sea of goodwill" for veterans and active duty service members came from an op-ed written by Admiral Michael G. Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the top-ranking advisory board in the Department of Defense comprised of the nation's highest ranking military officers. In a short 2008 article in *The Washington Times*, Adm. Mullen wrote: "There is, I am convinced, a sea of goodwill out in the country of people and places yearning to help. We need to tap into it" (Mullen 2008). The phrase "sea of goodwill" was a common feature of Adm. Mullen's speeches and public addresses at the time; he regularly used

this precise phrase to reference the growth in support for veterans and the military, which has been empirically proven in the post-9/11 American political landscape (Huiskamp 2011).

Mullen's phrase was formally codified two years later in a seminal White Paper authored by Major John W. Copeland and Colonel David W. Sutherland, advisors from Mullen's office who oversaw the Joint Chiefs' division of Warrior and Family Support. In their paper, Copeland and Sutherland (2010) more explicitly connected the rather amorphous notion of "support" to not-for-profit organizations that worked with veterans. However, they also noted all this organizational support would be ineffective if it were not properly networked and coordinated. They advocated for collectivizing support programs into a mutually-reinforcing "trinity" of support resources for veterans and their families, centralized around a corpus of education, employment, and healthcare services. In order to channel "the tide of this Sea of Goodwill," organizations had to shift towards "prioritizing and linking the needs of warriors and families…in an organized fashion that will allow for a better application of resources" (6).

In the years that followed, the Joint Chiefs continued to author several White Papers advancing the Sea of Goodwill concept and, in so doing, sparked a new way of thinking and talking about how to best structure veterans' nonprofit organizations. Later papers codified the need to translate the diffusion of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations into a centralized network that would be highly coordinated and efficient. In 2014, the Joint Chiefs asserted: "Now is the time to create a national structure—characterized by functional cooperation, cross-sector collaboration, and an integrated network—to establish a no-wrong-door capacity that allows our country to reintegrate effectively veterans and their families as a matter of course" (2). The Joint Chiefs' use of the phrase "no wrong door" was meaningful; it was a metaphor for a system in which VNPOs were thoroughly integrated and, consequently, interdependent. In this idealized

system, a veteran could seek services from any one of the interconnected organizations and immediately be funneled to the services they needed. There would be "no wrong door" for a veteran seeking services. The logic asserted that, rather than leaving veterans to search and find services from a plethora of organizations, the onus should be on the organizations to properly centralize *themselves* so that veterans could "step right in" to a formalized service-delivering system.

Extending this "no wrong door" logic, the Joint Chiefs later went on to advocate for "After Sea of Goodwill (ASOG) Communities," in which they imagined VNPOs centralizing into a network characterized by, among other things, a shared agenda and strategy, an integrated communication platform, functional cooperation at every level of each organization, cross-sector collaboration to integrate programs, and complete sharing in various areas of program responsibilities and assessment (Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 2015). To put it more plainly, optimal ASOG communities would exhibit high levels of centralization and bureaucracy to the point that the ideal type of ASOG community would virtually mirrors the organizational structure of the military. The professional military is a dense and complicated bureaucracy with a shared agenda, integrated communications, mutually reinforcing cooperation between units, and a centralized system for assessment and oversight.

The Joint Chiefs implied that ASOG communities should not only mirror the military in formal structure, but also in principle. In order to achieve uniform discipline, the military suppresses unruly individualism in favor of communal-orientation, stressing allegiance to the collective unit and its mission. The Joint Chiefs invoked this collective, anti-individualist mentality in their description of ASOG communities, where they spelled their rules for serving veterans: "If you think you're doing it better than anyone else or the only one doing it, someone

else is doing it and doing it better…If you start to think it's about you, that's when it's time to get out." (13). The Joint Chiefs emphasized that, rather than focus on singular impact or individual self-interests, the wave of the Sea of Goodwill and the immutable deservingness of veterans necessitated a different paradigm.

Interestingly, the Joint Chiefs (2015) were also adamant that ASOG communities and other VNPO centralization initiatives should not be overseen by government or state-run agencies. Exhibiting a relatively standard military mistrust of government bureaucrats, the Joint Chiefs cautioned against situating VNPO centralization in the state: "The creation of a comprehensive, government-led veterans strategy may be a bridge too far…We believe that long-term, sustainable success in a national veterans strategy is more likely if the effort is embraced and led by the private sector, which can often move faster to address exigent need" (4).

Gaining Traction

In the years following the Copeland and Sutherland White Paper, the Sea of Goodwill logic became ubiquitous and popularized in the veterans' support space. In a follow-up to the first White Paper, the Joint Chiefs (2011) began by stating: "The 'Sea of Goodwill' was heavily distributed and overwhelmingly well received, to the point of almost being unanimously accepted as the primer for reintegration reading" (5). Indeed, researchers and even my own interview respondents referenced the idea of a "Sea of Goodwill" anytime they aimed to show that there was a newfound era of support for veterans. Some of my respondents cited the papers directly. For example, Tony Ressenda, one of the most influential figures in the San Diego VNPO sector, referenced the Joint Chiefs by name in our interview:

> Colonel David Sullivan [sic], who worked for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he talked about a thing called a Sea of Goodwill and that people really love veterans. They want to help veterans and it's depicted in this [paper] when you read it. So, what's happened is the country's kind of said, "We want to take care of our veterans."

> That's the sort of Sea of Goodwill. That's this good feeling about veterans. They've done well, they've served well. They've served honorably. Let's make sure they get their benefits. So, everybody's kind of said, "The more the merrier." (Tony Ressenda, Founder of the San Diego Veterans Action Network [VAN], Air Force veteran)

Another indication that the Joint Chiefs' prescription was widely accepted came in 2013, when the Council on Foundations convened a conference in San Diego with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, local VNPO leaders, and representatives from prominent grant-making foundations. The Joint Chiefs not only unveiled another White Paper at this conference, they also petitioned grant-making organizations to adopt their vision of a centralized and disciplined service delivery network and shape their grantees to participate in such a system (Cohen 2013). According to a journalist that covered the event, the foundations welcomed the idea of a more centralized VNPO sector because of their lack of familiarity with veterans and their confusion with a growing number of veteran-focused charities: "Navigating this sea [of veterans programs] is difficult, leading institutional givers to say that they value and appreciate the contributions of veterans in this nation's overseas wars, but in terms of their grantmaking, they don't 'do' veterans" (Cohen 2013).

Researchers in military and veteran-oriented think-tanks also began circulating the term and the logic of the Sea of Goodwill. Researchers at the Center for New American Security and the Institute of Veterans and Military Families began to cite the Joint Chiefs' papers directly and advocated for increased centralization of the sector. Berglass and Harrel (2012) argued that the VA and/or Department of Defense should be more involved in providing guidance and oversight to the sector to "help reduce inefficiencies" and give structure to "the thousands of community-based nonprofit organizations nationwide that provide a range of critical services to veterans" (7). Armstrong et al. (2014) stated firmly that "these 45,000 organizations must act in a more

coordinated manner to generate the greatest possible, long-term impact on our current and former servicemembers' health and wellbeing." Carter and Kidder (2015) began their report by calling for interagency coordination: "Because of its organic, often uncoordinated nature, the nonprofit community serving veterans has taken on a fragmented character, with many leaders arguing for greater coherence and coordination among these nonprofits" (1).

At the same time that the Sea of Goodwill logic gained traction among funders and researchers, it was also promulgated and put to action by locally-embedded actors in the VNPO sector. In practice, the call for inter-agency centralization took the form of VNPOs creating collaborative networks and coalitions to begin building more centralized systems. Researchers at the Institute of Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) began mapping sites of VNPO collaboration and coalition-building in 2015 and found that there were collaborative networks being formed around the country. They also noted that most of these networks were relatively centralized:

> …the majority of network collaboratives analyzed are lead-organization governed networks, meaning that a service provider acts as a decision-making governance body for the whole network…most collaboratives also have formal relationships between partners, where there is a clearly defined governance structure and full or extensive collaboration and cooperation between service partners" (Armstrong et al. 2016).

Drawing upon IVMF's data, Carter and Kidder (2017) produced a follow-up study and showed that, out of the 100 most populous veterans localities, 67 had some kind of collaborative inter-agency activity for veterans, and 18 of these localities (including San Diego) had a more robust, centralized collaborative system.

Combining Logics and Acting Strategically: The San Diego Case

While there are many strategic reasons for nonprofit organizations to collaborate and form networks (which I explain in further detail in Chapter 3), the creation of *veteran-specific*

collaborative structures was a uniquely cultural phenomenon that provided a way to "couple" veterans programs with both the logics of the military and nonprofit institutional constraints. Importantly, local actors often emphasized that veterans' charitable programs were highly precarious. Structurally, this was quite true given their "newness" (Hager et al. 2004) and stagnant assets. But at the micro-level of individual perception, precarity was connected to feelings about the civil-military divide, a feeling that veterans occupied a tenuous position in civilian society. Throughout my fieldwork, I observed VNPO leaders lament that only 1 percent of eligible American adults served in the military. The civil-military gap, they argued, was growing and veterans charities would be the first casualty when civilians "forgot" about the military. In most of the secondary sources I analyzed and in many of my observations, there was a gnawing sense that civilian support for the military would wane, and that "The Sea of Goodwill" would eventually become an "ocean of apathy" (Carter 2012: 6).

Forming a collaborative, centralized system would not only ensure coordinated and efficient service delivery in line with militaristic logic, it would also insulate VNPOs from the whims of unfamiliar civilian donors and generate mutually-ensured survival for newly-founded public charities that longed for sustainability and organizational success. In other words, VNPO leaders did not simultaneously form coordinated nonprofit networks around the country simply because they were blindly following the orders of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Nor did they form these networks purely out of the strategic, enterprise-oriented self-interest that is necessary for public charities. Rather, coalition-building was a way to combine the logic of militaristic centralization with the enterprise culture of public charities.

In San Diego's VNPO sector, the combination of military and nonprofit logics to form coalitions was especially evident. In line with the national sector, the VNPO sector in San Diego

saw a similar rise in 501(c)(3) organizations in the years following 2001. During my fieldwork, I kept and maintained a database of VNPOs in San Diego[12] that I came across online, in person, or through nonprofit service directories. I identified nearly 150 San Diego charities that offered programs for veterans. I then separated from this sample organizations that were exclusively or significantly[13] devoted to veterans, leaving me with 104 charities that were highly involved in the veterans service space. The median founding year for these organizations was 2008; over two thirds of these organizations were founded in the years since 2001.

San Diego is a case where the push for veterans' services is taken extremely seriously. The density of the military population in San Diego gives VNPO leaders a tremendous sense of urgency. Throughout my fieldwork, I heard refrains that San Diego could serve as a "national model" in its collaborative efforts. In my interviews as well as my observations, actors regularly invoked the idea that San Diego was exceptional and that other areas were trying to do things "the San Diego way."

> To the fact that this is a military town so we know they're more veterans here, more families connected to the military here…so that "heart strings melody" plays even louder on us. (Randall Williams, founder of The Veterans Transition Camp, Navy veteran)

> Because there is such a large [veteran] population concentrated in the county in particular and in certain neighborhoods in the county. Then you have got so many military connected individuals and organizations. So that actually puts more pressure on the work… You know, like things have got to happen here. If they are not going to happen here, then they're not going to happen anywhere. (Carol Herren, Executive Director of San Diego Service Network [the infrastructure organization behind the Military Family Alliance], Army child)

[12] I defined a VNPO as being "in San Diego" primarily by the location of their headquarters and the scope of their activity in San Diego County. Organizations were included in the database if their headquarters were in San Diego County or, if their headquarters were not in San Diego County, they maintained an organizational subsidiary in San Diego County.

[13] I defined organizations as "exclusively devoted" to veterans if all of their programs were aimed at the veteran population. I defined organizations as "significantly devoted" to veterans if no less than half of their programs were devoted to veterans.

VNPO leaders in San Diego echoed many of the same sentiments advanced by the Joint Chiefs of staff. They recognized that there was a newfound growth in support for veterans, but that growth may not lead to the efficient delivery of services. One of my respondents was known for repeating the phrase "not all help is helpful" (Mark Fischer, founder of the Military Family Alliance, not military-affiliated) to refer to uncoordinated veterans' services. There was widespread recognition that without proper coordination, the "Sea of Goodwill" for veterans would create a unique set of challenges:

> Everybody was sending stuff to the military [in Afghanistan]. [My son] has a picture of a wall of beef jerky and Spam and Handiwipes. I mean I'm talking a wall that has the height up to [the ceiling] and probably 30 feet long of stuff stacked up…how do you not overwhelm someone with so much goodness?... They couldn't possibly have a need for so much Handiwipes… that's what's happening [with veterans] now. (Chuck Stern, veterans' advocate, Navy veteran)

In addition, local VNPO leaders echoed the Joint Chiefs' sentiment that veterans should not be expected to sift through so many charitable programs on their own. While advocating for a more formal service delivery framework, one of my respondents likened a veteran seeking charitable services in this landscape to "trying to take a drink out of a firehose" (Kari Leeds, First Call Resource Center, Marine Corps spouse and parent). So many charitable programs were difficult for veterans to navigate.

> The veterans' programs are so scattered, so fragmented, so piecemeal. Veterans can't navigate the system. It's too complicated. Where do I go to get benefits? Where do I go to get healthcare? What am I eligible for? How do I go to college? Who pays me money? (Ron Schor, Coordinator for veteran's education benefits at a local university, Navy veteran)

> I sat in a conference and I…[talked directly] with Mark Cuban… he simply said, "There are way too many veteran nonprofits out there and they are not working together"… There's just an influx, and I think almost a saturation, there is a saturation. (Dawn Karlson, Vice-President of the Veterans Entrepreneur Association, Navy spouse)

My respondents regularly supported the idea of an integrated service delivery system. In San Diego, as in many other VNPO localities, that system came in the form of formal collaborative networks and coalitions. Some collaborative, information-sharing structures had been in place in San Diego since the 1980s, but most of these older structures were designed to create a bridge between federal agencies and local posts of veterans' voluntary associations. In the post-9/11 years, new groups of public charities began to organize themselves into a number of coalitions and collaboration initiatives throughout San Diego County. Today, there are six separate veteran collaborative initiatives underway in San Diego, the majority of which were founded between 2004 and 2013. By far, the two most prominent collaboratives in the area are the San Diego Veterans Action Network (VAN) and the San Diego Military Family Alliance (MFA), founded in 2009 and 2010 respectively. Most of the local charities I encountered were members of either VAN or MFA and many were members of both. These structures created a system for sharing resources as well as assessing who was a "legitimate" actor in the newly dense world of veterans' charities.

> Everybody jumps in and says "I've got the best thing since sliced bread." "No I do." "No I do." And they all go off and form their own niche someplace. It's wide open and so the people are jumping in when they see an opportunity and you know, there's scam artists in veterans causes too… The Sea of Goodwill is a positive thing but like a lot of good things, it gets taken negative because people get in and there's an opportunity to take advantage of it... and there's no regulation that controls it… So that's one of the good things about [VAN], to have some vetting and get more collaboration. (Tony Ressenda, Veterans Action Network, Air Force veteran)

> One of the things I like to see [VAN] do… is vet some of these organizations. Some of them, quite frankly, see veterans as dollar signs… But then some are genuinely doing terrific stuff. So, I like to know who's out there, what they're doing, and either support them or learn more about what they're doing so that I can let our veterans know about resources if they need them. So that's why I go to things like [VAN]. (Joan Flanagan, Veteran's Education Outreach, Navy veteran)

Implied, but just beneath the surface of many of my interviews was that the current landscape of veterans charities was influenced by a civil-military divide. There was a sense of a civilian world "out there," full of people who ostensibly cared about veterans, but could just as easily be misguided or even forget about veterans' needs.

> See, my beef with America is that nobody has any skin in this war other than the kids and their families. So, all of this stuff was started by families of people that had kids overseas that wanted to do something. (George Ashe, founding member of VetTown SD, Army veteran)

> During a VAN meeting, an older man got up to talk about the importance of collaboration. He said that only 1% of the population has been in the military, and he took that to mean that 99% of the country doesn't know or understand the work that these organizations are doing (Field notes, April 2016).

At the same time, there was a feeling of veteran-specific insularity coming from my respondents. They regularly suggested that veterans do not trust civilians, just as much as civilians don't understand veterans.

> When you think about military service, when you first come in… there's always that time when you separate… into this identity in-group and makes it an "us against them" thing. So the civilians around that base are trying to get your disposable income. They're not thinking about you; it's you against them. And so, when you're transitioning out of that, to break that mindset, you have to have people that see the cultural differences in you and care enough about you that can talk about those things and help you begin to deal with that. (Jason Hunt, VAN Board Member, Navy veteran)

> I suspect that it is the characteristics that come along with [having been in the military]. For example, veterans are suspicious. "Who is this person? Why is she writing me?"…Veterans are suspicious… It's pretty old school thinking, frankly. (Riley Jean Dodson, VAN Board Member, Navy veteran)

The creation of veteran-specific coalitions and collaboratives was a way for VNPO leaders to bridge two different needs. On one hand, coalitions provided a way of directing inter-agency efforts consistent with the Sea of Goodwill logic. On the other hand, coalitions were a place

where veteran-focused service providers could come together, speak the same language, and enact the kind of cultural boundaries I described in Chapter 1.

Coalitions quickly became the arbiters of the Sea of Goodwill logic. As a result, coalition organizations have now been so thoroughly integrated into the sector that they act as centers of gravity – central hubs in the veterans nonprofit sector with the power to confer (and deny) the legitimacy of particular organizations. As Suchman (1995) articulates, legitimacy is "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (574). Scott (2014) argues that, for an organization, legitimacy is much like oxygen: "the importance of legitimacy becomes immediately and painfully apparent only if lost" (71).

In my interviews, respondents mentioned that organizations that were not members of at least one coalition organization were either obsolete or untrustworthy. When I asked about organizations that may not be part of VAN, one respondent replied: "My guess is that most of the ones who are doing good work in this space are in [VAN]" (Patrick O'Brian, President of First Call Resource Center, Navy veteran). Another respondent had just sought membership in VAN and, when I asked her why VAN membership was appealing, her answer was revealing: "It's something I need to do in order to show, 'Look I'm supporting the veterans community' … if you're not a member of this organization you're not really real" (Patty Forrester, The Transition Seminar, Navy spouse).

But the coalitions also have the power to deny membership and, consequently, legitimacy. For example, VAN requires that potential new members "pitch" themselves at a meeting and sell members on how they will bring added value to the network. Members then vote on whether to admit or deny the new organization. Although I never witnessed VAN

members deny a membership bid during my fieldwork, VAN's capability of controlling membership was an expression of its symbolic power. One particularly tense moment occurred when the Wounded Warrior Project presented its bid for membership 2017, a year after a scandal had ravaged the organization. The Wounded Warrior Project's membership bid sparked intense conversation from VAN members and the VAN board. Though the Wounded Warrior Project was eventually granted membership, VAN members and leaders first made clear that they *could* deny membership and that granting access to the Wounded Warrior Project was, in some ways, an act of making the Wounded Warrior Project "legitimate" again.

CONCLUSION: CONTINUED NEGOTIATION

The rise in 501(c)(3) public charities disrupted the veteran-focused nonprofit field, bringing well-documented institutional constraints to become formal, bureaucratic, and business-like. As public charities began to ascend, so too did the notion that too many self-interested charitable organizations were bad for veterans and thus necessitated a formal, centralized, inter-agency network for service delivery. In response, VNPO leaders embraced coalition-building, which could strategically satisfy the militaristic logic of formal centralization while also meeting the necessities of charitable "enterprise culture."

The pervasive, nationwide development of veteran-focused nonprofit coalitions re-organized the field and established new rules of the game. Proximity to a coalition became a primary way for VNPOs to signal their legitimacy and the coalitions, themselves, became intermediaries for legitimacy in the sector. In this way, those organizations at the core of collaborative networks have cemented their power in the sector.

Despite these developments, there remains a substantial amount of contestation in the sector over the next steps for VNPOs and coalitions. Many of my respondents expressed

ambivalence over whether the ideal of a formal, centralized VNPO sector could actually be put into practice in the day-to-day functioning of their organizations. While the Sea of Goodwill logic provides a clear rationality for collective, rather than individual, impact, the reality of organizational life prevents its full application. As I show in the next chapter, organization leaders are struggling to find ways to actually incorporate a centralized, "no wrong door" model into their organizational practices while also preserving their time, resources, and autonomy. One respondent noted poignantly: "At the end of the day, I have to answer to my board [of directors]. So if its two hours at [VAN] or two hours on a grant proposal, I have to write that proposal" (Victoria Colin, Executive Director of Veteran's Aqua-Rehab, Navy child).

In their original claims for the Sea of Goodwill, the Joint Chiefs of Staff imagined "After Sea of Goodwill" communities that could resemble the military. However, the formal inter-agency collaboration espoused as a *way of life* for VNPOs had to be reconciled with the *lived experience* of running a charity. As these organizations started to grow into themselves, they began to feel the tension between two logics: the needs of the enterprise on the one hand, and the meanings of the military and veterans' community on the other.

Chapter 3: The "No Wrong Door" Model

> "What I'm looking for is a *coalition of the willing*, and I think I've got that here. It's time to move away from working in silos, none of you can do it all. We've got to create a holistic, no-wrong-door approach to veterans. And here is our chance to make a big play." (Wayne Bradford, Vice-President of Call-SD, speaking to a room of local VNPO leaders, paraphrased from fieldnotes)

In May 2016, a group of San Diego VNPO leaders convened in a large conference room at Call-SD, a public charitiy that operates an enormous call center designed to connect anyone who dials "Call-SD" with available nonprofit and public services. Led by Wayne Bradford, a fast-talking and business-minded Army veteran, the meeting was to introduce VNPO leaders to a centralized client-sharing operating system. Wayne was looking for buy-in, a "coalition of the willing" to implement a shared software for client referrals called "VetsUnited OS." I looked around the room and saw many familiar faces; Wayne had leveraged his influential role in VAN and his credibility across the sector to bring people to the table. I attended the meeting alongside Hunter Nelson, the CEO of the Enlisted Support Initiative, the organization I had been studying in-depth.

The VetsUnited OS demonstration was one of several highly symbolic moments I observed while in the field. Wayne Bradford and his allies were trying to move VNPOs to a "no wrong door" model for service delivery. They imagined a system in which VNPOs were thoroughly integrated and, consequently, interdependent. The Joint Chiefs and other proponents of the Sea of Goodwill logic desired an integrated service system in which a veteran could seek services from any of the networked organizations and immediately be funneled to the services they needed. There would be "no wrong door" for veterans seeking services. The "no wrong door" model was a metaphor for realizing the Sea of Goodwill logic, a way of describing an idealized organizational sector that had been appropriately centralized to satisfy veterans' needs

and minimize organizational self-interest. In his meeting to find a "coalition of the willing," Wayne Bradford offered the VetsUnited OS to sector leaders as an infrastructure, a mechanism for building a centralized group of organizations and operationalizing the "no wrong door" approach. In the room, dozens of VNPO leaders nodded and asked questions. But months later, only a few of them actually bought into VetsUnited OS.

What was at stake in this meeting was a negotiation between sector-level rationalities and on-the-ground organizational realities. As I review in Chapter 2, the rise in veteran-focused public charities created an organizational environment dense with new, enterprising, service-delivering organizations. Leaders of these organizations and observers from the Department of Defense agreed that having "too many" independent and agentic veterans' organizations constituted a "Sea of Goodwill" that, if improperly navigated, would capsize organizations and leave veterans metaphorically lost at sea. The ensuing logic drew from military cultural repertoires and advocated high degrees of collective interdependence and centralization. Eventually, coalition organizations became intermediaries for a new organizational legitimacy.

From a sector-level perspective, it would seem that VNPOs were clustering into local, centralized power systems. But on the ground, the picture was more complicated. VNPOs were not neatly and unquestioningly adhering to the Sea of Goodwill rationality. While VNPO leaders publicly embraced the centralization logic of the Sea of Goodwill, they also struggled to fully implement it into their organizational practices. Centralization would be costly, risky, and require organizations to yield varying levels of autonomy. The logic that emerged alongside public charities eschewed myopic self-interest and encouraged centralization. To realize this logic in practice would require these new firms to sacrifice their self-interest in the name of serving veterans. In practice, few of them seemed willing to do so.

In this chapter, I argue that as a relatively new and emergent sector of organizations, veteran-focused public charities were in a structural position to engage in "institutional work," or the ways in which actors shape the boundaries and practices considered legitimate in their domain (Zeitsma and Lawrence 2010). Although these organizations did not represent a new organizational form (since public charities were already ubiquitous in the nonprofit sector), their novelty in the world of veterans' services created openings for actors to interpret and negotiate how veteran-focused charities should work. While all newly formed organizations "face an identity problem," the creation of so many veterans charities in the post-9/11 era meant that many veterans charities faced this problem at the same time (King et al. 2011).

Informing their institutional work was the negotiation between the constraints of having to be "business-like" and the emergent logic of the Sea of Goodwill, a prescriptive framework in line with collectively-oriented military rationality. VNPOs enacted cultural boundaries that symbolically separated them from other kinds of charities. Belonging to the "veterans' service space" meant having to signal that one was "in it for the right reasons," which meant that one was willing to reject blind self-interest in the name of what was best for veterans, and what was best for veterans was the "no wrong door" model.

From my organizational ethnography and field observations, I find that in practice, VNPOs were reluctant to engage in the strategic restructuring that would have been necessary for building the "no wrong door" model. At the same time that VNPOs embraced and advanced the logic of centralization, the self-interest of organizational survival weighed heavily on organizational practices. Instead of actively building the "no wrong door" model, these organizations "loosely coupled" with the logic by engaging in multiple collaborative partnerships and by attending regular meetings of coalition organizations (Weick 1976; DiMaggio and Powell

1983). These collaborations fell along a spectrum ranging from informal to formal and overwhelmingly favored one-to-one, rather than multi-agency, partnerships. The collaborative practices of these organizations are consistent with what could be expected of new organizations that were not yet structurally embedded in the community, in that they opened more resources and required minimal loss of organizational autonomy.

I observed these dynamics first-hand during a 9-month organizational ethnography with the Enlisted Support Initiative, or ESI. My ethnography with ESI not only afforded an opportunity to observe a VNPO in-depth, it also gave me an organizational perspective for interpreting and interacting with the rest of the sector. Founded in 2012 by a Navy veteran, ESI was emblematic of the growing rise in veteran-focused public charities. In its day-to-day operations, ESI regularly negotiated between the isomorphic pressures necessitated by the nonprofit marketplace and the military logics embraced by its CEO and his counterparts throughout the sector. Throughout the chapter, I will draw upon my ethnography at ESI to punctuate and illuminate the trends I observed during my field observations and interviews.

This chapter proceeds as follows. In Part 1, I start by discussing how newly formed organizations are able to engage in "institutional work" in an effort to find and assert their organizational identities. I then discuss inter-agency collaboration as a nonprofit organizational practice, briefly reviewing scholarship on how and why nonprofit organizations collaborate with each other. The range and scope of nonprofit inter-collaborations vary, but almost always entail the negotiation of three main costs: resources, relationships, and autonomy. From there, I spell out the difference between "standard" nonprofit collaboration and the centralization that was advocated in the Sea of Goodwill logic. In Part 2, I address how organizations are loosely coupling with these efforts through the perspective of my ethnographic case study: the Enlisted

Support Initiative (ESI). After introducing ESI's mission and team, I discuss how the Sea of Goodwill logic showed up in ESI, as well as the limits of this logic in practice. I then trace three collaborative efforts at ESI to demonstrate the costs of collaboration and the difficulty in operationalizing the "no-wrong-door" approach. I conclude the chapter by explaining the recent ubiquity in VNPO coalition-building in practical organizational terms; these coalitions offer a low-cost but highly symbolic, and therefore attractive, organizational practice.

PART 1: NEW ORGANIZATIONS AND NONPROFIT COLLABORATION

The majority of veteran-focused public charities have been formed in the post-9/11 era. While these organizations did not represent a new organizational form in the nonprofit sector generally, they were novel in the veterans' services space. Being relatively young and novel, veteran charities faced a particular structural condition. On one hand, their newness, lack of long-term assets, and small size made them relatively precarious. In their study of nonprofit organizational longevity, Hager et al. (2004) find that new and small nonprofit organizations have a higher risk of closure due to a lack of structural embeddedness.

On the other hand, emerging organizations also have an opportunity to define themselves through a kind of "organizational bricolage" (Perkmann and Spicer 2014). That is, new organizations have an opportunity to weave together material and symbolic resources to produce organizational forms and practices in line with their organizational values (Perkman and Spicer 2014). King et al. (2011) call this process "identity realization," or "how organizations use combinations of elements to create identities within the constraints imposed by understandings of what that form is meant to be and how such organizations are meant to behave" (555). They argue that while every new organization goes through the process of identity formation, organizations emerging in a new industry or field (such as charter schools) must engage in a

cross-level identity process, where identity is formed at both the organizational level and the broader sector level. These organizations "must establish recognizable features that all organizations of that type can draw on for legitimacy" in addition to engaging in "organization-level editing of templates to distinguish their own organization from the rest of the field" (555). Though VNPOs were not necessarily emblematic of a new industry, their recent emergence and novelty created an opening for actors to engage in this kind of cross-level identity formation, enabling them to define the central characteristics of veteran charities broadly as well as what distinguished them from other veteran charities in the sector.

In addition to their newness as organizations, veteran charities disrupted the traditional configuration of veteran support services. Though still a numerical minority relative to veteran voluntary associations, veteran charities were different kinds of players in the veterans' support field. Zeitsma and Lawrence (2010) argue that organizations in recently disrupted fields have the opportunity to engage in "institutional work," which they separate into "boundary work" and "practice work." These authors posit that boundaries and practices reinforce each other. Boundaries designate who belongs in a particular field and, from that grouping, delimit sets of practices that, in turn, reinforce the legitimacy of the boundaries. Organizational actors engage in "institutional work" when they seek to create, maintain, or disrupt the existing boundaries and practices in a field. When a field is disrupted, the salience of boundaries and practices are heightened and thus subject to renegotiation. Alongside their identity formation, veteran charities could engage in boundary work and practice work, determining who "belonged" in the sector and what kinds of practices supported their membership.

From the perspective of identity formation and institutional work, coalition-building and collaboration were a way to assert collective organizational identities as well as create mutually-

reinforcing boundaries and practices. As I described in Chapter 2, the Sea of Goodwill logic inspired coalition-building *en masse*. Coalition-building was a practice that enabled a larger vision for centralized, multi-agency coordination. Coalitions soon became the keepers of sector boundaries, conveying or denying legitimacy on the basis of membership. To signal membership within the boundaries of the in the VNPO community, organizations had to engage in the practice of coalition-building and inter-agency collaborations to show that they were not blindly following their own self-interest. In line with Zeitsma and Lawrence's (2010) understanding of boundaries and practices, coalition-building and collaboration were mutually-reinforcing as both a boundary and a practice.

Collaboration in the Nonprofit Sector

Most scholarship on nonprofit collaboration tends to focus on cross-sector collaboration between nonprofits and the business sector or nonprofits and the public sector. However, more recent studies have turned their attention to within-sector collaboration between nonprofit organizations. Recent scholarship has made clear that inter-agency coordination is becoming an industry standard in nonprofit organizations (Sowa 2009). Increasingly, nonprofit organizations are expected to demonstrate their interorganizational collaborations when applying for grants from public agencies and private foundations as a means of demonstrating their professionalization and sustainability (Jang and Feiock 2007; Suarez 2011; Witesman and Heiss 2016).

Though collaboration is increasingly expected among nonprofit organizations, these collaborations can vary in scope and intensity. Informal collaborations range from sharing information, making referrals, or sharing material resources and budgets (Guo and Acar 2005; Kagan 1991; Mattessich and Monsey 1992; Selden et al. 2006). These kinds of collaborations are

fairly common, for reasons I explain below. What are less common are formal collaborations, which generally entail strategic restructuring of organizations and formally integrating services, such as sharing ownership over a program, combining staff, merging clientele, or merging entire organizations (Guo and Acar 2005; Kagan 1991; Mattessich and Monsey 1992; Selden et al. 2006).

There are several dimensions of incentives for nonprofit collaboration. From a resource dependence perspective, collaboration enables organizations to access others' resources and minimize their costs, each of which are especially attractive if the organizations' funding environments are unstable or precarious (Guo and Acar 2005; Snavely and Tracy 2002). From a social network perspective, building collaborations is a strategy for nonprofit organizations to leverage existing and build new social capital (Arya and Lin 2007; Gulati 1998). Finally, organizations may collaborate as a strategic maneuver for managing their organizational ecology, or field (Fligstein 1996; Fligstein and McAdam 2012), such as in strategic response to competition or the threat of competition (Barman 2002; Bunger 2012; Bunger et al. 2014).

However, engaging in collaboration can be both risky and costly to nonprofit organizations. Collaborations can be risky insofar as they expose organizations to potential exploitation and cooptation by their partners, who may opportunistically dominate the relationship or leverage the partnership for their own enrichment (Bunger 2012; Das and Teng 1998). In this way, collaborations could threaten organizational autonomy if improperly managed. In addition, collaborations require up-front investment of time and resources, both of which are scarce in nonprofit organizations (Jang and Feiock 2007). The payoff for this up-front cost is uncertain; organizations often enter into collaborations unsure about how they will be assessed and whether they will be effective at meeting the agencies' objectives (Sowa 2009).

Finally, even though collaboration is institutionally mandated to prove legitimacy in the eyes of funders, a poorly-managed or poor-fit collaboration can ultimately threaten an organization's legitimacy and damage their relationships with other organizations (Galaskiewicz, and Colman 2006). Consequently, collaborations require a high degree of trust (Bunger 2012).

Three main features are at stake in nonprofit collaboration: autonomy, resources, and inter-agency relationships. Himmelmen (2001) uses three alliterative to describe these features: "time" (resources), "trust" (relationships), and "turf" (autonomy). The negotiation of time, trust, and turf makes informal nonprofit collaborations more attractive than formal integrations. Informal collaborations require minimal (or manageable) investment of resources and organizational autonomy. If successful, these collaborations can maximize inter-agency relationships and, if unsuccessful, were not costly enough to damage relationships in the long-term. Formal integrations, on the other hand, require a sacrifice of autonomy, substantial investment of resources, and a high level of inter-agency trust.

Based on the established literature on nonprofit collaboration, it could be argued that VNPOs embraced collaboration with such zeal because it is becoming institutionalized and expected in the nonprofit sector. These organizations were "catching up" to the rules of the game for the nonprofit institution and seeking the kind of social network embeddedness that will insulate them from organizational mortality (Hager et al. 2004). However, there are a few reasons to believe that the Sea of Goodwill logic that called for inter-agency collaboration reflected more than a mere nonprofit survival strategy. First, the calls for collaboration originated in the Department of Defense, not the VNPO sector. While VNPOs may have faced the isomorphic pressure for collaboration, the Joint Chiefs were insulated from that pressure as the highest ranking members of the military, yet still advocated for interorganizational coordination.

Second, from its inception the Sea of Goodwill was a prescription for what *veterans* needed, rather than a strategy for veteran service providers. The White Papers authored by the Joint Chiefs made clear that collaboration was about streamlining services to make it easier and safer for veterans to receive services. In fact, if an organization was too interested in their own survival, they were chastised. At the heart of collaborative efforts should be veterans, not resources or agency survival.

Most importantly, The Sea of Goodwill did not advocate for the kind of collaborations that are commonly seen and expected among nonprofit organizations. The Sea of Goodwill logic was not a rallying cry for informal partnerships or low-cost collaboration projects. It advocated for a nation-wide, centralized network into which every VNPO would be thoroughly integrated:

> The ASOG [After Sea of Goodwill] Community would provide a nation-wide network of collective engagement and collaboration that connects all veterans and their families to the support and opportunities they need to prosper in civilian life. We envision a networked no-wrong-door capacity for any veteran or military family organization… [the ASOG network] identifies, marshals, and aligns available data, resources, networks, and services in order to create efficient access and delivery of these programs to the nation's veterans and their families. (Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 2015: 2)

The "no wrong door" model advocated by the Joint Chiefs and VNPO leaders described high degrees of formal collaboration, extended across the entire sector. The Joint Chiefs stressed that the "no wrong door" model should be led by a central steering committee, supported by paid staff, informed by strict management practices, and organized around a membership structure that sorted all members into interdependent working units equipped with chairpersons and objectives. Implied in their prescription was that, in order to achieve a "no wrong door" model, VNPOs would need to formally restructure themselves into a system that resembled the military.

Such a vast, multi-agency organizational restructuring is simply unaccounted for in scholarship on nonprofit collaboration. In fact, while nonprofit collaborations have been studied

in a wide variety of empirical cases, the majority of these investigations explore one-to-one, dyadic partnerships (cf. Bunger 2012). Even if the collaboration under investigation is relatively formal, the organizational actors involved in the collaboration are generally limited to two or three agencies at a time (Selden et al. 2006; Sowa 2009).

Loose Coupling with the "No Wrong Door" Model

While the logic of the "no wrong door" approach had a high degree of cultural purchase among VNPOs during my time in the field, it had yet to be realized in organizational practice and attempts to move organizations toward such a model were met with resistance. For example, one of the leading VNPO coalition organizations in San Diego and a major purveyor of organizational legitimacy was the San Diego Veterans Action Network (VAN). In many ways, VAN was a relatively unremarkable professional network. VAN organized monthly meetings, provided networking opportunities, and celebrated collaboration efforts between its members. Yet, VAN was never quite content in this role. Throughout my fieldwork, VAN representatives repeated that they were a "backbone support organization" for building the "no wrong door" model in San Diego. VAN structured itself to match the governance structure of an ASOG Community: it was led by a central committee, had a paid staff person, and organized its members into "Unity Groups" with designated chairpersons and sets of objectives. But at the same time, VAN members expressed reluctance to the idea that VAN would be the central focal point in a more formalized organizational system. The reluctance came in many forms, including disagreements about VAN's future role and expressions of skepticism in my interviews that the "no wrong door" approach would even be possible. Throughout my time in the field, I was perpetually confused by the embrace of the "no wrong door" model on one hand, and the resistance to putting it into practice on the other.

This disconnect between logic and practice is what many scholars have called "coupling." When faced with an institutional logic, actors situated within organizations have the agency to couple tightly or loosely with the logic and do so based on the realities they face in context (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Weick 1976).). As scholars of inhabited institutionalism argue, the negotiation between individual actors within an organization, as well as the negotiation between the collective organizational actor and the forces of institutional constraint, combine and complicate the top-down prescriptive effect of institutions (Coburn 2004; Hallett 2010; Hallett and Ventresca 2006).

Veteran charities loosely coupled their collaboration efforts with the Sea of Goodwill logic and the "no wrong door" model for inter-agency coordination inspired by that logic. In so doing these organizations could engage in both "boundary work" and "practice work." Signaling allegiance to the "no wrong door" model was a matter of myth and ceremony (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Even if the "no wrong door" model had not been achieved, even if few people believed it could *ever* be achieved, advocating for it was a way of asserting membership in the organizational community. Even if VNPOs would not fully realize the "no wrong door" vision, they could loosely couple with its mandate by engaging in the low-cost, informal partnerships that were expected of all nonprofits and championed by VAN.

For the remainder of this chapter, I explore the organizational forces at work in this negotiation between logic and practice. I first introduce my case study, the Enlisted Support Initiative (ESI) and trace how it is informed by the Sea of Goodwill logic. While ESI embraced the Sea of Goodwill, there were limits to translating the logic into practice. Finally, I outline three key collaborative efforts in which ESI was involved during my ethnography to demonstrate the costs and opportunities associated with different kinds of collaboration.

PART 2: THE ENLISTED SUPPORT INITIATIVE (ESI)

The Enlisted Support Initiative (ESI) is a veteran charity that specializes in offering emergency financial grants to active-duty servicemembers and veterans during their transition away from the military, with one major caveat. ESI will only offer its services to those who are (or were) lower enlisted[14] military members. The mission makes sense; lower enlisted are the most socially and financially vulnerable of all military members (Department of Defense 2015). ESI recognizes these strains and limits its program to those who qualify as current and former lower enlisted personnel.

ESI was officially founded in 2012 after it disassociated from a national-level veteran charity. At the time, ESI was an affiliated chapter of the national organization, but the leadership disagreed with decisions being made at the national office and garnered support to take on the organization as a separate 501(c)(3) entity. Hunter Nelson stepped in to run the newly-founded charity. As a Navy veteran with a post-military background in consulting with military contractors, Hunter brought both a managerial and military background to his work, consistent with the normative forces of professionalization observed by Hwang and Powell (2009). In line with King et al. (2011), Hunter quickly got to work formulating ESI's organizational identity: "I wanted to do one thing really well and in a way that no one else does it," he said (Fieldnotes, January 2016).

[14] Lower enlisted refers to military personnel who are enlisted (rather than officers) and in the ranks of E1 through E6. The federal-level military ranking system separates military personnel into two tracks: the officer track (O1-O11) and the enlisted track (E1-E9). Those in the enlisted ranks generally join the military without a college degree, which is required for the officer track. Enlisted personnel sign up for a specified contract term, which lasts an average of 4-5 years. At the end of their contract term, enlisted personnel can re-enlist for another term if they desire and meet re-enlistment eligibility requirements. Most personnel start their military careers as E1 or E2 after completing basic training and typically advance to E4 or E5 by the end of their first enlistment contract. Generally, the lower enlisted ranks represent the proverbial "boots on the ground" military. They see the highest levels of staff turnover and generally tend to experience greater levels of volatility and uncertainty compared to higher military ranks.

Prior to receiving any service from ESI, all potential clients must first fill out an online application to request services. The application is a way of tracking client data, a hallmark of "business-like" charities. ESI's application is exceptionally comprehensive; it requires would-be clients to provide a careful accounting of monthly expenses, copies of bills and financial notices, statements of outstanding debt, military- and state-issued documents, and a narrative account of their financial situation. All told, the application takes between 45 and 60 minutes to complete, assuming the applicant already has electronic copies of all their documents. ESI sees such a robust (even tedious) application as doubly useful: it provides the organization with the ability to track client data and also opens the door to an in-depth conversation about financial habits. Upon successfully demonstrating eligibility, grants are issued to clients on the condition that they attend a half-day financial self-sufficiency course. Clients also receive financial counseling to help them get back on track.

Meeting the Team

ESI is located in a nondescript office park in northeastern San Diego. When I walk into the office for my first day in December 2015, my first sight is of an older woman happily hanging Christmas decorations around the reception desk. The office extends along a main corridor; the front houses reception and a conference room, the middle contains fundraising and development staff, and the back is for client services. The office has a homey feel; there are quilts hanging like tapestries on the walls, photographic portraits of military personnel snuggling their children, the smell of coffee in the air, and a cluster of children's toys nestled in the corner of the reception area. I am soon greeted by Hunter Nelson, the CEO. Hunter is tall, very tall, and extremely gregarious. A veteran of the Navy who then became a military contractor consultant, he has the characteristic swagger of a former sailor and the disposition of an entrepreneur. I

would soon come to learn that the mug of coffee he carries in his hand is an almost permanent fixture.

I first met Hunter at a VAN meeting and then again at ESI's open house in November 2015. I had heard Hunter's name, and about ESI more generally, during many of my observations. I got the impression that, even though they were fairly new, ESI was quickly becoming a reputable organization in the sector. I had attended ESI's open house in hopes of asking Hunter for an interview, but when I described my dissertation and my search for an ethnographic case site, he enthusiastically exclaimed, "You should study us!" I was pleasantly surprised by his earnestness and a few weeks later I accepted his offer. Now, on this December afternoon, I am here to meet the team.

Hunter walks me around the office and introduces me to the staff and volunteers. ESI is a fairly large operation with 8 paid staff. First, I meet Jeremy, the office bookkeeper and an Army veteran. Next, I meet "J1," the first of two women named Jennifer. J1 is the Director of Communications and a Navy spouse. Next is "J2," an Event Planner whose fiancée is also in the Navy. Then there is Erin, the Fundraising and Development Assistant and also a Navy spouse. Later that day I will meet Melissa, the Director of Development, and Linda, a part-time fundraising consultant. Melissa and Linda are two of three ESI staff members who are not military-affiliated. Melissa, Erin, J1, J2, and Linda make up the "Development" wing of ESI. Along with Hunter, they spearhead the organization's fundraising and outreach efforts.

Next is the Client Services room, a large office with six separate cubicles equipped with phones and computers. Here, I meet Ron, an older man who has been volunteering with ESI for two years. I also meet Ashley, a Master of Social Work (MSW) student who started at ESI as an

intern and now works there part-time. Both Ashley and Ron have relatives who were Vietnam-era veterans.

The last step on my office tour is Carla, Director of Client Services and, after Hunter, the boss. Carla is a friendly and utterly no-nonsense social worker, a product of decades of experience with a variety of needy populations. Before coming to ESI, she worked in homeless case management, where she often met and worked with veterans. Like Melissa and Linda, Carla has no military affiliation. Carla is warm and quick to laugh. She is the kind of person who keeps heart-shaped knick-knacks on her desk. But she is also formidable – when she speaks within her realm of expertise she turns serious and deliberate, sincere and intense. I would eventually learn that Carla is often the much-needed counterweight to Hunter, whose boundless energy would be unsustainable without Carla keeping his feet on the ground.

I chat with Carla for a while and quickly observe that she is the clearing house for anything having to do with a client, whether an anecdote for a funding proposal or an approval for an emergency grant. When I explain to Carla that I also have a social work background, she lights up and starts telling me about the social work principles they use at ESI, which is a regular selling point for Hunter during his outreach. She explains the rationale behind their extensive application process and how they structure conversations with clients to feature "solution focused therapy." That is, the application and conversations open windows for clients to diagnose their own problems and come to their own solutions. The practice is rooted in an old social work adage: clients are the "experts in their own lives" (Novotny 2000).

After chatting with Carla for about an hour, I re-join Hunter in his office. We talk for a while about ESI's history, his approach to managing a nonprofit, and some of the projects they are involved in. During our conversation, I notice that Hunter keeps distancing himself from

charities that are overly motivated by self-interest. I record the following observation later that day:

> [Hunter] kept stressing that [ESI] was not a "professional nonprofit." He seemed to want to make clear that [ESI] did not exist to give him or anyone else a job. He said that [ESI] will exist only as long as there is a need and will disband once they are no longer necessary, saying "Ultimately the idea is that we will put ourselves out of business; once the need is gone, we'll pack up and move on." He kept repeating that his intention was about the need, not about the staff. (Fieldnotes, December 2015)

This insistence made sense as a kind of "boundary work." In line with the Sea of Goodwill logic, Hunter was signaling that his organization was not like "others" that were blindly motivated by organizational survival. I came to learn that Hunter was a strong representative of the Sea of Goodwill logic and that his military background informed his work practices, from the way he spoke to his belief that a centralized nonprofit sector was best for veterans, who could not easily navigate a system with individuated providers. But this also had to be squared with the needs of his business. ESI had to function like a professional nonprofit, despite Hunter's desire for it not to become one. At the end of the day, ESI was "business-like," a fact with which I became increasingly familiar as I worked with the Development team.

Enterprise Culture Meets Military Proximity

Right away, the office at ESI conveys to anyone walking through the door that they are entering a charity. There are donation slips and promotional materials stacked in neat piles throughout the office. A promotional pen, brochure, bracelet, pin, reusable bag, or t-shirt can be seen from just about anywhere along the main corridor. ESI is like most public charities in that it is constantly engaged in fundraising. During a conversation with an old colleague who came to visit the office, Hunter explained that the biggest challenge ESI faced was the deluge of never-ending fundraising: "When his colleague asked what has been the biggest challenge, he

responded in almost no time with 'Fundraising!' He described it as a "constant, constant pressure'" (Fieldnotes February 2016). This pressure was reflected in the Development team. One of my projects at ESI was to help Erin make a "grant handbook" to systemize the grant application process. We did this by pulling together all the information on past, present, and future grant proposals. Each month, there were an average of 12 grants being written, 10 grants already submitted and waiting for response, and 8 known grants coming up in the next month. More grants would be added to the calendar as new funding opportunities were found. This impressive grant-writing enterprise was in addition to the numerous fundraising events and donor engagement drives in which ESI also engaged.

ESI was an enterprise, feeling the isomorphic "business like" pressures of all public charities, exacerbated by its relative newness in the field. It had to constantly fundraise, spend, and fundraise again. The need to constantly bring in funds was imminent, but if the Development team was too successful at bringing in funds, the Client Services team had to be sure to spend a proportional amount on charitable services in order to keep the accounting ratios intact.

One of my first tasks at ESI was to breakdown the expenses for a particular fiscal year into administrative costs, fundraising costs, and service costs. This experience was a crash-course in the importance of keeping the ratio between "overhead" and "charitable costs" low, lest ESI would go the way of the Wounded Warrior Project. Before I began to work on the financials for an upcoming internal audit, Hunter sat me down to explain the differences between the cost categories and the ideal balance he wanted to strike. I learned that, at the time, ESI had a two-star rating on Charity Navigator, one of the major "watchdog" agencies for the nonprofit sector. Hunter explained that the low grade was a product of the recent disassociation from ESI's former parent organization:

> After we disaffiliated, we had to spend all our savings. We had to get a new office, do all the rebranding, all of that. So if you just looked at the financial statements, you'd see that we spent a lot on ourselves, not a lot on programs. Then boom, two stars on Charity Navigator. And we'd get these people calling in all angry because we only had two stars and they wanted us to know they wouldn't donate to us. So we'd have to explain what happened, sometimes that got them off the edge and sometimes it didn't. (Hunter Nelson, paraphrased from fieldnotes, January 2016)

Hunter wanted me to know the purpose behind the careful accounting of expenses, since ESI was in the "gauntlet" process of building up its rating on Charity Navigator and reclaiming its legitimacy in the eyes of donors.

In addition to these nonprofit forces, ESI was also informed by the military backgrounds of its staff and clientele. There was a conspicuous amount of military iconography in the office. But even beyond these visual cues, ESI's military proximity was also palpable from talking with staff. As I discovered on my first day, most of ESI's staff had some connection to the military, and over half of them were either veterans (Hunter and Jeremy) or military spouses (Erin, J1, and J2). Hunter often went onto military bases to promote ESI's services to military commands. This was something Hunter was able to do with relative ease because his veteran status enabled him to get onto base without much question from the military police who guarded the entry gates. Once on base, Hunter moved with cultural ease, particularly when on a Navy base. Hunter was extremely adept at military code-switching. He could speak to the military commanders with a fluency of vocabulary, abbreviations, tempo, volume, and humor. This was important, because military commanders would often refer junior servicemembers and veterans to ESI. Hunter had to show that ESI had the "street credentials" to work with their clients, and he often leveraged his own background as proof.

ESI and the Sea of Goodwill

At ESI, Hunter was the main proponent of the Sea of Goodwill logic. Because Hunter was primarily involved in outreach efforts and finding partnerships, he was regularly engaged in the boundary and practice work that new VNPOs were exercising. Hunter once sat me down to explain his thoughts on the veterans' service sector. Looking back on that meeting, Hunter was essentially reciting the Sea of Goodwill logic I had heard throughout my fieldwork:

> See there are so many programs out there, everybody wants to help veterans. But you get all these providers and throw a veteran in there and what's he gonna do? It doesn't make sense. And so he'll call up one agency and ask "Can you help me, here's my story." But if they can't help him, or if they do a bad job, he's not going back out there and trying again. He's done. Veterans have a hard time asking for help, and we're out here making them tell their story over and over. (Hunter Nelson, paraphrased from fieldnotes, March 2016).

After describing a universe of services that was dense and confusing for veterans, Hunter pivoted to advocating for centralization:

> Organizations need to network together, they could create a system of support surrounding that veteran. Then they could send him to whatever he needs, and he only has to tell his story to one person. So this veteran could go to any of these providers, and any one of them can get him help. There's no wrong door. (Hunter Nelson, paraphrased from fieldnotes, March 2016).

At this point, Hunter got up from his desk and drew a diagram visualizing the "no wrong door" model on the whiteboard in his office (Figure 3.1). He drew, a circle of organizations in a wheel-and-spoke pattern orbiting around a stick-figure veteran. He then envisioned different "entry points" into this network and showed me how each organization could send the veteran to wherever he needed. At this point, I remarked that this model sounded good, but I did not really see it happening. I asked him why the model had not been put into practice. He replied optimistically, "That's what we're trying to do here!" As a joke, he then drew a larger stick

figure carrying the system, added a skirt to the stick person, and proclaimed "And that's you, trying to figure it all out!"

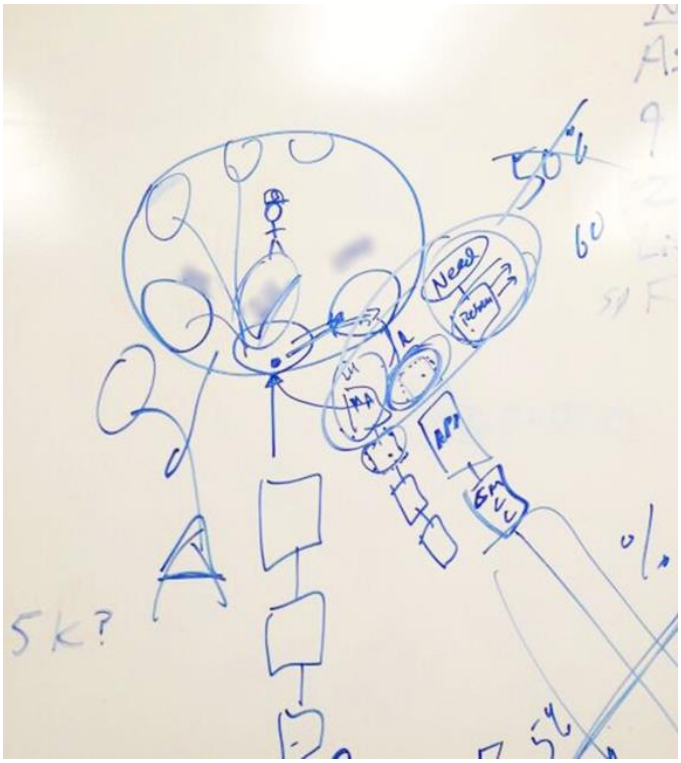

Figure 3.1: Hunter Nelson's Rendering of the "No Wrong Door" Model
Source: Fieldnotes, March 2016

Hunter, like the Joint Chiefs and many others in the VNPO sector, envisioned the centralization of veteran-focused service providers. As much as Hunter was inspired by this logic, it was not all powerful at ESI. In the months following this meeting, I observed and participated in three separate collaboration efforts for ESI. In each, I learned that the organizational costs and benefits of collaboration weighed heavily on decision-making and were often the more primary reasons for participating (or withdrawing) from these efforts. Though building a "no wrong door" approach for veterans was important to Hunter, ESI more often engaged in "loose coupling" with this logic.

Putting "No Wrong Door" into Practice

Consistent with the scholarship on nonprofit organizations, the collaborations enacted at ESI were partly informed by the institutional isomorphic pressure to signal sustainability and professionalism in the eyes of donors (Suarez 2011). But ESI's efforts were also representative of the Sea of Goodwill logic. Throughout my time there, Hunter and other VNPO leaders whom I met expressed a desire to move beyond collaboration toward more systematic integration. They practiced collaboration regularly and saw collaboration as necessary, but also made clear that simple, informal collaborations were not sufficient for making a collective impact for veterans and their families.

While at ESI, I facilitated and observed three main collaboration efforts between ESI and other VNPOs in the sector. First, throughout my ethnography I regularly attended VAN meetings, often alongside Hunter. Second, in the Spring of 2016 I helped to draft and implement a "Memorandum of Understanding" agreement between ESI and Call-SD, the massive nonprofit call center run by Wayne Bradford. Finally, in May 2016 I accompanied Hunter to the VetsUnited OS pitch meeting, where Wayne Bradford had leveraged VAN to find a "coalition of the willing." In each of these experiences, I observed the costs and benefits of the efforts and the difficulty of operationalizing a "no wrong door" model.

Membership in the Veterans Action Network

The San Diego Veterans Action Network (VAN) was the main driver of the Sea of Goodwill logic in San Diego's VNPO sector. As the steadfast representative of this logic, VAN also became the de-facto force for generating a "no wrong door" approach to organizing and centralizing the sector. VAN was a source of organizational legitimacy for the sector; membership in VAN was a form of "institutional work," since belonging to VAN was as much

symbolic as it was strategic. VAN was "an organization of organizations," a place where service providers came together to share information, market their services and events, and gain brand recognition and legitimacy. But VAN was not a manifestation the "no wrong door" model. VAN did not engage in service provision nor referrals for individual veterans; it did not link its member organizations around particular clients, nor did it intend to. VAN leaders were adamant that VAN was merely a brokerage for interorganizational connection in the sector, not directly involved in linking veterans to services. But in this role, VAN wanted to eventually provide the "backbone support" for realizing a true "no wrong door" system. In the meantime, VAN convened members once per month to highlight inter-agency collaborations and give members the chance to network.

The leaders and member organizations of VAN met on the second Thursday of each month for 2-3 hours. Though the meetings began at 8:00 a.m., most people arrived 20-30 minutes early. Arriving early was "normal" for a room full of veterans, but it was also necessary for maximizing the benefits of VAN membership. Before the meeting was when prime networking occurred; as the room was filling up, folks could snag important contacts as they walked in or talk with them before the many others who wanted their attention.

Attending VAN was a low-cost form of institutional work. Admittedly, the time spent at a VAN meeting was valuable to Hunter; his absence from the office for 2-3 hours was costly but normal, since much of his job entailed outreach and building "brand recognition." In addition, going to the meeting could also pay off in valuable ways. For its low cost, VAN meetings came with three main benefits. First, Hunter and other VNPO leaders could use the meeting as a marketing opportunity for their organization. Regular attendance and participation meant that a VNPO leader could build their recognition and legitimacy. From his entrepreneurial background,

Hunter knew that being taken seriously as a contender in the field was better for ESI in the long run, even if it cost him time in the office.

The second benefit was that every VAN meeting featured time and space for service providers to "pitch" their services, advertise events, and encourage referrals. When an organization faces a decline in their engagement numbers, as ESI did during that spring, these "pitches" can be invaluable for creating the conditions for "warm handoffs" – a kind of currency in the nonprofit world cultivated through social capital and field position. When a potential client comes to an organization but is ineligible for services, many nonprofit staff try to find another organization for the client and "hand them off" to the other organization. To do this, staff generally tap into their social capital and field knowledge, assessing who they know in the field and which programs have the best reputation. In order to be on the receiving end of a warm handoff, an organization and its representatives must have a strong enough position in the field that they are well-known and seen as legitimate by their peers. VAN provided an opportunity for organizations to both pitch themselves as well as get a sense of others, so that they could engage in reciprocal warm handoffs.

Finally, VAN offered a space for organization leaders to meet, assess each other, and entertain the possibility of a strategic partnership. VAN gave members a window into the field and an opportunity to observe the other players. In addition, VAN created a pre-text for engaging in conversations with other VNPO leaders, getting a sense of their personalities, management styles, and backgrounds. From those conversations and observations, VNPO leaders could build their relationship capacity and eventually embark in a strategic collaboration with other organizations in the network. This benefit is not necessarily hidden; after all, VAN billed itself as a brokerage of connection. However, what was surprising was that VAN did not explicitly enable

these strategic partnerships during the meeting time. The meeting time was largely taken up with VAN business, rather than designated networking time. The conversations so crucial for starting partnerships could only occur before the meeting or directly after adjournment. It was during one such occasion that Hunter began talking with representatives from Call-SD and broached the idea of a strategic partnership.

Partnering with Call-SD

In an effort to drum up engagement, Hunter decided to embark on a semi-formal partnership with Call-SD, the call center run by Wayne Bradford. Hunter began the conversation with Call-SD following a VAN meeting, and he and Wayne later met to discuss their visions. Call-SD was one of three agencies that were contracted by San Diego County to administer the publicly-funded "Braving Connections" program, which encouraged military personnel and veterans to seek services by calling one of the contracted agencies. ESI was seeking a referral agreement with Call-SD so that "Braving Connections" call center operators could easily send eligible clients to ESI by entering the caller's information into their system and "sending" the client information to ESI.

In the past, referrals from Call-SD to ESI had not been very reliable; Call-SD operators would often refer clients who were ineligible for ESI's services. Inversely, ESI did not often make warm hand-offs to Call-SD, they simply told clients to call "Call-SD" if they were curious about other services. Hunter and Wayne envisioned a dyadic version of the "no wrong door" model, a streamlined system of funneling clients to either organization.

The partnership was Hunter's idea, but Carla and I were tasked with making it a reality. During one of our planning meetings, I explained to Carla that the partnership seemed like a way to try the "no wrong door" model but on a one-to-one basis. She looked at me puzzled, clearly

not sure what I was talking about. At this point, I brought her into Hunter's office to show her the diagram he had drawn on the whiteboard. The following excerpt from my fieldnotes explains what happened next:

> After I explained how it worked, she shook her head and said "I'm not sure why we would to this." Confused, I asked, "why not?" Carla then turned serious. She explained that "sending" clients to different agencies contradicted the social work principles of the Client Services team. She emphasized that "funneling" a client who did not asked to be connected to other services was unethical. But even if they consented, she emphasized that it was bad social work practice. This wouldn't encourage the client to diagnose their own needs and develop their own solutions, which is the basis of [ESI's] approach. (Fieldnotes, April 2016)

At this point in our conversation, Hunter returned to his office and Carla asked him to explain the diagram to her.

> After Hunter explained it, Carla said that this practice would not help clients learn to advocate for themselves. Hunter countered Carla's opposition by saying that veterans were a special case, reluctant to ask for help even when they really needed it. He argued that having to call several agencies and repeat their stories to different service providers was deflating to veterans. After explaining why veterans needed a different approach, he reiterated: "So this way there's just one person you have to tell your story to, then boom – you're connected to whatever you need," Carla looked at Hunter for a long moment, eventually shaking her head and saying "I guess that makes sense, but I don't know." She agreed to go forward and "see what happens." (Fieldnotes, April 2016)

When it came to planning a partnership rooted in the Sea of Goodwill logic, Carla fell back on her professional background as a social worker for alternative logics and objected to being a practitioner of the "no wrong door" model. However, as ESI's second-in-command and someone desiring more clients and outreach, Carla was willing to loosely couple her efforts with the logic, even if she remained skeptical. We got to work crafting a "memorandum of understanding," a written agreement for the partnership.

In theory, the Call-SD agreement would set up Carla as a special user in Call-SD's database. If a would-be client called the Braving Connections line and was referred to ESI, the

intake operator would take down the client's information, attach the client file to Carla's user profile, and send Carla a system notification that she had a new referral. Carla would then log in, review the information, and reach out to the would-be client with further information and instructions. The idea behind the agreement, consistent with Hunter's way of thinking, was that the veteran would only need to tell their story once before they were funneled to the service that was right for them.

But in practice, the agreement was much more complicated than it appeared on its face. First, Carla had to be trained in how to use Call-SD's operating system, a process that took several meetings and troubleshooting phone calls. Second, Carla's user profile had to be configured so that Carla could not see any other person's information in the database and could only access the individuals and information tagged in her profile. Third, and more onerous, the agreement had to be adjusted to include cases where clients divulged protected health information covered by HIPAA. In fact, making sure both organizations were protected from HIPAA violation was a major factor in the agreement, and one that made Carla extremely cautious. Fourth, the agreement had to specify that only Carla could log into the system, that other staff were forbidden from logging on and handling the referral themselves, even if Carla had delegated the referral to them. From there, the agreement had to include provisions for obtaining informed consent for individuals before their file could be attached to Carla's profile. Finally, Carla would have to provide intake operators with a training on ESI's eligibility requirements as well as their comprehensive eligibility application. The intake operators were forbidden from filling out the application for the clients, but they could explain to clients what the application would entail. All told, it took nearly two months to finalize the agreement, which

would only be in effect for three months and renewed thereafter if both parties wished to continue the partnership.

The partnership neither improved nor increased ESI's referrals. There were very few clients sent to Carla's profile, and many of the clients sent Carla's way were ineligible. Importantly, the idea that veterans would only have to "tell their story once" also did not bear out in practice. In reality, ESI still required these clients to fill out the extensive application and have an intake phone call with Carla or a member of the Client Services team. Even if a client had already told their story to an intake operator at Call-SD, they were still required to abide by ESI's intake practices.

The agreement was a prime example of the promise and the costs of informal collaborations. It required significant, but manageable, up-front investment of organizational resources to get the agreement off the ground. Both Call-SD and ESI had to devote staff hours and technological resources to writing and enacting the agreement, with little guarantee that the partnership would have its intended effect. It also required a manageable loss of organizational autonomy: Call-SD had to give Carla some minimal access to their database and Carla was not able to delegate referrals as she normally would. The partnership also required some level of trust between the organizations. The relationship between Call-SD and ESI was strong, but lopsided. ESI was a relatively small organization serving a particular niche service function, while Call-SD was massive. In many ways, ESI had the most to gain if the agreement yielded more referrals. But it also had the most to lose in terms of time and resources lost because it had fewer resources to spare. But because the collaboration was more informal, the relationship between the agencies did not suffer when the organizations discontinued the agreement.

The VetsUnited OS

About one month after the Call-SD agreement was underway, in May 2016, Hunter and I were invited back to Call-SD for a sector-wide strategic planning meeting to discuss the implementation of the VetsUnited OS. Wayne Bradford leveraged his role in VAN to bring together stakeholders in the San Diego VNPO sector and introduce a software system that would pull together dozens of VNPOs. "VetsUnited OS" was a software developed by a group of veteran entrepreneurs who wanted to provide an operational solution for the Sea of Goodwill logic. They started their pitches by recounting the familiar tenets of the Sea of Goodwill: overwhelming support for veterans created a myriad of service providers that was impossible for veterans to navigate, and thus veteran-focused nonprofit organizations needed to be pulled together under one roof. The VetsUnited OS team had been pitching their system to VNPO communities around the country and were invited by the VAN board of directors to make their case to a room of VNPO leaders in San Diego. Under the discretion of Wayne Bradford, Call-SD was prepared to subsidize the bulk of the cost for contracting the service but needed to find a "coalition of the willing," other providers who would buy into the service, albeit at a discount.

When I walked into the large Call-SD conference room with Hunter, I could sense the weight of the social capital in the room. It was a veritable "who's who" of San Diego veteran service providers. Wayne kicked off the meeting by making the case for such a system, recounting the need for a "no wrong door" model for veterans seeking services. He also implored that San Diego should feel a sense of urgency to enact the system, saying "places with fewer veterans are pulling this off," "people are looking to San Diego," and "we are falling behind." He also stressed that VetsUnited OS offered a promise, a way "to actually connect us together and get us out of our silos." Wayne was also up front that opting into VetsUnited OS would take

commitment and be a lot of work, requiring multiple business agreements, mandatory trainings for agency staff, and oversight from a central "backbone" organization, which he repeatedly stressed would be VAN, *not* Call-SD. But the payoff for this work and trust, he offered, was a systematic, holistic approach to getting veterans services, and the ability to track the outcomes of interagency referrals and collaborations.

After Wayne's introduction, the VetsUnited OS team provided a demonstration of the software and answered audience questions. For the most part, the questions were highly technical and pragmatic – questions about consent, notifications, HIPAA, etc. – reflecting many of the same concerns Carla and I had experienced during the creation of the ESI/Call-SD partnership. But through these technical, mundane questions, it became clear that engaging several agencies in one community also opened the door to having their decisions, workflow, and processing time seen and, potentially, scrutinized by others. Members of the VetsUnited OS team mentioned that members of "the community" would be able to observe each other's behavior:

> It helps reveal best practices because sometimes one provider is just doing a better, faster job while another provider offers that service but they don't do it as well; So then people know where to send those cases because they've learned over time who needs to pick up the pace and who's doing things well. (VetsUnited OS team member, paraphrased from field notes)

> We acknowledge that everyone has their own system, so you don't need to input all of your program notes or all of your cases into this system. You just need to do enough so that the community knows what's going on, that you're updating the cases and closing them out. (VetsUnited OS team member, paraphrased from field notes)

Another symbolic point in the meeting came when Sheila Johnson, the leader of a veterans' housing organization, asked a question about power and control:

> So, say you have this group of networked agencies and there are 12 housing providers. Who is in charge of deciding … how are the referrals assigned in a way that is non-competitive? How is it decided so that it doesn't become a big marketing

> frenzy for the veteran who suddenly might hear from all those providers? (Sheila Johnson, Veterans Homes and Health, paraphrased from field notes)

The VetsUnited OS team did not have an answer to this important question. Almost as soon as Sheila finished her question, Wayne defensively cut in with "Let me ask you the question, how do you think that's being done now?" He insisted that the current interpersonal system of making warm handoffs was inefficient. At this point, Wayne turned to Tony Ressenda, founder of VAN, and asked him to "say what he usually says." Tony replied with his signature phrase: "there's plenty of work to go around, no one's going to go out of business by collaborating." To this, the audience applauded and shouted out phrases like "Hear, hear" and "Right on."

Sheila's question provided a salient moment in the VetsUnited OS meeting. Her question was reasonable and pragmatic: how would the software, or the backbone agency overseeing the software, ensure that the referrals were distributed equitably among similar providers? Wayne responded by pointing out that an imperfect referral system was already occurring through interpersonal "warm handoffs" and that the community would have to decide a more efficient pathway. Neither Wayne's response nor Tony's rallying cry actually answered Sheila's question. Instead, their response was a kind of policing, a way to discourage the self-interest at the core of Sheila's question. By asking a question that revealed a desire to protect her organization and realize her organization's interests, Sheila was violating one of the unwritten rules of "boundary work" for veterans' charities. To belong in the VNPO "community" meant sacrificing individual interest in favor of the collective.

Even though the VetsUnited OS may have offered a comprehensive, "no wrong door" way to integrate VNPOs in San Diego, only a few of the organizations represented in that meeting joined the "coalition of the willing." As Wayne had cautioned, integrating several providers into such a system would have been costly on agency time and resources. But even

more importantly, the question of referral equity uncovered the true costs of a "no wrong door" system: trust and autonomy. While useful for streamlining referrals, the unintended consequence of the system was that organizations could surveil each other and determine who had the best practices, a situation that demanded extremely high levels of inter-agency trust. The skepticism over how the overseeing agency would ensure equal access and participation in referrals, and the lack of coherent plan for doing so, would require organizations to suspend their autonomy in favor of the collective agreement. Though interpersonal warm handoffs may have been an imperfect referral system according to Wayne, these referrals were usually made between organizations that kept their autonomy and trust intact.

MAKING SENSE OF VNPO COLLABORATION

In the months that followed the VetsUnited OS pitch meeting, VNPOs continued attending VAN and engaging in relatively informal partnerships. The Sea of Goodwill logic, and the "no wrong door" approach advocated as a mechanism for achieving that logic, entailed building an infrastructure that would pull everyone in the sector together, allowing them to share data, define objectives, generate referrals, and prove outcomes. VNPO leaders like Hunter Nelson enthusiastically embraced this logic, believing that it was a truly superior way to "do" veterans support. In this way, creating a "no wrong door" model was a way for new veteran charities to assert their collective, sector identity.

But enacting this logic did not result in the systematic, inter-agency integration that many envisioned. Such an infrastructure, like the VetsUnited OS, was ultimately too costly and too risky. To participate in this system, these new and relatively precarious organizations would have had to invest time and resources up front, give up high levels of organizational autonomy, and take a risk that their peer organizations would be trustworthy partners. Because this system was

highly centralized, it required actors to relinquish their self-interest in favor of the collective "community." Many VNPO leaders asserted that this selflessness was necessary, but few could actually implement it in practice.

Instead, VNPOs enacted the logic through loose coupling. In practice, the "no wrong door" model took the form of a varied landscape of VNPO collaborative activities. Participating in coalitions and inter-agency collaborations was useful on a number of levels. As a kind of "practice work," informal collaborations enabled VNPOs to expand their reach, build a bridge between services, gain more referrals, gain access to other organizations' resources and networks, and develop structural embeddedness to mitigate their "liability of newness" (Hager et al. 2004). But these activities were also a kind of "boundary work." Collaborative practices were a way to assert membership and legitimacy in the veteran-focused sector of nonprofit organizations. Attending coalition meetings and enacting partnerships was a way for organizations to demonstrate that they were taking steps towards the "no wrong door" model, even if they fell short of its full realization.

The notion that coalition-building is a form loose coupling with the Sea of Goodwill logic helps explain why coalitions and collaborative organizations have begun to emerge around the country. As I witnessed with VAN, coalitions can be instrumentally useful for public charities by giving members low-cost access to a network of information, enabling partnerships that are attractive to donors, and providing a space to market programs. But in addition to these benefits, participating in a coalition is also a form of meaningful action. In line with the Sea of Goodwill logic, veteran-focused coalitions are sites for recognizing and negotiating how to "do" veterans support in a field newly occupied by public charities. As a result, being a member of a coalition is a low-cost but highly symbolic organizational practice. Even if these organizations do not

become the bureaucratic infrastructure for a “no wrong door” service delivery system, they nevertheless offer relatively new veteran charities a space for asserting and developing sector-level and organizational-level identities.

Chapter 4: Gendering the VNPO Sector

On a summer morning in 2017, I sat in a conference room full of women who worked in San Diego's VNPO sector. We were there for a meeting of the recently-formed Women's Coalition. I was invited to the meeting by Riley Jean Dodson, an Army veteran, women's advocate, and long-time board member for VAN.

Earlier that year, Riley Jean had gone to the VAN board to propose a new "Unity Group." VAN grouped organizational members with similar aims and services into "Unity Groups," such as the Physical Health Unity Group, Family Unity Group, Financial Unity Group, etc. The Unity Groups were a practice in line with the "no wrong door" model; VAN networked similar organizations together so that they could more efficiently integrate their services. In January 2017, Riley Jean proposed that VAN should add a Women's Unity Group in order to pull together VNPOs that offered services to, or were staffed by, women veterans. Riley Jean was not alone in her proposal; several VAN members also wished to see a more formalized Unity Group committed to women veterans.

One thing that these members wanted was to insert gender into the discussions and practices of veteran charities. Though veteran charities offered a wide variety of programs, very few of them acknowledged the different needs of women veterans and only one charity offered a formal program specifically designed for women veterans. Riley Jean and I regularly spoke about the compounding needs of women veterans, who often deal with marital and familial issues in addition to the "standard" difficulties of transition away from the military; women veterans who were traumatized during their military service also need additional support from knowledgeable and sensitive charity staff. Riley Jean and her allies insisted that women veterans

who were members of VAN should build a Unity Group to pull together different charities and devote more resources to women veterans' needs.

After some deliberation, the VAN board dismissed the proposal. Their rationale, according to Riley Jean, was that a women-focused Unity Group risked dividing members and devolving into identity politics. The VAN board wanted unity; they didn't want members dividing into groups on the basis of gender, race, or any other social status. Their compromise with Riley Jean was to support a "Women's Coalition," a voluntary and informal group for members, but not an official Unity Group. Disappointed but unfazed, Riley Jean and her allies quickly got to work putting the Women's Coalition into action.

The Women's Coalition gathered monthly. Their meetings occurred immediately after the VAN meeting on the second Thursday of every month. Within their first few months, the Women's Coalition grew quickly and soon doubled its original membership. Among its members were a number of men veterans[15] who wanted to support the Women's Coalition. By the time I observed a Women's Coalition meeting in the summer of 2017, they were planning a major, multi-day resource fair for women veterans. The fair was one of the first of its kind in San Diego and even caught the attention of the California Secretary for Veterans Affairs. Despite its growing membership and successful activities, the Women's Coalition was still denied status as a full-fledged Unity Group by the VAN board, to the continued frustration of Riley Jean.

In the early months of 2018, one year after Riley Jean proposed a women's group to the VAN board, the Women's Coalition voted to formally sever ties with VAN. While most of the

[15] I acknowledge that it is uncommon to use "men" as an adjective (e.g. men doctors). However, I choose this phrasing intentionally. By only using "women" as an adjective (e.g. women doctors), we continue to reinforce the taken-for-granted standard of men as a default, de-gendered category. While it is more common to use the adjectives "male" and "female," I shy away from these terms as much as possible in order to disrupt the gender/sex binary. Therefore, I will refer to veterans who are women as "women veterans" and veterans who are men as "men veterans" in order to mark men as a gendered group and avoid essentializing gender and sex categories.

Women's Coalition members would still maintain their membership in VAN, they agreed that the Women's Coalition needed room to expand beyond the purview of the VAN board. When I last spoke with Riley Jean in the Spring of 2018, she informed me that the Women's Coalition would either merge with an existing 501(c)(3) public charity or chart a new path as an independent public charity, and members would soon vote on the matter. Either way, the Women's Coalition's separation from VAN was firmly decided.

The story of the Women's Coalition offers a glimpse into the gendered politics at work in the VNPO sector. When I first designed this project, one of my primary interests was to see how veteran-focused organizations acknowledged and supported women veterans. But soon after entering the field, I realized the same thing that Riley Jean and her allies eventually fought to change: there were virtually no programs for women veterans. Members of the Women's Coalition wanted to change this situation. They desired a way for the sector to acknowledge women veterans *as women*. But the attempts to create a Women's Unity Group were met with resistance and an insistence that a women's group would unnecessarily divide the membership. The reaction from the VAN board was neither malicious nor bigoted; their response was resonant with the "de-personalizing" ideology of military culture – an ideal to eliminate social divisions between troops in favor of collective solidarity. The emphasis on the collective over the individual was the cultural engine behind the Sea of Goodwill logic. New veteran-focused charities desired a system that would centralize their sector and eliminate the negative effects of individual self-interest. As the story of the Women's Coalition demonstrates, the same thinking informed the sector's approach to gender.

In this chapter, I explore some of the gendered dynamics at work among VNPOs in San Diego. After entering the field and only finding one women-specific program among veteran

charities, I initially assumed that gender would not be part of this dissertation. But I soon learned that gender was at work in the practices of veteran charities even beyond the absence of women's programs. In what follows, I present three separate instances where gender was an organizing principle in social relations among veteran nonprofit organizations (Ridgway 2011). The thread that unifies each of these snapshots is that the newly-formed sector of veteran charities was a site where actors could confront, negotiate, and sometimes reify the gendered logics of the military. As I explain in Chapters 2 and 3, the introduction of the 501(c)(3) charity organizational form disrupted the veteran-focused nonprofit sector. In the past 15 years, professional, "business-like" charities devoted to veterans have been on the rise. These new organizations, in turn, began to fashion logics and practices to give shape and meaning to their work, which was informed by the military backgrounds of the actors involved.

This chapter explores the same dynamic, but with attention to the gendered logics and practices that are taking shape among veteran charities. On one hand, these organizations have had to contend with the gendered ideologies espoused in the military, one of the most pernicious of which is that the military is a place for men. Even though women have traditionally provided the reproductive labor necessary for sustaining its soldiers, even after women have *become* its soldiers, the military remains a predominantly male-dominated and masculinized institution. Consequently, the notion of "veteran" is also cast in masculine terms. By contrast the nonprofit sector has traditionally been a place for women. Women are more represented in voluntary associations and professionalized charities, and the latter typically hire staff from female-dominated occupations. As a result, veteran charities occupy a space informed by contrasting gendered expectations and assumptions: "veteran" as masculine, and "charity" as feminine.

In this chapter, I show three different ways that veteran charities are negotiating these contrasting gender constraints. First, I show different patterns in leadership for veteran-focused charities versus veterans voluntary associations, the other dominant organizational type in the VNPO sector. I argue that as public charities took up more space in this sector, they created opportunities for women to lead organizations and be paid for their labor, in line with the gendered patterns in the nonprofit sector. However, while women were more represented among the leadership of veteran charities, most of these women leaders were family members of veterans (rather than veterans themselves) and led charities that were family-oriented. In line with the gendered patterns of the military, men were more likely to lead charities associated with veterans, while women were associated with family. Finally, I show how veteran charities are currently engaging in conversations about women veterans, who do not fall neatly between the gendered division of "veteran" and "family." This area of veteran charity was beginning to gain traction just as I left the field, but what I managed to observe was an emergent negotiation of how to "do" women veterans' services. The program that did exist for women veterans included activities to "restore" their femininity, a point of disagreement among sector actors, who were negotiating how include women veterans *as women*, without reifying their otherness as veterans.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I briefly review literature on gender in the military and the nonprofit sector to show the contrasting gendered landscapes of these institutional arenas. I then briefly review the data I use to track differences in gender leadership and then present the three instances of gender negotiation reviewed above. To conclude, I discuss how the activities of the VNPO sector, despite having a high proportion of women and enabling the negotiation of gendered logics, are ultimately reinforcing the default assumption that "veteran" is ultimately a masculine, heterosexual social category.

GENDER IN THE MILITARY AND NONPROFIT SECTOR

Scholars of nonprofit organizations contend that the philanthropic and charitable sector has long been an important avenue for women's participation in civic life. Prior to the advent of tax-exempt organizations in the mid-twentieth century, charitable organizations and civic associations in the Progressive Era afforded a space for white, nonworking women to participate in the public sphere and pursue their interests (Skocpol 1995). Because many women could not enter the paid labor force, volunteerism, philanthropy, and activism through women's associations were primary arenas for women to engage outside the home and family. However, in the 1960s and 70s, after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the creation of professional nonprofit firms, many women turned to the nonprofit sector as a source of paid employment (Katz 1996). In the 1980s, women made up over 68% of the 9.1 million paid employees in the nonprofit sector (Hodgkinson and Weitzman 1996). By the 1990s, women comprised between 70-78 percent of nonprofit employees (Gibelman 2000; Pynes 2000).

Women continue to be the vast majority of the contemporary nonprofit labor force, particularly in professional charities. Current studies estimate that women make up around three-quarters of paid charity employees (Joiner 2015; Outon 2015). In addition, women are highly represented among the leadership of nonprofit organizations. One national survey of nonprofit leaders finds that women make up about 65 percent of top executives (Bell et al. 2006). Women are more likely to reach the upper echelons of nonprofit organizations than their counterparts in the for-profit sector (Branson et al. 2013).

Some have argued that the preponderance women in the nonprofit sector reflects women's willingness to trade higher pay for the altruistic, nonmaterial rewards of socially-motivated work (Steinberg 1990). By contrast, Preston (1990) argues that women face

comparable pay in the nonprofit and for-profit sectors due to the gender wage gap, and thus do not trade material rewards for meaning. Rather, the high representation of women in nonprofit organizations is explained the higher wage drop-off for men who choose between for-profit and non-profit work.

Importantly, Burbidge (1994) observes that nonprofit organizations generally employ individuals from occupations that are traditionally sex-segregated and dominated by women, namely health services, education, and social services. She notes: "the route women take into industries, and ultimately into the nonprofit sector, comes by way of traditionally female occupations" (128). The concentration of women-dominated professions in the nonprofit sector not only explains why so many nonprofit employees are women, but also offers a framework for understanding why the nonprofit sector pays comparably less than the for-profit and public sectors.

These trends lead Steinberg and Jacobs (1994) to conclude that nonprofit organizations represent a kind of gendered institution. By drawing upon Acker's (1990) "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations," Steinberg and Jacobs (1994) argue that nonprofit organizations are gendered in three dimensions. First, women are the majority of the workforce. Second, there is a gendered division of labor, where women are concentrated in "client-facing" roles and men are concentrated in operations and management. Finally, the images and ideologies attached to jobs in the sector are gendered as feminine and, ultimately, reproductive. They argue that "previously unpaid work has been shifted to paid [nonprofit] work but continues to be viewed as less productive and as supportive to the sphere of production" (99). The end-result of these processes is that "the images associated with the nonprofit sector project a feminine cast" (100).

The gendered institution described by Steinberg and Jacobs (1994) contrasts starkly with the gendered institution described by scholars of the military. Though nonprofit organizations and the military are each supported by a "gender understructure" (Acker 1992; 567), those structures manifest quite differently. Unlike nonprofit organizations that are highly feminized, the military is masculinized. Following Acker's (1990) original definition and criteria, Carreiras (2006) also traces three main dimensions of gendered organizations onto the military, arguing that the military is an "extreme case" of a gendered organization. First, men overwhelmingly dominate the military. Men account for about 85 percent of all active-duty military personnel. Though women in the military continue to make significant gains, their full integration into the institution has been slow. In addition to having fewer women in its labor force, the military also has gender disparity in its leadership. Across all military branches, men comprise about 78 percent of all officers and nearly 93 percent of top officers[16] (Military Leadership Diversity Commission 2010). Second, the military is a gendered organization because gender is inseparable from the meanings and ideologies that surround military work. Soldiering has historically been a quintessentially masculine activity, which is one of the primary reasons why military ranks are filled with men even after women's official integration (Klein 1999; Herbert 1998; Segal 1999).

Finally, the military is a gendered organization because gender is the basis of distinction and exclusion at multiple levels of the organization. Structurally, gender is a primary mechanism for distinguishing between troops, assigning physical space, designing training and testing standards, dividing labor into "combat" versus "support" roles, and staffing personnel through recruiting and promotion quotas. Culturally, gender provides a script for framing narratives and

[16] Top-ranking officers are those in ranks O7-O10.

mythology inside the military, where the idealized soldier is equipped with stereotypically masculine traits such as physical strength, stoicism, aggression, and homosocial brotherhood (Arkin and Dobrofski 1978; Cohn 1999; Elshtain 1995; Howard and Prividera 2004; Lobasz 2008; Woodward 2000). Women, by virtue of their gender, are "others" in this organizational environment, unable to fully achieve the characteristics of the ideal soldier (Herbert 1998; Higate 2003; Williams 1989). For example, in peer evaluations, men in the military generally report that their women counterparts possess fewer characteristics of military leadership, but also generally describe military leadership in stereotypically masculine terms (Boldry et al. 2001; Boyce and Herd 2003).

Veteran-focused nonprofit organizations are informed by institutional forces that are inversely gendered. Nonprofit organizations, with their women-dominated labor force and ethics of community care seem to be the antithesis of the military institution, where masculine traits and men generally prevail. This contrast begs the question of how individuals in VNPOs, many of whom are veterans or military-affiliated, might navigate two differently gendered meaning systems.

DATA

In the following sections, I present findings based upon data from three sources. First, I draw on biographical and demographic data from a sub-sample of VNPOs to compare the gendered trends in organizational leadership between 501(c)(3) public charities and 501(c)(19) veterans voluntary associations in San Diego County. To compile this data for public charities, I relied upon the organization database I maintained throughout my fieldwork, which included 104 veteran-focused public charities that were actively involved in the San Diego VNPO sector. From this list, I searched for information on the top executive for each organization by searching

the organizations' websites. When available, I recorded the gender of the top executives by observing which gendered pronouns or titles[17] were used to describe the individual. If these signifiers were not available, I relied on the name and/or photograph of the individual to determine their gender. I observed the military affiliation of these individuals by reading whatever biographical information was available on the website or discerning whether military rank initials were included with the individuals' name. Unfortunately, not all organizations provided this information on their websites. I was able to unambiguously discern the gender of the top leader for 81 of the 104 501(c)(3) organizations in my local database. Based on the biographical information available online, I was able to clearly discern both the gender and military affiliation for the leaders of 75 organizations, or about three quarters of the active veteran charities in San Diego.

I also searched for information on the leaders of 501(c)(19) voluntary associations, both veterans associations as well as their auxiliary associations. Veterans associations are membership-based organizations for veterans, whereas veterans auxiliary organizations generally draw their membership from family members of veterans. Consequently, I did not search for the military affiliation of the leaders of these organizations, because it is required for membership. To compile information on the gender breakdown of these leaders, I used the nonprofit organization research service GuideStar, which maintains one of the most comprehensive databases of nonprofit organizations in the United States. On GuideStar, I searched for all 501(c)(19) veteran's organizations currently registered with the IRS in San Diego County and generated a list of 79 veterans' organizations and 32 veterans' auxiliary organizations (111 organizations in total). I then searched for these organizations and their leaders online but soon

[17] Gendered pronouns refer to words such as he/him or she/her. Gendered titles refer to titles such as Mr., Mrs., or Ms.

found that most of these organizations did not maintain a website. Therefore, I used the names of the "Principal Officer" listed in the GuideStar database to discern the genders of organizational leaders. According to the IRS, the principal officer of a nonprofit is "a person who has ultimate responsibility for implementing the decisions of the organization's governing body, or for supervising the management, administration, or operation of the organization" (Internal Revenue Service 2018). Of the 111 501(c)(19) organizations, I could discern the gender of 83 principal officers (57 veterans' organizations and 26 veterans' auxilliary organizations). The remaining 28 organizations either did not list a principal officer or the name was gender-neutral or ambiguous.

In addition to this organizational data, I draw upon my interviews with local VNPO leaders and staff as well as my field notes from observations from the Veterans Action Network (VAN), and the Military Family Alliance (MFA). As I explain more thoroughly in the Appendix, my interview sample included 35 local VNPO leaders and staff found through my field ethnography and snowball sampling. My observations of VAN and MFA are based on attending 4 MFA meetings and 6 VAN meetings between January 2016 and April 2017.

FINDINGS

Enacting Nonprofit Logic: Women in VNPO Leadership

As explained in Chapter 2, the recent rise in 501(c)(3) organizations disrupted the sector of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations in the post-9/11 era. Unlike other war eras, those interested in serving veterans during and after Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom did not necessarily usher in a new wave of veterans' voluntary associations. Instead, and in line with overall trends in the nonprofit sector, they formed professionalized public charities that could be run "like a business" (Koch et al. 2015).

The ascendance of 501(c)(3) public disrupted long-running gendered patterns in veteran-focused nonprofit organizational leadership. Voluntary associations, the dominant organizational form in this sector, maintains a rigid sex segregation of leadership. Figure 4.1 shows the gendered breakdown of principal officers of San Diego veterans associations by gender. While men comprise over 95 percent of the principle officers for veterans associations, women comprise 92 percent of the principal officers for veterans auxiliary associations.

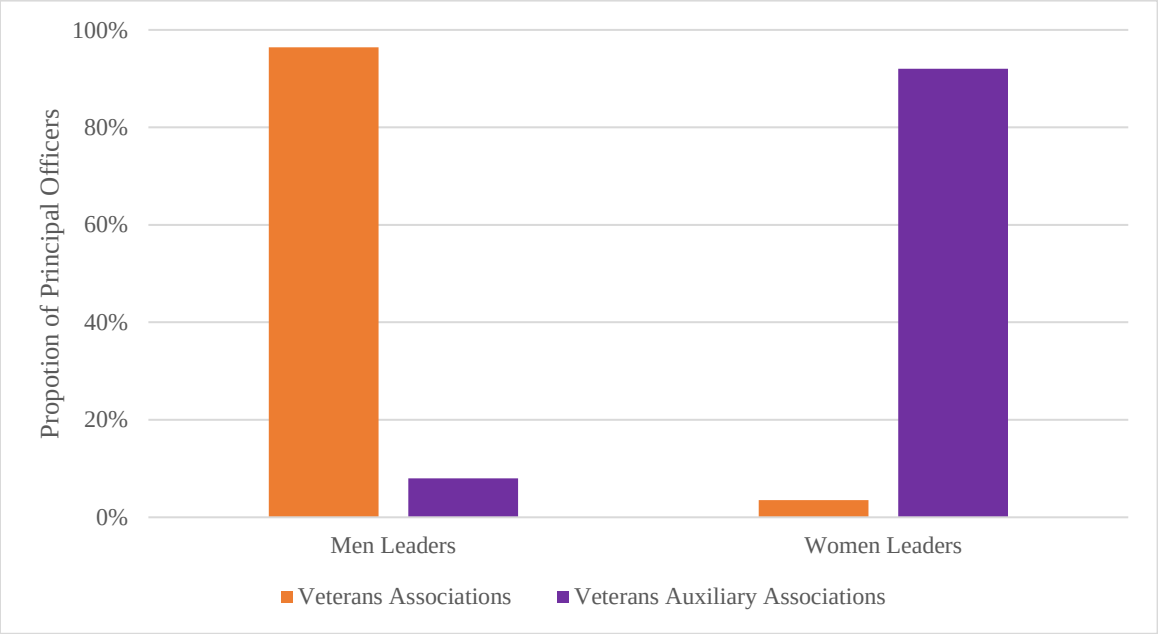

Figure 4.1: Principal Officers of San Diego Veterans Voluntary Associations by Gender
n=83 (Veterans Associations n=57; Veterans Auxiliary Associations n=26)
Source: GuideStar

The inverse pattern in gendered leadership in veterans associations and veterans auxiliaries reflects the inverse pattern in their membership. Veterans associations are some of the oldest organizations in the veteran-focused nonprofit sector. Among the most popular of these organizations are the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (or VFW, originally founded in the early 1900s) and the American Legion (originally founded after World War I). As a result, these organizations generally attract older veterans who are men. As these organizations struggle to attract younger members, they are trying to "move away from the stereotype of old guys

swapping war stories in smoky bars" (Murphy and Price 2015). In addition, women veterans comprise only a small fraction of the members of these associations because many associations restrict membership to certain occupational specialties or to veterans who deployed in a combat zone, both of which can be negative screens for women veterans. Because most of the members of these voluntary associations are older men, their pool of electable leaders are also men. By contrast, veterans auxiliary associations were originally formed to be supportive complements to veterans associations and tend to attract more women family members of veterans. Sometimes, the gendered composition of veterans auxiliary associations is intentional. For example, eligibility for the American Legion Auxiliary is explicitly limited to the women family members of veterans.

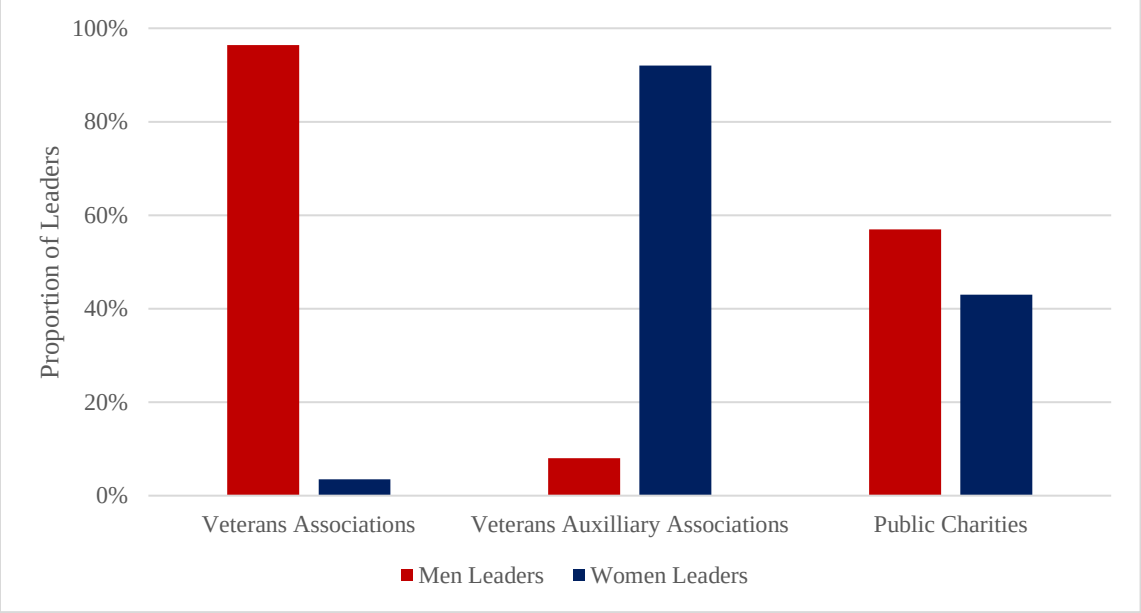

Figure 4.2: Proportion of San Diego VNPO Leaders by Gender and Organizational Type
n=158 (Veterans Associations n=57; Veterans Auxiliary Associations n=26; Public Charities n=75)

But when gendered leadership patterns are compared between veterans voluntary associations and veteran-focused charities, the picture changes dramatically. Figure 4.2 shows the proportion of men and women leaders for each organizational type. Where voluntary

associations are characterized by a sharp contrast in leadership, veteran-focused public charities appear much more equitable. Men comprise slightly more than half of the top executives in these organizations (57 percent), while women are slightly less than half (43 percent).

In line with the trends in the nonprofit sector generally, the growing number of public charities in the VNPO sector created space for more women to serve as leaders for veterans causes in San Diego. Table 4.1 shows the number of men and women leaders in these organizations. Even though public charities make up just below half of the local VNPOs in my sample, there are more women leaders in those organizations than there are in veterans associations and auxiliaries combined.

Table 4.1: Leaders of San Diego VNPOs by Gender and Organizational Type

Exemption Category	Organization Type	Men Leaders	Women Leaders	Total
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
501(c)(19)	Veterans Associations	55 (94)	2 (4)	57 (100)
501(c)(19)	Veterans Auxiliaries	2 (8)	24 (92)	26 (100)
501(c)(3)	Public Charities	43 (57)	32 (43)	75 (100)
	Total	100 (63)	58 (36)	158 (100)

This trend is consistent with the literature on nonprofit organizations as women-dominated spaces. It is tempting to think that the gender parity in the leadership of public charities is explained by the heightened focused on bureaucracy and rational "business-like" behavior in these organizations, rather than the "personalistic," member-driven style of voluntary associations. Because bureaucratic organizations function "according to calculable rules and 'without regard for persons'," they often have the power to level economic and social differences (Weber 1946, 215). However, it would be a mistake to assume that bureaucratic organization is an engine of equality in the nonprofit sector. Bureaucratic structures and practices often appear

to promote meritocracy while simultaneously reinforcing bias (Castilla 2008; Castilla and Benard 2010). Even rational organizations are supported by gender understructures that can differently pattern "advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, [and] meaning and identity" for men and women (Acker 1990, 146). As Steinberg and Jacobs (1994) argue, nonprofit organizations are generally "gendered" as the feminine, reproductive complement to the for-profit sector. Thus, public charities for veterans draw more women leaders not just because of their bureaucratic organizational form, but also because charities are coded as feminine organizations.

Enacting Military Logic: "Veterans" and "Families" in Veteran Charities

Among VNPOs, there is a concerted effort to include families as part of the sector's mission. For example, in all of their papers on the "Sea of Goodwill", the Joint Chiefs of Staff explicitly include mentions of the family any time they mention veterans or servicemembers. Attention to families is important because the constraints of military life often extend beyond individual servicemembers. As Segal (1986) has argued, the military is an example of a "greedy" institution, one which requires a pattern of total devotion that erodes the boundary between private life and military life (Coser 1974). The military demands a totalizing "constellation of requirements" from personnel and their families (Segal 1986, 15). As a result, military families are inseparable from the military institution. As some scholars have suggested, it is in the military's interest to cultivate families, which can create social support systems for individual servicemembers that limit bad behavior, provide necessary reproductive labor, and ultimately foster greater military commitment (Bourg and Segal 1999; Segal and Segal 2004). This helps explain why military personnel have higher rates of marriage and childbirth than their civilian

peers, despite declining marriage and fertility rates in society (Kelty et al. 2010; Segal and Segal 2004).

The boundary between "military" and "family" is often a gendered division. The military assumes a "two-person, one-career" approach to marriage (Papanek 1973), where the servicemember is the primary economic provider and the family is organized around the servicemember's career. When combined with the masculinized understructure of the military, this results in a traditional, heteronormative family model with a "breadwinning" husband and a "homemaking" wife (Harrison and Laliberte 1997). The military's long-time exclusion of women and homosexual servicemembers normalized this traditional model; because most servicemembers have been heterosexual men, most military spouses have been civilian women. In addition, the lower employment rate for military spouses exacerbates the "breadwinning husband, homemaking wife" tendency in military families (Booth et al. 2007; Cooney et al. 2011; Harrell et al. 2004).

While veteran charities created space for more women to lead nonprofit organizations, these organizations also reflect the traditionally heteronormative "military family" model, and thus reinforce the distinction between "veteran" and "family" as a gendered boundary. Women leaders of veteran charities are often military family members, and veteran charities are neatly dividing between organizations that are "family oriented" (and run by women) and "veteran oriented" (and run by men).

Sector-wide, most leaders of VNPO public charities have some direct affiliation to veterans (Figure 4.3). According to the online biographies provided by their organizations, nearly half of all top executives in these organizations are veterans themselves, almost one third of these leaders are the family member of a veteran (i.e. a spouse, parent, child, or grandchild),

and about one fifth did not state any military affiliation. Among veteran family members, about one half are spouses (45 percent), one quarter are children (27 percent), and the remaining are parents, siblings, and grandchildren (28 percent).

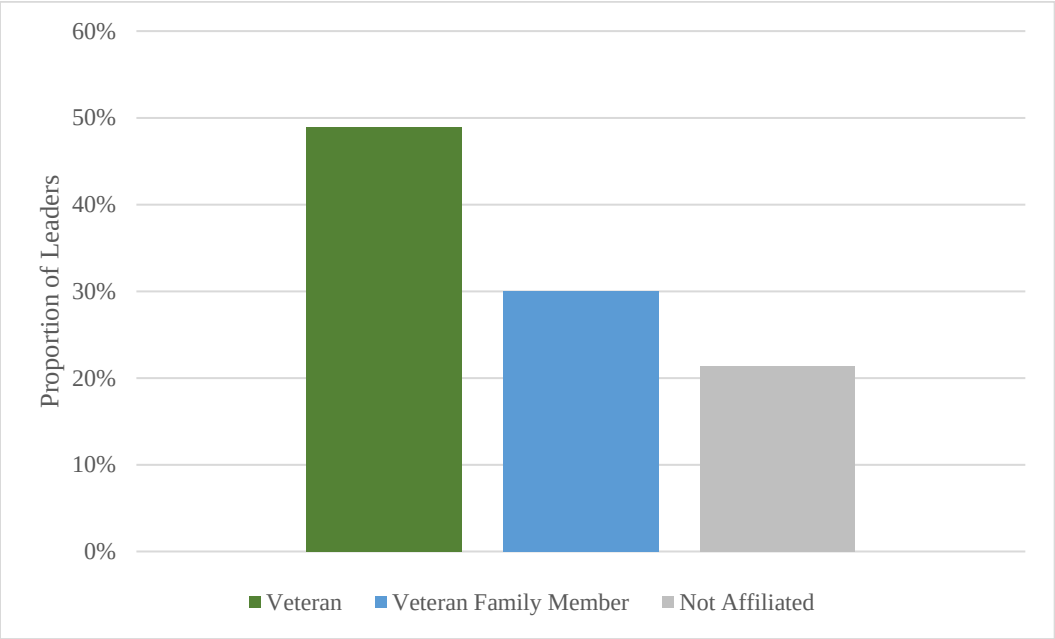

Figure 4.3: Veteran Affiliation of Leaders of San Diego VNPO Public Charities
n=75 (Veteran n=37; Veteran Family Member n=22; Not Affiliated n=16)

The overwhelming majority of these leaders (80 percent) have a direct tie to the military either as veterans or veterans' dependents (spouses and children). But there is a gendered pattern in these military affiliations. Figure 4.4 (next page) shows the gendered breakdown of VNPO public charity leaders who are veterans versus those who are veteran family members (leaders with no military affiliation were excluded[18]). Among leaders who are veterans, 92 percent are men while just 8 percent are women. Among leaders who are family members of veterans, 14 percent are men while 86 percent are women.

[18] Among public charity leaders who were not military-affiliated (n=16), there were nearly twice as many women leaders (10, 63%) than men leaders (6, 37%), consistent with the overall trend in nonprofit organizations.

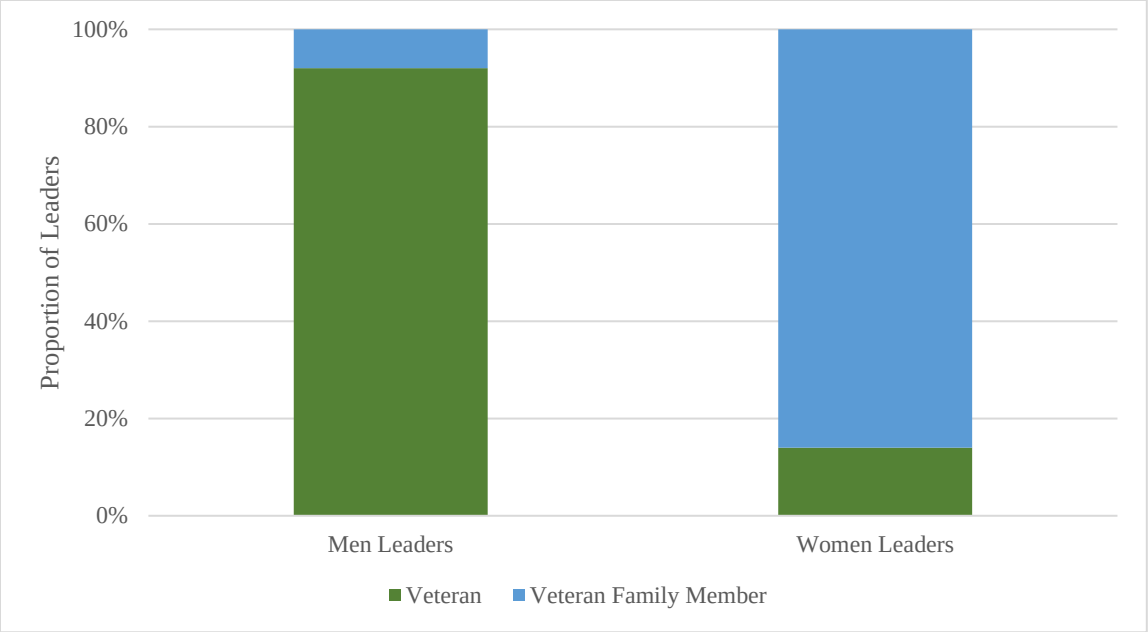

Figure 4.4: Veteran Affiliation and Gender of Leaders of San Diego VNPO Public Charities
n=59 (Veteran n=37; Veteran Family Member n=22)

On one hand, this trend mirrors the proportional representation of men and women in the military. Women comprise about 10 percent of the overall veteran population and about 16 percent of the post-9/11 veteran population. Thus, the low proportion of women veterans reflects the "extreme" gender understructure of the military (Carreiras 2006). But the gender parity in the leadership of veterans charities demonstrates that the sector is receptive to women, so long as those women are *family members*. The veterans charitable sector is not opening space for women veterans to exercise a greater role and, in this way, is reflecting the gendered logic of the military. In fact, after accounting for military affiliation, the gendered pattern in veterans charities is actually quite similar to 501(c)(19) veterans associations and veterans auxiliary associations. In both voluntary associations and public charities, organizations are informed by the intersection of gender, family, and the military. When women participate in these organizations, it not by being veterans themselves. Rather, women often come to VNPOs by way

of the family. As a result, men account for the majority of the "veterans" in veteran-focused nonprofit organizations.

As veteran charities began to come together in coalition-building to create the "no wrong door" approach to veterans services, this underlying gender structure of their organizations influenced their practices. In San Diego, there were two primary coalition-building organizations: the Veterans Action Network (VAN) and the Military Family Alliance (MFA). Between these two organizations, VAN attracted veteran charities almost exclusively, while MFA attracted veteran charities, county agencies, and other nonprofits who worked with women and children. Like VAN, MFA wanted to build a "no wrong door" approach to veterans, but with a focus on veteran family members, who they argued provided crucial support to veterans.

VAN and MFA were the organizational manifestations of the gendered distinction between "veteran" and "family." It was quite obvious that VAN attracted more men and MFA attracted more women. This gendered distinction was easily explained by the terms "veteran" and "family" in their names. When I asked one respondent if he had noticed a gender difference at MFA, his casual response was one I heard often: "Yes, but they're about families, so that's not surprising to me" (Mark Mead, Program Coordinator for Vets Vocational Training, Marine Corps veteran). The gendered distinction between VAN and MFA may not have been surprising to my respondents, but it affected how these organizations brought VNPOs together. After attending one of my first MFA meetings, I remarked on a key difference between VAN and MFA:

> One thing I want to note after this [MFA] meeting is that there were just so many more women there [than at VAN]. At one point I looked around the room and the ratio was around 5 to 1 [women to men]. And [the women] seem to be from a lot of different kinds of organizations – like the county, the school district, other kinds of nonprofit organizations. It felt really different. Sometimes I get the feeling that VAN is kind of closed-door, like there's an in-group and an out-group and people

> are needing to prove themselves. This felt more welcoming. There were a lot of perspectives in the room. (Fieldnotes, April 2016)

Many of my interview respondents also acknowledged a difference in the way VAN and MFA operated:

> So when I go to somewhere like the [VAN] meetings, it's a big group of veteran men. And then when I go to the Military Family Alliance it's almost entirely women. And I think it makes a big difference. (Dawn Karlson, Veterans Entrepreneurship Association, Navy spouse)

> [At VAN], you take minutes, vote, call to order, adjourn. It's got a very official feel. And [MFA] is different. It's organized very well, I don't mean it's disorganized. But it's different. There's a different tone… it's more like "come and bring your insights." (Dave Paretti, CEO of Financial Success Centers, not military affiliated)

> In [MFA] there are organizations that are geared towards the kids a lot. And those tend to be more female-driven. So I don't think it's on purpose, I think it's fairly organic. But I also think that people go where they're comfortable… [VAN] is a little bit like an Elks club meeting. I can see how women would be uncomfortable in that setting. I mean there are some grizzled veterans in there, there's some old salty dogs in there. (Scott Wagner, Navy veteran, Director of Veteran Education Transition Center)

Coded in Scott's language is that "veterans" are interchangeable with men and, at VAN, these men enact a kind of "grizzled," "salty dog" masculinity. He went on to say:

> With [VAN], if you want to be a respected member and you want people to take you seriously and utilize your program, you have to make a case for it…Because they vote, right?... But [at MFA] they do a lot of brainstorming sessions when you go. Like, they'll break everybody out into groups and say "Okay how do we tackle this?" They'll bring out butcher paper and markers and say "Let's make a solution." But with VAN someone will propose a solution and then we're going to vote on it… and that's how it's organized. It's not organized as a collaborative, it's just not. (Scott Wagner, Director of Veteran Education Transition Center, Navy veteran)

In line with the Sea of Goodwill logic from the Joint Chiefs of staff, VAN more closely resembled a top-down, hierarchically organized "ASOG community." Most of the veteran members in VAN were comfortable in this structure. But MFA, by virtue of pulling in more actors who did not have military backgrounds and who often worked outside the veterans' space,

organized their meetings in a bottom-up and collaborative manner. Respondents alluded to the idea that VAN was more rigid and structured, where every meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance and a "sound off," and meeting agendas were set and enforced. In my fieldnotes, I described VAN meetings as similar to a military briefing, where a person in charge delivers information to a room. But MFA organized its meetings differently; rather than a briefing, MFA fashioned its meetings as collective problem-solving sessions. They did not vote to solve disputes, they discussed the issue until the members in the room had found agreement. Underneath this distinction was reference to the performative masculinity at VAN and femininity at MFA. One respondent acknowledged the feeling of having to prove himself among men veterans, both at VAN and elsewhere:

> Its like this - every time I'm talking to a veteran they're like "Oh, you served? What unit? Oh, Iraq? What years?" So there's this whole proving, measuring stick battle of whose the manly Marine or whatever. So you're always on. (Sean Thompson, Program Coordinator at Veterans Resource Center, Marine veteran)

Another respondent, who wished to remain anonymous but was a regular contributor at MFA, explained that MFA operated quite differently:

> I think is that you have – even kind of one of my own weird observations is you have a lot of military dudes [in VAN] where the Military Family Alliance is a lot more like spouses and civilian women. And that gathers them to work. There tends to be a natural bent towards a kind of feminist consensus-building attitude.

The different structures and formats in VAN and MFA demonstrated the power of gendered logics and military backgrounds in shaping the organizational practices of veteran charities. MFA reflected the logics of the nonprofit sector: where women exercised power and where organizational practices were often rooted in feminist collective learning (English and Peters 2012). VAN, on the other hand, was more aligned with the gendered logics of the

military; a hierarchical power structure and masculinized leadership qualities limited full participation in favor of collective order and discipline (Carreiras 2006).

Among veterans charities, as in the military institution, the difference between "veteran" and "family" is implicitly coded as a gendered distinction, where veteran is synonymous with men and masculinity, and family is synonymous with women and femininity. Importantly, this gendered distinction and the consequent practices espoused by veteran- and family-focused charities left one major constituency out of the conversation: women veterans. The Women's Coalition emerged through VAN because women veterans wanted a voice, both as women and as veterans. But the gendered logic and practices espoused throughout the sector made a women veterans' group untenable in both VAN and MFA. Women veterans were more than veteran family members, but they were also veterans with familial obligations. As a result, they did not fit with the neatly gendered structure that had emerged in the veterans charitable sector.

In Between: The New Negotiation for Women Veterans

It was in this milieu that Riley Jean Dodson and other women veterans initiated the Women's Coalition at VAN. As neither men veterans nor civilian family members, women veterans disrupted the gendered divisions that had implicitly taken root in the VNPO sector. Women veterans complicated the gendered distinction between "veteran" and "family." This trend reflects a deeper, more pervasive difficulty for women veterans – their otherness in the military – which often causes conflict in both their professional and family lives. Professionally, it is well documented that women in the military face higher levels of gender discrimination and harassment than their civilian counterparts (Boldry et al. 2001; Carreiras and Kummel 2008; Heinecken and Soeters 2018; Katzenstein and Reppy 1999; Pershing 2006). Of course, it is important to note that women in the military have a variety of experiences and that women are

not universally the "embattled victims of aggressive male behavior" (Titunik 2000, 250). Across every branch of the military, women servicemembers express high levels of job satisfaction and identification with their peers (Lundquist 2008; Moore and Webb 2000). But even if women are generally quite satisfied with their military service, the military institution nonetheless constructs women's bodies as something to be managed and even suppressed in order to achieve the military mission and protect unit cohesion (Carreiras and Kummel 2008; Woodward and Winter 2004).

Outside of their careers, the gendered structure of the military also creates conflict for women servicemembers and their families (De Angelis et al. 2018). Women servicemembers not only have lower rates of marriage and fertility compared to their men counterparts, they are more likely to be in dual-military marriages, thereby doubling the "constellation of requirements" demanded of military families and disrupting the "two person, one career" model (Segal 1984; Papanek 1973). Civilian husbands of military women are less likely to relocate with their spouse, face higher levels of dissatisfaction with military-family life compared to civilian wives, and often report feelings of resentment and emasculation over their wives' military careers (Cooney et al. 2011; Little and Hisnanick 2007; Southwell and Wadsworth 2016). Consequently, women in the military have substantially higher rates of divorce than their military counterparts and their civilian peers (Negrusa et al. 2014).

The emergent sector of veteran charities has reflected the otherness of women in military. As I mentioned at the outset of this chapter, during my time in the field there was only one organization that offered a program specifically designed for women veterans. When I asked the leader of the charity that ran that program why other organizations did not follow his example, he responded quickly with: "Because it is hard…the challenges they face, a lot of people are

afraid of it" (Randall Williams, founder of The Veterans Transition Camp, Navy veteran). Just before I left the field, the practices around women veterans were shifting as more veterans charities were engaging in conversations about how to incorporate women veterans more intentionally in their programs. These conversations were often initiated by the women veterans in the sector, like Riley Jean, who looked around the sector and began to reflexively ask "Well, what are *my* options?" (Riley Jean Dodson, VAN board member and Women's Coalition chair, Army veteran). But as veteran charities began to address services for women veterans, they were negotiating an intricately complex question: how should programs address women veterans' unique needs as women, without furthering their otherness as veterans?

This question is rooted in one of the most profound contradictions in military culture. While the military maintains a masculine understructure, it also maintains an ideology that military membership transcends gender. In many ways, the military attempts to be "gender-blind." Alongside a culture of masculinity, the military also emphasizes communal togetherness, uniformity, and collective discipline that depersonalizes troops (Weber 1946). The de-individualization necessary for mass military discipline thereby "diminishes the importance of primordial and personal characteristics and creates a condition of communal solidarity that transcends individual distinctions," including gendered distinctions (Titunik 2000; 240). An essential practice for creating this transcendence is the totalizing nature of basic training, which re-socializes recruits into de-individualized soldiers who, by virtue of their collective training, feel a sense of oneness and sameness (Soeters et al. 2006; Zurcher 1967).

Veteran-focused charities are navigating this contradictory logic. Reflecting the "gender blindness" of military service, many of my interview respondents did not even speak about veterans in gendered terms. Consistent with Eichler's (2017) observations about veteran-focused

scholarship, my interviews reflected that veterans-focused organizations did not account for veterans as gendered subjects with gendered experiences. There was a taken-for-granted assumption in most of my interviews that veterans were either men or genderless.

But some of my interview respondents (13 of 35) did acknowledge that men and women veterans have different experiences based on their genders. One respondent put it succinctly: "I mean, viva la difference; women are different from men. Big surprise." (Joan Flanagan, Veteran's Education Outreach, Navy veteran). One of the primary differences for women veterans that emerged in my interviews was that the bifurcation of "veteran" and "families" often did not apply to them. Several of my respondents acknowledged that women veterans play different roles in their families compared to their men counterparts and that these responsibilities weighed more heavily on the minds of women veterans than men veterans. When asked about women veterans' needs, Kari Leeds (Director of Client Services at First Call, Marine spouse and parent) said that when women veterans call to inquire about services, "the childcare thing is a big one. I think that will become more important for men, eventually, but right now that's pretty big [for women]." As veteran charities began negotiating services for women veterans, the gendered distinction between "veteran" and "family" was one of the first practices in need of revision. For example, while planning their multi-day resource fair, the Women's Coalition made sure to arrange on-site childcare for the women veteran participants. During one of the planning meetings for the resource fair, one Women's Coalition member asked rhetorically "how are we going to say this is for all women veterans and then force them to find a babysitter, which they might not be able to afford in the first place, which is why they're coming to this event?" (paraphrased from field notes, July 2017).

But in imagining women veterans' programs, there was also ambivalence informed by the gender blind logic of the military. Among those I interviewed, the lack of women's programs was often explained through the notion that veterans, like military servicemembers, are more similar than different. Even if a VNPO leader was agreeable to women-specific programs, they also acknowledged that over-emphasizing gender differences could be counterproductive to military oneness:

> There's a lot more similarities than differences… Everybody that we polled in the survey wanted, well, they were vets first. So [the majority] of the things that we do is done for veterans whether you're male or a female. (Jason Wiley, Director of Operation Career Readiness, Navy veteran)

Another leaders acknowledged that gender blindness was a "default" perspective for the men veterans who often led veterans charities:

> I wouldn't say I've ever seen anything that was discriminatory [against women] in any way. It's more of a, you know, wouldn't always come up…It's more we're all one team, one fight type of thing. There's more of a "well these services will probably fit everybody"…a one size fits all rather than a thought. Then I think as you've had more of a push to integrate women leaders in these different organizations… You put women in the leadership positions and then they say, hey, nobody's doing this. (Brian Hoffman, Founder of Veterans Legal Team and VAN board member, Marine veteran)

The reliance on "gender blind" logic could even prevent charities from embracing programs specifically designed for women. When I asked a leader of a Navy-specific charity if his organization would design a special program for women, he flatly rejected the idea: "We do not separate by gender. Our programs are open to all sailors and their families. We do not do any gender-specific programs" (Keith Green, Director of Sailor Support Services, Navy veteran).

As veteran charities negotiated programs and practices for women veterans, another concern was over *how* to acknowledge women's gender without essentializing them. This negotiation was reflected in the one women-veterans' program that did exist during my

fieldwork. This program featured an explicit emphasis on "restoring" women veterans to their natural, pre-military state of femininity. The "Veterans Transition Camp" (aka The Camp) is a 3-week program designed to help veterans "unlearn" some of their military mindsets and re-integrate into civilian society. In 2013, The Camp developed and implemented a women-only seminar. In addition to the regular Camp schedule, the women's seminar featured make-up tutorials, fashion advice, a trip to the shopping mall, and other highly feminized activities. Randall Williams, a Navy veteran and founder/CEO of The Camp, explained the rationale behind the women's program:

> We said, "Let's not only do the inside makeover, let's do an outside makeover, like a cosmetic makeover" … And then they got the makeover and all the sudden it was like you saw the total woman coming back… It is an essential ingredient for women to be feminine. The military is not about feminine. The military is anti-feminine. It is the most anti-feminine scenario right there. So it was like, "I'm becoming a girl again." And they begin to soften up and then right at the end, you know, the tears started to come back. We take that little mental roadblock out to just allow yourself to be a girl again.

The Camp's vision speaks to a larger issue about how women veterans fit in with civilian society. In a recent essay in *The Atlantic*, Sarah Maples (2018) commented that women veterans have a difficult time coping with the gendered expectations of the civilian world because they have absorbed masculine traits in the military: "the behaviors – male behaviors – that women veterans learned were correct in the military are now at odds with the expectations civilians have for women."

But the idea that women veterans need to re-learn how to be feminine in civilian society was also deeply controversial. Among my respondents, women veterans were ambivalent about The Camp and how necessary it was for women veterans' programs to feature femininity. Riley Jean, for example, partially agreed with the program, not just because women veterans are

masculinized during service, but also because they needed to navigate the potentially hazardous minefield of *civilian* femininity:

> Women become very masculine during their service, not just to cope but to function. Like, it's your job. You have to dress like a man and behave like a man to do your job. It's part of your requirement…Women have to adjust themselves psychologically and emotionally and physically to meet that standard. So, if they then get out, they are no longer adjusted. You know what I'm saying?... What is funny is that I find the gender straightjacket tighter on the outside… If I cussed, I was unladylike. I was chastised. "That's not ladylike. You're not feminine enough." (Riley Jean Dodson, VAN Board Member and Women's Coalition Chair, Navy veteran)

By contrast, Rachel Webb disagreed with Randall Williams and the premise behind The Camp's women-only seminar. Recalling the de-personalizing nature of basic training, she noted that emphasizing femininity diminishes the strength women veterans have *as veterans*:

> I feel that is such a man's perspective. When we are on active duty, we are all in the same uniform. We have regulations for our hair, our nails, our makeup. Does that mean that I feel any less feminine? Any less female? Any less of a woman? Did the military take that away from me? No. It did not. It gives me an opportunity to understand myself, my innate strengths because we all have to go through bootcamp. And you do it and you learn that you're so much stronger than you thought… I feel that the military made me a stronger woman because I'm able to address men in conversation without any problem, I can stand in front of a group of men, like when I'm briefing Marines, and it has no effect on me. I can sit in a room next to a Lieutenant Colonel and feel like I am their counterpart and I deserve that, I earned that. (Rachel Webb, Women's Success Program, Marine veteran)

Riley Jean and Rachel, both powerful voices in the Women's Coalition, reflected the ambivalence of navigating a contradictory and complex gendered logic from the military. However, while veteran charities are beginning to contend with gender in a serious way, they are doing so in a way that only treats *women* veterans as gendered subjects. Bulmer and Eichler (2017) have found that men veterans often have to "unmake" their militarized masculinity during their transition to civilian life. But veteran charities have not yet begun to question the gendered behavior of the men veterans who participate in their programs. When I asked Randall Williams

if The Camp would ever feature a program for men veterans *as men*, so that they might "de-masculinize" themselves away from the "anti-feminine" culture of the military, he scoffed at the idea: "No we couldn't even do that with guys. I mean think about it. Okay, so you're going to take guys up to Nordstrom and give them a makeover? It's not going to happen."

The difficulty surrounding women veterans' charitable programs reflected the profound contradiction that the military is gender-blind in many ways, but in more ways, it is not. Thus, one of the complications in creating women veterans' programs was the fine line between acknowledging women's unique experiences with the military and doing so in a way that did not reify their otherness. The problem with The Camp was that it did both. The Camp acknowledged that the military was a masculine institution that othered women and femininity. But the logic of The Camp also reinforced that women had an essential difference that kept them at odds with the institution.

Charitable programs for women veterans are currently on the rise and shed light on the fact that though women are highly visible as servicemembers, they are often invisible as veterans (Goldstein 2018). Importantly, women veterans' programs in San Diego are being spearheaded by women veterans themselves, individuals who have lived through the unique experience of being othered both in the military and afterward. But, as the story of the Women's Coalition demonstrates, the VNPO sector is not currently organized to support these programs. The Women's Coalition and its disaffiliation from VAN illustrates the difficult predicament of women veterans, who deserve to be counted among the broader category of "veterans" but also to have their unique experiences acknowledged and attended to.

CONCLUSION

The rise in public charities among veteran-focused nonprofit organizations is creating a space for women to serve as credible leaders in a nonprofit sector that was heretofore dominated by men veterans. Before public charities took root in the veteran-focused nonprofit sector, the most legitimate organizations in this sector were 501(c)(19) veterans associations, where men overwhelmingly dominated the membership, leadership, and clout. With the rise of 501(c)(3) public charities, new organizational forms and possibilities have emerged. Women can be powerful leaders in this sector beyond being "auxiliaries" to men.

But most of the women leaders in the VNPO sector are family members, while the majority of men in the sector are veterans. This reflects the overrepresentation of men in the veteran population but also calls attention to the way gender, through the codes of "veteran" and "family," shape organizational practices, particularly in how organizations build toward the "no wrong door" model. Organizations like VAN, with higher concentrations of men *and* veterans, reflect the masculinized and hierarchical logic of military organizations. Organizations like MFA, with more women and civilians, build the "no wrong door" model in a way that reflects the feminized logic of the nonprofit sector. But in building organizational practices for which "veteran" and "man" become synonymous, both VAN and MFA reinforce the gendered understructure that reinforces the military as a man's domain.

The result of these forces is the startling lack of programs for women veterans, which is surprising considering that women veterans have been increasing their share of the military population since gender integration was first mandated in 1948. But the absence of these programs is explained by the trends in organizational leadership. Women veterans make up a very small proportion of leaders in this sector and, consequently, the programs in this sector do

not necessarily reflect their needs. But this is beginning to change. As post-9/11 veterans, who are more likely to have served in integrated units, become the prime movers in the veteran-focused nonprofit sector, there will be more acknowledgment of women veterans. But these programs will have to negotiate a contradiction that is endemic to the military – that women service members are both within and without. As a result, veteran charities are negotiating how address women's needs without reinforcing their otherness, and this task is proving difficult. For example, a program in Virginia called Final Salute offers timely and valuable homeless services exclusively to women veterans. But this organization is primarily funded through their "Ms. Veteran America" pageant. While the pageant is billed as a way to celebrate the "woman beyond the uniform," pageant contestants are judged on their "grace, poise, beauty, and service" and are photographed in evening gowns while gingerly holding a pair of combat boots (Ms. Veteran America 2016). It is hard to discern the extent to which this kind of program empowers women veterans as women, and the extent to which it essentializes their otherness as veterans.

The activities of the VNPO sector are reinforcing an assumption that deeply pervades military culture and civilian society: that the default veteran is a heterosexual man with a family. Even though public charities are creating space for women to be paid leaders of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations, the implicit separation of "veteran" and "family," the preponderance of men veterans as organizational leaders, and the lack of attention to women veterans keep men at the center of an unchecked standard. Veteran-focused nonprofit organizations may be creating more opportunities for women in veterans' causes, but in many ways they are reinforcing the problematic belief that men and veterans are synonymous.

Chapter 5: Serving "Our" Veterans

Every year, on a Saturday morning in early November, San Diegans gather along a one-mile stretch of downtown streets for the annual Veteran's Day Parade. It is a spectacle. Active duty units from local military installations march down the route along with the Marine Corps Band, political figures, children's groups, local businesses, and, of course, veterans themselves. Spectators wave miniature American flags distributed by volunteers while patriotic music booms from the floats that meander down the street. For anyone watching the event, it is hard to ignore the backdrop of the massive USS Midway, the aircraft carrier turned museum and tourist destination. Here, in the shadow of a warship, folks gather to symbolically assert themselves as members of a community and a nation. And the organizational apparatus that funds, manages, publicizes, and staffs the event is a 501(c)(3) VNPO.

Veteran-focused nonprofit organizations are just one small segment of the nonprofit sector, which is just one small segment of the overall economy. But the importance of these organizations extends beyond their economic impact. On the most basic level, these organizations provide a multitude of services to veterans, services which are funded through a combination of public and private contributions. But on a deeper level, these organizations keep veterans alive in the public consciousness. In fact, doing so is crucial for their organizational survival. Public charities thrive to the extent that they can fundraise and spend in tandem, and to fundraise requires reaching out to donors with varying levels of interest in veterans. In this way, VNPOs occupy space in what Segal and his co-authors (1974) call the civil-military interface, the social boundary where the military institution meets civilian society. VNPOs need to

interface with civilians and, in doing so, invoke and explain their knowledge and experience with the military to potential civilian donors.

This kind of education and advocacy is necessary for all kinds of nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit organizations are involved what Kendall et al. (2006) describe as social care – the act of translating resources and labor into collective goods that benefit communities. Whether an organization focuses on homelessness prevention, childcare, mental health, or prisoner reentry, there is a need to educate others who may not have personal experience with that population or their needs to show how investing in that cause can strengthen the larger community and society. This is certainly also the case for veteran-focused nonprofit organizations. But when an organization represents veterans, a group that is symbolically important to the nation, the act of education and advocacy also has an important latent consequence – it becomes part of our co-construction of national identity.

In this concluding chapter, I end by putting VNPOs into a larger conversation about institutions, organizations, and national identity. I see this chapter as the start of a conversation, organized around three main questions: what have we learned, why should it matter to scholars, and what does it mean? First, I will recap what we have learned in this study of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations, underscoring the empirical realities that are unfolding in this sector. Second, I will explore why understanding these realities is important for scholars of veterans, military sociology, and nonprofit organizations. Finally, I will offer a discussion of how VNPOs fit into our national project, attempting to see these organizations as a central actor in the construction of national identity.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

One of the primary lessons that readers should take away from this study is that veteran-focused nonprofit organizations exist and, in many ways, are relatively distinct from the state-run public agencies designed for veterans and other kinds of nonprofit organizations. As nonprofit organizations, VNPOs are subject to the same constraints of resource dependence, nonprofit federalism, accountability, and bureaucratization at work in other areas of the nonprofit sector. But in their day-to-day negotiation of organizational life, individuals within VNPOs are also able to import cultural repertoires and practices from the military and transpose them into this new context. The preponderance of veterans and military-affiliated personnel in these organizations makes these organizations microcosms of both military culture as well as nonprofit behavior. In this way, VNPOs, much like the veterans they serve, are institutionally "in-between." This institutional straddling, in turn, influences how VNPOs are facing new realities that are emerging in the sector. The influence of both the nonprofit and military paradigms are evident in how these organizations interpret and respond to the rise in public charities, how they strategically build coalitions and collaborations, and how they reinforc (and disrupt) gendered scripts in their organizations.

The Ascendance of Public Charities

For many decades, the nonprofit sector has been moving away from voluntary associations toward professional service delivery firms. Organizationally speaking, this has meant that 501(c)(3) public charities have come to occupy an increasing amount of space and resources relative to other kinds of tax-exempt nonprofit organizations. But the trend toward public charities has only just begun in the veteran-focused nonprofit sector. Public charities made up just below 4 percent of VNPOs in 1996, and by 2016 they made up nearly 15 percent. At the

same time, other types of organizations, particularly 501(c)(19) veterans associations and auxiliaries, are in decline. Though still the numerical majority, the number of veterans associations and auxiliaries shrank by about 25 percent between 1996 and 2016, despite two long wars and a steady cohort of post-9/11 veterans. In the same twenty-year period, veteran-focused public charities grew by an astounding 243 percent.

The introduction of public charities disrupts the organizational paradigm for VNPOs in a number of ways. First, public charities need to fundraise to survive. Whereas veterans associations are often funded through dues, the majority of public charities exist through donations and contracts. This means that public charities have to be much more vocal about veterans causes and needs in order to solicit funds from the public. Second, public charities must spend in proportion to their incoming revenue in order to be seen as legitimate. Failure to spend donated funds or spending on organizational capacity-building (also called "overhead") could translate into illegitimacy, as was the case for the Wounded Warrior Project in 2016. By contrast, veterans voluntary associations are not caught in the fundraise-spend-fundraise cycle. They are able to strategically "warchest" their revenue, turn it into assets, and strategically deploy their money. As a result of this difference, veteran-focused public charities are much more economically precarious. Third, public charities are eligible to receive public-sector contracts in ways that voluntary associations are not. The growth in public charities is commensurate with the growth in VA-issued contracts through programs such as Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF). But because charities can receive public contracts, they are also subject to the constraints of resource dependence long documented in the nonprofit literature. As a result, these organizations are more likely than veterans associations to be business-like, technical-rational bureaucracies.

But public charities have not emerged in a vacuum. The sector already had a number of organizations and authoritative voices with the legitimacy to assert how veterans services should be crafted and managed. Among those voices were the top-ranking military officials in the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who viewed the growth in public charities with cautious optimism. In their white papers documenting "The Sea of Goodwill," the Joint Chiefs argued that, though positive, the growth in professional charitable firms was a potentially destabilizing force that could fragment the sector and, ironically, keep valuable services away from veterans. In response, actors in the sector re-oriented around a discursive campaign that called for organizations to centralize and integrate providers into a nation-wide, comprehensive service network. These efforts call for a kind of strategic restructuring, where public charities would consolidate and synergize, almost to the point of merger (Connolly and York 2002). The idealized picture of maximum cooperation and integration resembled the structure of the military. Rather than resist the bureaucratic rationality taking root in nonprofit organizations, veteran-focused public charities expressed desire to extend it sector-wide. In practice, this ideal was manifested through a growing number of organizational coalitions and collaboratives emerging all around the country.

The Partially-Fulfilled Call for Centralization

While prior war eras were characterized by individual veterans forming voluntary associations in order to find social solidarity, the post-9/11 era is characterized by *organizations* forming these membership associations. Across the country, organizations are responding to the calls of the "Sea of Goodwill" logic by forming collaborative coalitions in the name of building a centralized, "no wrong door" approach to veterans services. But integrating services and building a comprehensive provider network is easier said than done. As the San Diego case reveals,

organizations are reluctant to engage in the kind of strategic restructuring for which they often advocate.

This reluctance is emblematic of how militaristic repertoires are mitigated by nonprofit organizational instrumentality. While the centralization of the VNPO sector is appealing to military-adjacent organizations and individuals, who favor collective and coordinated effort over individual self-interest, it is extremely costly for nonprofit leaders who ultimately have to run their organizations like a business. To actually build a "no wrong door" infrastructure for veterans services would cost VNPOs precious resources, test the limits of inter-organizational trust, and limit organizational autonomy. In other words, the "no wrong door" approach would require organizations to sacrifice their self-interest in the name of collective impact. This is something that most organizations are simply unwilling to do.

Still, the VNPO emphasis on togetherness and unity is powerful driver of organizational action. Even though San Diego organizations are not actively building a "no wrong door" infrastructure, they are loosely coupling with this principle in other ways. In particular, veteran-focused organizations must become recognized members of a coalition organization in order to gain legitimacy in the sector. Coalition membership, on the other hand, is a way to symbolically assert allegiance to the "no wrong door" concept even if it is not being put into practice. In addition to coalition membership, organizations in this sector also avoid appearing overly self-interested. Organizations that do not pledge allegiance to the coalition-building and collaboration movement are viewed with suspicion and, sometimes, derision. After all, coalition-building is motivated by a deeper meaning about veteran deservingness. Because the best perceived way to serve veterans is to integrate with other service providers, approaching collaborations with an attitude of "what's in it for me" is highly discouraged.

The Reification and Disruption of Gender Scripts

The dual-institutional identity of VNPOs also has implications for the importance of gender in the VNPO sector. Informed by the feminized world of nonprofit organizations, on one hand, and the masculinized world of the military on the other, VNPOs both disrupt and reinforce the gendered scripts at work in the military institution. The ascendance of public charities, and the feminine workforce and practices that accompany those organizations, has created more space for women to be paid leaders of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations. Prior to the rise in public charities, the sector consisted almost entirely of veterans associations and veterans auxiliaries that sex-segregated membership and hierarchized the sector along gendered lines. Professional charitable firms allowed more women to lead organizations that were not symbolically sequestered as secondary in their organizational importance.

But the VNPO sector also reinforces gendered logics pervasive in military culture. First, while more women have entered into veteran-focused nonprofit leadership, the majority of these women are family members of veterans. In addition, women are more likely to lead organizations that have an emphasis on serving veteran families, while men are more likely to lead organizations that serve veteran individuals, who also tend to be men. The gendered connotation of veterans and families in the VNPO sector influenced how these organizations come together to build coalitions and create the "no wrong door" approach to veterans, with men-dominated "veterans" organizations adopting a more formal and hierarchical style.

Second, women veterans occupy both an invisible and othered space in the VNPO sector. They are not only relatively absent from the top-ranking leadership of VNPOs, they are also absent from most veteran-focused programs. Though the needs of women veterans are unique, the are only now starting to be addressed by VNPO services. But in this process, veteran

charities are again navigating and even reifying military culture. Just as in the military, there is a gender blindness to women veterans in VNPOs, with many individuals unwilling to disrupt perceived sector unity in the name of gender equity. When women veterans are taken into account, and when programs are created on their behalf, there is disagreement over how to treat women veterans as gendered subjects. The Camp, for example, featured elements that were meant to restore femininity and bring women veterans into closer alignment with civilian gender roles and expectations. While this approach acknowledges the masculine structure and culture of the military, it also reinforces women's essential otherness within the institution. Though women's different experiences with the military must be acknowledged, these experiences cannot be overemphasized to the point of reifying essentialism, neither that the military is essentially masculine nor that women are essentially mismatched with military service.

WHY SHOULD IT MATTER TO SCHOLARS?

To summarize the previous section, the case of the VNPO sector offers a glimpse into how organizational sectors respond to and change alongside the introduction of a new organizational form. The ascendance of 501(c)(3) public charities ushered in a new way of "doing" veterans services. In this milieu, actors both new and old could re-assert and re-negotiate their practices, principles, and power relations. One area of negotiation concerned how organizations should relate to each other; actors in the sector could sense a shift in veterans services and attempted galvanize others around an idea that would amplify and extend bureaucratization into a multi-agency, sector-wide phenomenon. But in practice, organizations could symbolically assert allegiance to the idea of inter-agency centralization while also avoiding its implementation, a case of "loose coupling" with an institutional logic (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Weick 1976). Another area of negotiation was in the gender politics of the sector. On one

hand, men are not the default leaders of nonprofit organizations, as they often are in the military. On the other hand, women cannot be assumed to be the leaders of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations since these organizations draw leaders, staff, and clientele from a men-dominated pool of military veterans. Whereas gender is an explicit organizing principle in both the military and the nonprofit sector, in the veteran-focused nonprofit sector, gendered divisions get reclassified and coded as distinctions between veterans and families. The result of this process is that women veterans are, in large part, left out or marginalized in veteran-focused nonprofit programs and conversations.

Behind these negotiations is a backdrop of inter-institutional tension, where repertoires and logics from the military meet and interact with the logics of the nonprofit sector. Actors in this sector can draw upon their personal and professional backgrounds in the military and in nonprofit organizations to create organizational logics and practices that are somewhere in between. The larger institutional forces at work in this sector intersect with multiple fields of sociological study. Attention to these organizations can yield insights not only for the study of veterans, but also to military sociology and the sociology of nonprofit organizations more broadly. In what follows, I will highlight my contributions to these three fields of study as well as further questions to consider in future research.

Scholarship on Veterans

There are two popular themes in the study of veterans. The first is to observe the long-lasting effects of military service on veterans' life chances. The vast majority of veteran-focused research is in this vein (Angrist 1998; Booth and Segal 2005; Bound and Turner 2002; Kleykamp 2013; Prokos and Padavic 2000; Routon 2014; Teachman 2007). Utilizing large datasets from national population surveys, many veteran-focused researchers use quantitative models to

understand veterans' lives. The problem with this approach is that these quantitative studies show interactions between measured variables, rather than people. While these studies are able to point to large-scale trends for veterans in important areas of life, they are less revealing about how and why these trends occur. The other approach in veteran-oriented research attempts to fill this gap through qualitative studies of the difficulties, barriers, and triumphs that veterans face in their quest for employment, education, and healthcare (DiRamio et al. 2008; Detray 1982; Demers 2011; Kleykamp 2007; Longman 2007; Mattocks et al. 2013; Rumann and Hamrick 2010). But just as we cannot get a full picture of veterans lives through quantitative modeling, we also cannot fully understand veterans' experiences by myopically focusing on how veterans cope with disadvantage. There is a broader, richer range to veterans' lives, and even more importantly, veterans play a more important role in our society than these studies let on. Most of the research into veterans is, however inadvertently, a meditation on veterans' diminished life chances.

This study disrupts that paradigm in veteran-oriented research. By engaging with VNPOs I find that veterans play an important role in the field of nonprofit organizations, strategically deploying their military experiences and agency to shape the organizational sector around them. The veteran-focused nonprofit sector pulls veterans into its orbit, offering a space for veterans to do important work, assert themselves and their identities, and create programs that they feel are meaningful. Importantly, this sector also makes room for veteran family members to have a voice, gain power, and be paid for their reproductive labor. In addition, this study takes research on veterans to a different level of abstraction than previous literature. By studying veteran-focused organizations, I look in between the macro-level forces of institutions and the micro-level phenomena of individual experiences. Many of the social forces that shape veterans' lives

play out in the community organizations that are tasked with serving them, such as relations with the state, the coordination of resources, and the negotiation of gendered politics.

Further research should consider bringing an organizational perspective into our understanding of veterans not only to widen our analytical perspective but to make room for observing how veterans have the power and agency to shape different organizational sectors of society. After separating from the military, veterans go to work, learn, volunteer, and play in a multitude of organizational contexts. How do veterans exercise agency within these contexts and to what extent does the presence of veterans shape the organizations in which they are involved? In other words, how and under what conditions do veterans change the places where they are? Organizational sociologists have found that the backgrounds of actors can be strategically deployed to reshape organizational sectors and even institutions (DiMaggio 1988; Scott 2014 Seo and Creed 2002; Zucker 1988). In the veteran-focused nonprofit sector, a high concentration of veterans influenced how these organizations are managed. Not only were the veterans in the sector quick to embrace a logic of centralization, the preponderance of men veterans and women family members influenced the gender politics in the sector. Future research into veterans should investigate the organizational sectors where veterans congregate to see how veterans may be importing cultural models and experiences from the military and changing the society around them.

Military Sociology

Research on veterans is one small subfield of the larger military sociology sub-discipline. As one of the oldest fields in sociology, military research is impressive both in depth and range. Scholars generally focus on the military institution on its own terms, examining the inter-organizational intricacies that reproduce and change military structures and cultures (Cotton

1981; Segal et al. 1974; Snyder 1999; Soeters at al. 2006). The majority of military research is focused on the active duty side of the military institution, examining questions pertaining to personnel representation and experiences (Lundquist 2008; Moore and Webb 2000), policies and practices (Heinecken and Soeters 2018), armed conflicts and occupations (Kucera and Gulpers 2018), and the military's role in the state and geopolitics (Huntington 1957; Janowitz 1964). Generally, scholarship on the military's relationship with the surrounding society is broadly characterized as "civil-military relations." Contemporary scholars of civil-military relations explore how the military remains civilian-controlled (Rukavishnikov and Pugh 2018), the "gap" between civilians and the military (Feaver et al. 2001), and how a changing society (and world) is brought to bear within the military (Dempsey 2010; Katzenstein 1999; Owens 2011; Williams 1989). Previous generations of military sociologists explored how the military was a foundational institution in American life, one that could exert influence outside of itself in a myriad of ways (Janowitz 1964 and 1977; Segal et al. 1974). At the time, the military's role in shaping society was more explicit because of conscription; but since the creation of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973, the importance of the military as a force in American life has received diminishing scholarly attention. The notable exception to this is the body of work that explores the military-industrial complex, or how the military is able to leverage resources and influence the state and the business sector, particularly with regard to research and development (Der Derian 2009; Giroux 2015; Segal et al. 1974)

My study is in line with these prior cohorts of military scholarship because I explore how the military exerts influence in other sectors of society, specifically the nonprofit sector. While the military's influence has been thoroughly documented in the public sector and the business sector, its influence on the "third sector" of nonprofit organizations is less understood.

Scholarship on the relationship between the military and the nonprofit sector is limited to international nongovernmental organizations that work in areas of military occupation and conflict (Boene 2018; Kucera and Gulpers 2018). There is reason to explore the military-nonprofit relationship outside of military conflict. I find that the military is involved in the operations of domestic VNPOs, both directly, through the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and indirectly through the military backgrounds of VNPO staff.

Scholars of military sociology should consider turning their attention to the relationship between the military and nonprofit organizations in the local communities where the military and nonprofits meet in real, material space. Beyond the relatively adjacent field of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations, the military may influence different areas of the nonprofit sector, such as child care organizations located near military bases, refugee rights and resettlement organizations that are directly affected by military operations, or fair housing organizations in cities where the military vies for land. Future research should take the relationship between the military and the nonprofit sector seriously in order to see how inter-institutional tension or cooperation creates outcomes for military personnel, veterans, and civilians in communities with a significant military presence.

Sociology of the Nonprofit Sector

Finally, this research speaks directly to scholarship on nonprofit organizations in a number of ways. Foremost is that this study raises questions of the different kind of orientations and practices that accompany certain nonprofit organizational forms. Scholars of nonprofit organizations have documented how nonprofit organizations shifted from a voluntary, altruistic ethos to one of business-like rationalization and professionalization (Hwang and Powell 2009; Maier et al. 2016; Skocpol 2003). But this literature does not adequately distinguish between

different kinds of tax-exempt organizations due to its dependence on data from 501(c)(3) organizations (Boris and Steurle 2006). As the VNPO case reveals, the difference between public charities and other kinds of nonprofit organizations was significant enough that the introduction of public charities into the organizational landscape initiated sector-level shifts. To fully understand the difference between public charities and other kinds of nonprofits would require a more thorough comparative analysis, something that is beyond the scope of this study. But it is my hope that this study will encourage nonprofit researchers to at least consider the question of inter-organizational differences or, at minimum, recognize the limitations of research that relies solely on public charities.

In addition, the nonprofit literature has largely ignored veterans services as a key area of nonprofit activity. On one level, this inattention makes sense; since public charities have not traditionally been part of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations, they have not received the same kind of scholarly attention from nonprofit researchers implicitly intent to study those kinds of organizations. Scholars may eventually turn their sights on veteran-focused public charities to the extent that these organizations gain more prominence in this sector. But in the meantime, the veteran-focused nonprofit sector offers an attractive site for comparing the difference between different kinds of nonprofit organizations and for witnessing *how* the shift toward business-like rationalization occurs in nonprofit arenas. While most other sectors of nonprofit activity are already dominated by public charities, this shift has only just begun in the veteran nonprofit arena and is unfolding presently. In that process, individuals in this sector and in the adjacent field of the military are interpreting the shift and reorganizing their efforts in response. This can provide nonprofit scholars with rich, contemporary data on how meaning and organizational practices are negotiated in the move toward public charities.

Importantly, attention to veteran-focused nonprofit organizations can disrupt, test, and fortify our understanding of two other prominent themes in nonprofit research. First, attention to the veteran-focused nonprofit sector shows the nuances and limits of gender as an organizing principle in these organizations. While numerous scholars have documented the feminine trends in this sector, the VNPO case is masculinized in particular ways and femininity is either obfuscated under the guise of "family" or, in the case of women veterans, simultaneously ignored and essentialized. If, as Burbidge (1994) has argued, the gendering of the nonprofit sector is due in part to the gendered professional trajectories of its staff, the military histories of VNPO staff offers an insight into how women-dominated professions of care work meet with the men-dominated profession of military service.

The case of veteran charities also reveals the limits of scholarship on nonprofit federalism. Much theorizing has gone into explaining nonprofit federalism; these accounts contend that the public funding transfers to the nonprofit sector created seismic shifts for nonprofit organizations and ushered in an era of diminished public funding for social welfare (Anheier and Salaman 2006; Smith and Lipsky 1993; Salaman 1995). In the case of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations, only one of these seems to be true. The rise in federal and state public contracts (particularly those from the VA) was a likely factor in the rise of veteran-focused charities. However, unlike in other charitable sectors, the move towards contract federalism in veteran nonprofits did not precede austerity in public programs. For veterans, public contracts to charities were not a way to transfer public funding to the nonprofit sector. Rather, public contracts are just one part of an overall *expansion* in public sector services and spending on veterans. In fact, contracts to charities have even been a mechanism for enrolling more veterans in *public* programs. How might this difference in the purpose of contracts come to

affect the nonprofit organizations that became providers of publicly-funded veterans' services? Does the intention of the contract matter for the kinds of things that scholars of nonprofit resource dependence have documented, such as accounting systems, scalability, and assessment? Scholars of nonprofit organizations have shown that nonprofit federalism engendered more "business-like" forms of organizational behavior because public-sector contracts demanded "accountability" for how public dollars were spent (Smith 2006). But these accountability metrics may be less severe if the public sector is not *transferring* public dollars to the nonprofit sector but is instead using those funds to bring more veterans into public sector agencies. As a result, VNPO public contracts may not have the same resource-dependent effects witnessed in other nonprofit sectors (Smith and Lipsky 1993).

The delay in public contracts for veteran-focused nonprofit organizations may also provide additional insight into how the state views its obligations to different kinds of needy populations. As Skocpol (1995) has demonstrated, public expenditures for veterans of war became the seedbed for the American welfare state. As a population, veterans evoke a special kind of state response because they are the embodied representation of a complex civil-military relationship. While scholars have documented the state's involvement in key areas of nonprofit work, such as the arts (DiMaggio 2006), childcare (Gronbjerg 1998; Kagan 1991), and healthcare (Kendall et al. 2006; Schlesinger and Gray 2006), attention has yet to be paid to the role of the state in veteran-focused nonprofits. How does the state's obligation to veterans affect the work being done in these organizations, the ease or difficulty with which these organizations secure public funding, or future of the nonprofit sector? Does the rise in veteran-focused charities and public contracts signal an eventual shrinking of public expenditures for veterans, as has been the case in other sectors?

My study cannot answer these questions. First, I did not set out to understand how nonprofit federalism comes to bear in this sector relative to others. I sought simply to trace the contours of a nonprofit sector that had not yet been featured in academic literature. Second, my study featured an organization that expressly refused public contracts in order to maintain full autonomy. As a result, I did not witness firsthand how public contracts shape VNPO work. Further research is needed to explore the limits and contours of nonprofit federalism and research dependence in the VNPO sector. In addition, the VNPO sector could prove an illustrative comparative case for how the state's relationship to different populations shape different nonprofit sectors.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

I contend that the case of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations is also useful for theorizing how the nonprofit sector contributes to national identity. Tocqueville (1835) is often cited as one of the first observers of the voluntary and charitable spirit in the United States. Many scholars have documented the ways in which nonprofit activities such as volunteering and charitable donations create meaning in American civil society (Clemens 2006; Smith and Gronbjerg 2006; Skocpol 2003; Vesterlund 2006). The veteran-focused nonprofit sector is an especially rich site for observing how nonprofit organizations shape national identity. Because veterans are a highly symbolic group in American society, the organizational efforts of VNPOs, including their fundraising and advocacy efforts, takes place within a meaning system that links veterans to nationalism. As a result, VNPOs become proxies in the co-construction of national identity.

From the citizen-soldier tradition of Western armies to the armed conflicts that forged the United States as a new nation, the military has long been a constitutive force in American

identity (Snyder 2003). But as important as the military is in the United States, to some degree it is constructed as apart from the rest of society – military personnel are sequestered onto closed-off bases, operating with minimal transparency and creating a culture that is insular and elitist (Kucera and Gulpers 2018; Ricks 1997). In many ways, the separation of the military from civilian society is by design. In order to maintain democratic civilian control of the military in Western democracies, the military is fashioned to be structurally distinct and essentially separate from other institutions in society (Huntington 1957; Janowitz 1964). This is to ensure a "culture of civilian supremacy," where professional military personnel recognize and accept "that they are the servants, not the masters, of civilian society" (Rukavishnikov and Pugh 2018: 129). This is why joining the military involves a symbolic departure from society, and why veterans' separation from the military initiates a process of "re-joining" society in popular imagination. Though military personnel do not "leave" society in a material sense, there is a powerful symbolic separation between military personnel and the civilian society (Moskos 1973; Segal et al. 1974).

The separation of the military from civilian society is not only functional for avoiding military coups, it also reaffirms the United States as an imagined community (Anderson 1983). The military institution and those who join it are marked as the defenders of democracy and, by extension, the keepers of the proverbial "American way of life" (Tomforde 2018). Consequently, the ceremonies and rituals that draw attention to the military – holidays, presentations of colors, even jet flyovers at sporting events – are about much more than showing respect for military service. From a Durkheimian, functionalist perspective, the act of honoring a "them" also symbolically affirms an "us."

Veterans, by virtue of their military service, become symbols for American national identity. But even though veterans are able to "re-join" society, their status as a special kind of citizen keeps them perpetually separate from the civilian world, if only symbolically. As Sebastian Junger (2016), an embedded combat journalist, has noted, American society constructs a "shared public meaning" about military sacrifice, one that helps reaffirm commitment to military expenditures and wars. In our attempts to honor veterans, we actually reinforce their otherness:

> Such public meaning is probably not generated by the kinds of formulaic phrases, such as "Thank you for your service" that many Americans now feel compelled to offer soldiers and vets. Neither is it generated by honoring vets at sporting events, allowing them to board planes first, or giving them minor discounts at stores. If anything, these token acts only deepen the chasm between the military and civilian populations by highlighting the fact that some people serve their country, but the vast majority don't. (Junger 2016: 97)

Still, in many ways the othering of veterans is necessary, not only to honor the time they spent in the military but also to transform that time into a larger meaning. Even if a veteran joined the military for purely utilitarian reasons (say, to afford college), their time and energy laboring for the military is made to be about *service* – to the United States, to the nation, to "us."

The relationship between veterans and the civilian society in which they live gives veteran-focused nonprofit organizations an important role. For VNPOs, doing business requires straddling the line that sequesters military personnel and veterans as different from the rest of us. This is one reason why military-affiliated individuals are the majority of the staff in veteran-focused nonprofit organizations. On a rudimentary level, those individuals possess some experiential knowledge that civilians simply do not have. But on a deeper level, they do the work of translating veterans' causes into the language of civilian society. In their outreach and fundraising efforts, they invoke deeply meaningful themes of patriotism and national identity

with phrases such as “our veterans,” “our military,” or “serving those who have served us.” By doing so, VNPOs reinforce the symbolic meaning of what veterans are to us. Even more importantly, in their fundraising and outreach, VNPOs become the representatives for veterans as a category of people. As a result, these organizations become abstractions of the relationship between veterans and civilian society. We read into these organizations the same kinds of things we read into veterans as individuals. If veterans are the keepers of America, and VNPOs are the keepers of veterans, then VNPOs hold a symbolic promise for civilians. Put another way, if veterans are “ours,” then the organizations that serve them are “ours” as well.

REVISITING AT EASE

At the outset of this project, attending the “At Ease” event for homeless veterans sparked my interest in veteran-focused nonprofit organizations. In the years since, I have learned that there was so much more to “At Ease” than I could perceive at the time. I have learned that many of the organizations I saw at the event were recently-formed 501(c)(3) charities. I have learned that many of these charities participate in local coalition-building efforts and are in the middle of a project to strategically centralize while still maintaining their autonomy. I have learned that the four Marines from the VFW, with whom I struggled to stir potato paste, are part of an organizational form that could eventually be replaced by public charities, as veterans’ associations struggle to enroll new members and shrink in number every year. I have learned that my volunteer supervisor, a woman who I now know to be a military spouse, feels empowered to launch her own 501(c)(3) charity and that, unsurprisingly, her mission will be about families.

There is much more to explore in the world of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations. We could ask many more questions about how leaders of these organizations design their programs, whether veteran charities are achieving effective outcomes for veterans, and what their

future might look like in an era when publicly-funded veterans' care risks being privatized. But for now, for this study, it is worth ending with a call to treat these organizations seriously as important collective actors in American society. VNPOs have the power to leverage something deeply meaningful – the desire to see ourselves in the work that they do. These organizations offer a window into veterans' lives, one in which we can see ourselves reflected back.

Appendix: Data and Methodological Considerations

At its core, this dissertation offers an exploratory account of an organizational sector unexamined in academic literature. My goal in these chapters has not only been to provide a snapshot of the size and scope of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations, but to invite readers to perceive the deeper meanings that shape VNPO work. To achieve both of these objectives, I rely upon a combination of data sources. Each chapter weaves in data from multiple sources in order to present a more comprehensive picture of the trends shaping these organizations.

The majority of this study is based on qualitative fieldwork conducted in one metropolitan area: San Diego, California. There, I interviewed 35 local VNPO leaders and staff, observed multiple VNPO meetings and events, and conducted an organizational ethnography wherein I worked part-time for a local VNPO. During my time in the field, I began keeping a database of local public charities in order to develop a more comprehensive picture of the "population" of VNPOs in San Diego. In addition to data generated through fieldwork, I also generated data from other sources. I used the Urban Institute's National Center for Charitable Statistics to generate national-level data on VNPOs based on the IRS Business Master File. I also compiled additional data samples to feature in particular chapters: a sample of secondary sources to trace the origins of the "Sea of Goodwill" discourse as well as a sample of veterans voluntary associations to observe gendered divisions in leadership.

Taken together, these data offer a cross-section of different levels of analysis, from national-level trends down to individual experiences and perceptions. This multi-level framework was an intentional feature of my research design, catalyzed by my frustration that most veterans' research either focused on national trends in employment and education or

phenomenological accounts of individual experiences. I found each of these unsatisfying and desired to understand the construction and delivery of veterans' support as a multi-level social process, invoking organizations, institutions, and individuals alike. From my view, to understand veterans requires that we recognize how they are embedded in a multitude of nested organizational environments; during active duty this takes the form of the hierarchical military bureaucracy and after service it is in the form of various public and private benefit programs. Veteran-focused organizations are a crucial force in this embeddedness and, like all organizations, are an interface between the macro-institutional and micro-individual levels. The data deployed in this dissertation are an attempt at situating veteran-focused organizations at different levels of analysis.

In this Appendix, I briefly summarize and explain my methodological approaches in collecting each source of data and I address the limitations of each approach. I first offer an overview of the San Diego case and explore why San Diego is an exemplary case for observing VNPOs relative to other major metropolitan areas in the United States. The rest of the Appendix is organized according to the type of data under consideration: field observations, interviews, organizational ethnography, the local organization database, and the IRS data. I also discuss some additional data that are featured in select chapters.

CASE SELECTION: SAN DIEGO, CA

I situate my analysis in the veteran-focused nonprofit sector in San Diego, California. San Diego provides an especially rich site for observing VNPOs at work. The County of San Diego has the third highest population of veterans in the United States (preceded by San Antonio, Texas and Tampa, Florida). It is estimated that as much as one third of San Diego County's residents are military-affiliated, meaning they are either active-duty service members, veterans, military

families, or veteran dependents. Veterans alone make up 13 percent of the population of San Diego County, and their numbers are growing (San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce 2013). Each year over 15,000 service members transition out of the military in San Diego and approximately half of them intend to make San Diego their permanent home (Military Transition Support Project 2014).

Due to the high veteran and military-affiliated population, the presence of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations in San Diego is palpable. Every major veterans voluntary association is represented by a multitude of chapters (e.g. the Veterans of Foreign Wars). In addition, many national-level public charities keep a field office in San Diego (e.g. the Wounded Warrior Project). Finally, San Diego is home to hundreds of locally-bound public charities (e.g. VetTown San Diego or the Enlisted Support Initiative). This active VNPO sector is in addition to a highly robust public sector; all of the federal- and state-level veterans agencies and programs can be found in San Diego and both the County and City of San Diego invest substantially in veterans' programs.

Relative to other major metropolitan areas, San Diego is an exemplary case for studying the dynamics of VNPOs. Notably, the density of veteran-focused organizations in San Diego makes observing inter-organizational dynamics relatively straightforward. In addition, the San Diego sector was likely among the first to witness the growth in veteran-focused public charities due to the high degrees of military affiliation among the population. Further, the Sea of Goodwill discourse that coincided with the ascendance of public charities was likely widely felt in San Diego. Not only did the Joint Chiefs convene a major nonprofit conference San Diego (where they unveiled a new White Paper), the region was determined to have particularly robust levels of inter-organizational VNPO collaboration (Carter and Kidder 2017). San Diego is likely

representative of other areas with high veteran populations and exemplary of cities where the VNPO sector is slightly smaller in scope. One important limitation of relying on the San Diego case is that it cannot account for the dynamics of VNPOs in rural areas. This is an especially important point because the majority of veterans live in small towns and rural areas, many of them geographically close to military installations. While the San Diego case cannot represent these areas, the dynamics of rural communities are generally quite different than cities and merit study in their own right.

Before moving on to describe my data collection and methods, it is crucial to note that all names in the dissertation have been changed, including the names of both individuals and organizations. In order to protect the confidentiality of research participants, I have attempted to obscure and remove information that could be identifying, which includes the organizations I observed. This is the case for all names with only a few exceptions. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (discussed throughout the dissertation) are mentioned by name because these individuals are public figures and not research participants. In addition, I mention some organizations by name as illustrative examples of more general trends, for which I relied upon publicly available information: the Wounded Warrior Project, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the American Legion, Final Salute, the Center for a New American Security, and the Institute for Veterans and Military Families. Finally, I do not change the names of public agencies or programs (e.g. the VA or the SSVF grant program).

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

I began my research journey by venturing into the "field" of veteran-focused nonprofit organizations in San Diego. There is widespread disagreement over what constitutes a "field" methodologically, as in a place where one conducts "fieldwork." This discrepancy is especially

pronounced when such a "field" is not tethered to material or geographical space, as is the case in organizational fields or sectors. But as Atkinson (1992) argues, a field is more produced than it is discovered; the mere act of watching or interacting with people and spaces constructs a field of research that does not necessarily exist "out there," beyond the researcher. Thus, defining what constituted the "field" for my field observations was a consequential decision in the research design.

Informing this decision was the fact that meaning-making was at the core of my inquiry. I sought to observe how veteran-focused nonprofit organizations were sites where actors made sense of their work, both as individuals in an organization as well as collective actors in a broader sector (King et al. 2011). The difficulty with observing meaning-making is that meaning is so ubiquitous it is easily taken for granted by those for whom it matters most. To study meaning requires understanding how actors co-construct their lived order through ordinary, everyday knowledge and practices (Pollner and Emerson 2001). In line with studies in ethnomethodology, I decided to discern meaning by observing settings and events where "the ordinarily effaced infrastructure is (or can be made to be) transparent or thematic" (Pollner and Emerson 2001: 7).

Throughout my time in the field, I focused my observations on conspicuous events and gatherings that brought individual representatives from multiple VNPOs together in the same space. These included special occasions, such as events for Veteran's Day or Memorial Day, special conferences convened by local politicians, or showcase events and resource fairs for local service providers. These also included meetings of local coalition-building organizations. In these meetings, representatives came from around San Diego to exchange information, build legitimacy, and define collective solidarity or a sense of "us." In total, I observed 9 special

occasions[19] and 12 meetings of coalition-building organizations[20] between November 2014 and June 2017.

At each of these events, I recorded ethnographic "jottings" during my observations followed by narrative accounts of what I observed. In my field notes, I followed a style Emerson et al. (2001) would characterize as "descriptive," going beyond the bare-bones accounting of events and offering some initial impressions. My fieldnotes focused on telling the story of the event, highlighting moments that felt thematic or disruptive, as well as some of my own experiences, interpretations, and confusions along the way. Because it is impossible to achieve objectivity in field observation, I did not use field notes to capture the "facts" of what happened at the event. Rather, my relationship to fieldnotes was to capture key details of the event but, ultimately and more importantly, to construct my own understanding of what happened.

There are many limitations to my approach to field observations. My decision to define the "field" as events where organizations came together automatically excluded other spaces that are relevant to the VNPO sector, including inside the organizations themselves. I attempted to address this gap by also conducting an ethnography within an organization, though that does not fully resolve the issue that my observations account for only a narrow slice of organizational activity. Another limitation with my approach is that it does not account for organizations or individuals who did not participate in these events. Thus, there is a selection bias in the organizations and actors that I was able to observe. Yet, despite these limitations, observing key

[19] Special occasions included: 2 Veteran's Day events, 1 Memorial Day event, 3 service showcase events, 1 highly publicized "open house" event for a prominent organization, 1 day-long veteran services-themed conference at the County Board of Supervisors, and 1 planning meeting for the implementation of an integrative multi-agency software.

[20] Meetings included: 6 meetings of the Veterans Action Network, 4 meetings of the Military Family Alliance, 1 meeting of a VA-Nonprofit network, and 1 meeting of a Military-Business-Nonprofit network.

events that made the mundane visible was a way to observe how meaning emerged, became contested, or remained obvious to individuals who work in VNPOs.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

I embraced an ethnographic approach to my interviews. By that, I mean that I sought out respondents after spending time observing the field and maintained a largely unstructured style in our conversations. Initially, I solicited interviews only after I had genuinely interacted with a potential informant in the field, such as at a veteran-focused occasion, a coalition-building organization meeting, or an open house-style event. After I had been observing for many months, I became recognizable among many VNPO leaders as "the student doing the research." I would then leverage my contacts in the field in a kind of snowball sampling, asking those who knew me to give me a "warm handoff" to others in the field. Often, this took the form of introducing me in-person to particular individuals or initiating an email conversation with other individuals they thought I should interview. Some of my field contacts also invited me to attend and observe events that would have otherwise been closed to the public, where I met additional interview respondents. The purpose of this approach to recruiting interview respondents was to ensure that, by the time the interview commenced, the participant and I had some genuine basis of connection on which we could build intimacy and trust (Heyl 2001).

Because I sought to understand how actors made sense of their work and their organizational environment, I decided to impose as little structure on the interviews as possible. As Spradley (1979) has articulated, "the researcher's job… is to communicate genuinely, in both subtle and direct ways that 'I want to know what you know in the way that you know it'" (34). Thus, I opted for asking "grand tour questions" that would set the context for conversation and allow the respondent considerable control over the interview process (Spradley 1979). In

particular, I asked respondents to share their "story" for how they got involved with the field, whether their organization was involved in collaborative efforts and why, and the guiding principles they brought to their organizations. If respondents "opened the door" to gender by discussing veterans as both men and women, I would also ask them what they thought about women veterans' programs.

My interview sample consisted of 35 executives and high-level staff from 31 different VNPOs in San Diego. I interviewed both the executive and a high-level staff member at 3 organizations: the Veterans Action Network, the Military Family Alliance, and an organization that was founded as a result of these coalitions – First Call. My interview respondents represented organizations that covered a range of different services and objectives, including education (6), mental health (5), employment (4), general transition support (6), coalition-building (3), legal services (3), homeless prevention (2), and women's programs (2). Two-thirds of my interview respondents were men, likely due to the fact that I was primarily interested in veteran-oriented nonprofits (which are generally run by men), rather than family-oriented nonprofits (which are typically run by women).

Interviews were transcribed after the cessation of data collection. I read each interview transcript before initiating the coding process, taking note of emergent themes, phrases, and narratives. After revisiting each interview, I coded the transcripts in Nvivo using an inductive coding strategy. Coding categories were initially based on the emergent themes discovered during reading and then elaborated and made more specific through additional rounds of coding and re-coding.

The most obvious limitations of the ethnographic approach to interviewing and analysis have to do with generalizability, replicability, and objectivity. Because unstructured interviews

are highly interactive and oriented toward genuine conversation, the researcher takes on more of a friendly role, one of a "traveler" rather than a "miner" of information (Kvale 1996). The researcher is inseparable from the insights discussed and discovered in the interview, because the interview is dependent upon the conversation *in situ*. As a result, other researchers are unlikely to replicate the same insights, even if speaking to the same individuals. While this is a severe limitation for scholars oriented toward positivistic sociology, this approach is actually preferable for generating and capturing the authentic accounts of real people, rather than treating people as "things" that will behave the same way across contexts (Gouldner 1970).

Importantly, insights generated by this approach are highly situated in their local context. Though San Diego is an exemplary site for observing VNPOs, many themes discovered in the interviews may be particular to the San Diego context. In particular, the discussions about how interorganizational collaborations occur may vary by local context. However, it is unlikely that actors in other communities would invoke "The Sea of Goodwill" in dissimilar ways because that discourse did not originate in San Diego but was rather imported into San Diego.

ORGANIZATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

My ethnography at the Enlisted Support Initiative (ESI) was the culmination of my fieldwork activities. I worked at ESI for 10-12 hours per week for 9 months. While at ESI, I continued interviewing VNPO leaders and observing veteran-focused events but did so with the dual identity of an insider-outsider. I was still an outsider insofar as I introduced myself as a researcher, made my purpose clear in every interaction, and did not have a personal stake in the activities I observed. But I also gained more of an insider status because I became associated with ESI as a voluntary member of their team. When I attended VAN meetings during this ethnography, I was both representing ESI as well as gathering field observations.

Similar to my approach to interviews, my approach for gaining access to this organization grew out of my time observing the field. During the initial few months of field observations, I kept hearing about ESI and its CEO, Hunter Nelson, at events and during interviews. I had the impression that ESI was a trusted and prominent local organization. I attended an open house at ESI shortly after they had moved into new and expanded office space. At this event, I engaged genuinely with Hunter and members of the ESI board, explaining my interest and the goals of my research. Hunter then invited me to pursue ESI as a case study pending approval from the Board of Directors, some of whom were at the open house and present for this conversation.

It didn't take long to conclude that ESI would be a strong but limited case site for a VNPO ethnography. It was limited first because much of their efforts were geared at services for active duty servicemembers. During my time at ESI, active duty personnel became the majority of ESI's clientele. Second, ESI was limited because it restricted its services to current and former junior enlisted personnel, which meant that veterans of higher ranks were ineligible for their services. Finally, ESI maintained that only veterans who were currently transitioning from the military (i.e. had separated from the military in the last 18 months) would be eligible for services, which further narrowed the pool of veteran beneficiaries. Despite these limitations, I concluded that ESI would still be a strong site for studying VNPOs *as organizations.* Importantly, the limitations described above all have to do with the beneficiaries of ESI services. My study was not focused on individual beneficiaries, but rather on the organizations that leveraged resources for veterans' support and claimed membership in the veteran support space. In this sense, ESI's limitations were eclipsed by all of the ways it exemplified broader trends in the VNPO sector. ESI was a public charity, founded at the height of the Sea of Goodwill

discourse, led by a veteran with military and professional managerial experience, represented at both VAN and MFA meetings, and a prominent member of the VNPO community in San Diego.

In exchange for research access, I worked for ESI on a part-time, unpaid basis for 9 months (December 2015-August 2016). During this time, I embedded myself in the organization and became a recognizable member of the team. I attended staff meetings, worked on projects with various members of the staff, pursued individual projects (such as synthesizing documents into procedural handbooks or organizing donated items), helped top-level staff run a formal program evaluation, and engaged with donors during fundraising campaigns. I would also often shadow Hunter Nelson, the CEO, in his various outreach and community engagement efforts. I spent an average of 10-12 hours per week at the ESI office or attending events with ESI staff. During particular weeks, such as before a major fundraiser or during the onboarding of a new employee, I spent up to 30 hours at the office or working remotely on ESI-related projects.

I took a slightly different approach to fieldnotes during this ethnography than I had during field observations. In particular, I strove to become a member of ESI and generate a lived experience of working in a VNPO. I jotted notes on-site only when particularly instructive moments arose or during moments of insight. I then compiled more comprehensive reflections every other week, reproducing an account of what had happened during the time as well as interpretations and discussions of what I was learning and what was still puzzling. This approach to recording fieldnotes was based on an understanding of ethnography that presupposes the centrality of the researcher's reflexivity. I contend that ethnographic accounts cannot be divorced from the perception and subjectivity of the researcher; consequently, fieldnotes cannot offer an objective re-telling of data divorced from the process of generating said data.

The opportunity to study ESI afforded me an invaluable vantage point for my research; not only could I observe the inner workings of a VNPO, I could also experience what it was like to interface with the broader organizational sector. But this positioning also created some difficulty. Primarily, it was impossible to remain an impartial observer. I was an embedded member of the team, leading projects and doing work that was valuable to ESI and useful for my own understanding. The social embeddedness and intimacy of ethnography amplify the necessity for ethical research practices. Any time I introduced myself to someone at ESI, I was sure to emphasize that my primary role was to observe ESI as part of my dissertation research. But nevertheless, I formed close bonds with the staff at ESI and have thus been careful to present them as respectfully and honestly as possible. Another difficulty of the ethnographic method was disassociating from the site. In particular, I found it difficult to fully detach myself from Hunter and Carla, the two staff with whom I worked closely and from whom I learned the most. I often desire to return to ESI to help with their projects and stay in touch with the organization.

LOCAL ORGANIZATION DATABASE

During fieldwork, I slowly built a database of veteran-focused public charities to get a sense of the organizational population in San Diego. My strategy for populating this database was multi-pronged. First, I included public charities that were members of the Veterans Action Network and the Military Family Alliance. Because membership in a coalition-building organizations was an important basis of legitimacy among those I interviewed, it was appropriate to assume that VAN and MFA attracted member organizations that were (or desired to be) established players in the local sector. Second, I included charities that were listed as "vetted" resources by 3 local agencies: Call-SD (the administrative backbone for VAN), First Call (a

burgeoning service referral charity), and The Patriot Project[21] (a charity that provides evaluation and support to veteran-focused charities). Finally, I included any organization that I observed in the field that was not already included in the database.

From this initial list of 127 organizations, I refined the database to include only those organizations that were currently recognized and in good standing with the IRS and that had filed a tax return in the previous 3 years. I also removed organizations that were not "significantly" veteran-focused. I wanted to separate organizations for which veterans was a primary pillar of their business aside from organizations that were primarily focused on other service areas and just happened to have a veteran's program. I determined that an organization was "significantly" involved in veterans' services if at least half of their programs were explicitly directed at veterans. With this designation, it followed that a significant proportion of their staff and resources would be devoted to operationalizing services for veterans. After refining the list in this manner, I was left with 104 local charities that were in good standing with the IRS and that I could confidently call "veteran-focused."

I then used a number of tools to compile information on these 104 organizations. Primarily, I relied upon GuideStar, a nonprofit analytics service.[22] GuideStar maintains one of the most comprehensive databases of nonprofit organizations available. I relied upon the GuideStar database to collect legal and financial information about these organizations: ruling year[23] and general revenue trends[24]. The limitation to using GuideStar is that the database is limited to organizations that self-select to create a profile. It does not provide an exhaustive

[21] Interestingly, The Patriot Project began as a program in a different, non-veteran charity. Shortly before I left the field, the program was transformed into an independent public charity, consistent with the overall trends in the VNPO sector. Consequently, I added the Patriot Project to my database of VNPOs.
[22] GuideStar charges for access to their database. I had a paid membership for four months, after which GuideStar graciously granted me a complimentary student subscription so that I could access their database at no cost.
[23] The year the organization was recognized as a tax-exempt entity by the IRS.
[24] I tracked whether revenue since the ruling year was generally positive, negative, stable, or volatile.

account for all nonprofit organizations. Still, I was able to use GuideStar to locate information for about two thirds of the organizations in my local VNPO database.

In addition to this information, I also searched online for information about the leadership of these local organizations by pulling up each organization's website. Chiefly, I collected information on the genders and military affiliations for the top executive and the directors of the board. To do this, I first discerned gender by observing which gendered pronouns or titles[25] were used to describe the individual, or if these signifiers were not available, relied on the name and/or photograph of the individual to determine their gender. I observed the military affiliation of these individuals by reading whatever biographical information was available on the website and looked for military rank abbreviations[26] included with the individuals' name.

With regard to the top executives of the 104 local organizations in my database, I was able to discern the gender of 81 executives, both the gender and military affiliation of 75 executives and neither the gender nor military affiliation of 17 executives. With regard to boards of directors, I recorded the ratio of men to women and the ratio of military-affiliated to civilian directors. I was able to discern the gender proportion of 59 boards, both the gender and military-affiliation proportions for 41 boards, and neither the gender nor military-affiliation proportion for 31 boards.

There are some important limitations to the database of local VNPOs that I constructed. First, there are many organizations for which I could not find data neither through GuideStar nor searching online. Even though these organizations were part of the population, I could not include them in systematic analyses. Second, there are many other kinds of information that I did

[25] Gendered pronouns refer to words such as he/him or she/her. Gendered titles refer to titles such as Mr., Mrs., or Ms.

[26] Military rank abbreviations signify the person's current rank or their former rank (for officers only). Examples of rank abbreviations include VAdm (Vice Admiral), LtCol (Luitenant Colonel), or CPT (Captain).

not gather, such as the gender composition of their entire staff, the professional trajectories of their managers, nor their funding sources (e.g. individual donations, private grants, government contracts, fees for service, etc). The time and resource constraints of dissertation research means that there is still much about these organizations that I still do not know. Finally, my definition of "veteran-focused" excluded organizations that may be prominent in the veteran-focused nonprofit sector in San Diego in addition to being involved in other service areas. Like in other areas of the research design, this decision was based on my objective of uncovering the underlying meanings and trends associated with doing veteran-oriented nonprofit work. I wanted to find out as much as I could about organizations entrenched in the "business" of serving veterans. While many organizations can be involved in serving veterans, an explicit orientation towards veterans may not be part of their organizational identity or culture. Though it is by no means comprehensive of the multi-faceted field of veteran-focused nonprofit *services*, my definition of VNPOs intentionally narrowed my focus to veteran-focused nonprofit *organizations*.

IRS DATA

I also compiled national-level data on VNPOs by utilizing the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS), a data repository for the nonprofit sector supported by the Urban Institute. NCCS draws its data from various documents submitted to the IRS, most notably the Business Master File, or BMF. The BMF is one of the most comprehensive nonprofit datasets available, tracking 59 variables across all active tax-exempt organizations in the United States. NCCS has created a user-friendly way of searching in and generating reports from this dataset. To compile information on the veteran-focused nonprofit sector, I utilized their "Table Wizard" tool, an online form for pulling and organizing information from the BMF. The Table Wizard

tool offers several search criteria for identifying and filtering among different kinds of organizations, including:

1. Organizational Type
    a. All registered nonprofits
    b. Public charities
    c. Private foundations
    d. Other nonprofits
2. State
3. County
4. NTEE Code (11 Broad Areas)
5. Subsection Code
6. Foundation Code (for private foundations only, 14 broad areas)
7. Total Assets
8. IRS Ruling Date

The researcher can select the search criteria and the BMF date from which the tool will extract the data. The Table Wizard then searches the BMF from that date, identifies the organizations meeting these criteria, and compiles in a table format the aggregated totals for 6 variables:

1. The number of registered organizations,
2. The number of organizations filing Form 990 (gross receipts over $50,000)
3. The revenue reported by organizations filing Form 990
4. The assets reported by organizations filing Form 990
5. The number of organizations filing Form 990-N (the "postcard" tax return for organizations wit less than $50,000 in gross receipts).
6. The number of organizations filing any tax return (990 or 990-N)

To generate the national-level data on VNPOs, I ran 48 individual queries for organizations classified under the W30 NTEE code in the Business Master File. I ran one query per year (2001-2016) for public charities, other nonprofit types, and all registered organizations. I recorded the aggregated totals for each organization type and each year in a master data file. I then used Excel to compare organizational types side-by-side over time.

The primary limitation in this data is the reliance of the W30 NTEE code. As I explain in Chapter 2, this code is quite imperfect for tracking veteran-focused nonprofit organizations. NTEE codes are self-selected, meaning that an organization that I would define as a "VNPO"

may not be designated in the W30 code. In other words, organizations who devote more than half of their programs to veterans may just as likely select a different NTEE code when they file for exemption. Second, and inversely, an organization might designate itself as W30 even if it devotes only a tiny proportion of its energy to veterans. Finally, the W30 code suffers from the same limitation as my definition of "VNPO." There are many organizations that offer programs to veterans as one of many programs or initiatives in a broader mission. However, despite these limitations, using this code is the most straightforward way to get a sense of the national trneds among veteran-focused nonprofit organizations. A better approach would involve building a database like the one I compiled for San Diego, inductively finding and tracking organizations within particular regions (both rural and urban) and compiling the data for each organizations identified. But combing through several thousand organizations was beyond the scope, time, and resources for this dissertation. Thus, I use the data generated by the W30 code to offer an imperfect snapshot of the national sector in order to elucidate themes and trends I found at the local level.

ADDITIONAL DATA

In addition to these main sources of data, I also draw upon two additional data sources in particular chapters. These data were not part of the original research design, but nonetheless were integral for both my research findings as well as my understanding of the sector.

Sea of Goodwill Secondary Sources

In Chapter 2, I offer an overview of the "Sea of Goodwill" discourse, showing both its central tenets as well as its history. I base this argument on a sample of secondary documents I collected during and after leaving the field, which I summarize in Table A.1.

Table A.1: Sample of Secondary Sources that Establish the "Sea of Goodwill"

Year	Publishing Agency	Title	Author(s)
2008	*The Washington Times*	Honoring Life on Memorial Day	Admiral Michael G. Mullen
2010	Joint Chiefs of Staff	Posture Statement of Admiral Michael G. Mullen, USN Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Before the 111th Congress Senate Armed Services Committee	Admiral Michael G. Mullen
2010	Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Warrior and Family Support	Sea of Goodwill: Matching the Donor to the Need	Major John W. Copeland, Colonel David W. Sutherland
2011	Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Warrior and Family Support	Channeling the "Sea of Goodwill" to Sustain the "Groundswell of Support": Transitioning from Concept to Application	Captain Chris Manglicmot, Major Ed Kennedy, Colonel David W. Sutherland
2012	Center for a New American Security	Well After Service: Veteran Reintegration and American Communities	Nancy Berglass Margaret C. Harrell
2012	Center for a New American Security	Upholding the Promise: Supporting Veterans and Military Personnel in the Next Four Years	Phillip Carter
2014	Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chairman's Office of Reintegration: *Veterans / Families / Communities*	*After* the Sea of Goodwill: A Collective Approach to Veteran Reintegration	Not specified
2014	Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF)	Collective Impact: Channeling Waves into Currents for Veterans in the Sea of Goodwill	Nicholas J. Armstrong, Colonel James D. McDonough, Jr. (Ret.), Daniel Savage
2015	Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chairman's Office of Reintegration: *Veterans / Families / Communities*	*After* the Sea of Goodwill Conceptual Framework	Not specified
2015	Center for a New American Security	*Charting* the Sea of Goodwill	Phillip Carter, Katherine Kidder
2016	Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF)	Mapping Collaboration in Veterans and Military Family Services	Nicholas Armstrong, Ryan Van Slyke Michelle Isbester Bonnie Chapman
2017	Center for a New American Security	A Continuum of Collaboration: The Landscape of Community Efforts to Serve Veterans	Phillip Carter, Katherine Kidder

In total, my sample of secondary sources included 11 documents. One document was a short 2008 op-ed written by Admiral Michael G. Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for *The Washington Times* in 2008. The op-ed was one of the first times Mullen had written the phrase "Sea of Goodwill," though he had often used the phrase in speeches. Also among the

sample are the 4 White Papers authored by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. These papers were the first to formally codify the phrase "Sea of Goodwill" as it pertains to veterans, outside of Mullen's utterances. Either the "Sea of Goodwill" or the Joint Chiefs were often mentioned in my interviews and observations. Two other agencies were also mentioned in my observations: the Center for a New American Security and the Institute for Veterans and Military Families. After hearing about these think tanks during field observations, I searched for reports from these agencies that made mention of the "Sea of Goodwill" or cited the White Papers authored by the Joint Chiefs. This search generated another 6 documents, 4 from the Center for a New American Security and 2 from the Institute for Veterans and Military Families.

This sample of sources, as well as the method I used to collect it, is a far cry from a formal discourse analysis. I did not generate an exhaustive sample of texts using a statistical sampling strategy. But I also did not gather these sources in order to systematically trace the genealogy of a discourse. Rather, I concentrated my attention on documents that I knew my respondents and other individuals in the San Diego VNPO sector had read, were likely to have read, or were likely to have heard about. I found the documents by hearing people talk about them, the authors, or the sponsoring agency. Again, my choice to inductively build a sample of secondary sources from my fieldwork was driven by a desire to understand the underlying meaning that provided context for "rational" action among VNPOs. Because I wanted to know how these actors made sense of themselves (and how they organized themselves accordingly), I allowed my qualitative fieldwork to guide my approach to finding these sources.

Sample of Veterans Voluntary Associations (also referred to as 501(c)(19) organizations)

In Chapter 4, I compare the gendered patterns in top leadership for VNPOs based on the organizational type, showing that there is a much more equitable division of leadership in public

charities than in veterans voluntary associations and veterans auxiliary voluntary associations. One part of this comparison is based on the database of local VNPO public charities that I built throughout my time in the field. The other part of the comparison is based on a sample of 501(c)(19) organizations located in San Diego County. To find these organizations, I used the again turned to GuideStar's massive nonprofit database. On GuideStar, I searched for all 501(c)(19) veteran's organizations in San Diego County. This search returned hundreds of results, but many of the organizations had been flagged by the GuideStar system as no longer registered with the IRS. This was not necessarily surprising since, on the national level, these kinds of organizations are on the decline while public charities are on the rise. I then narrowed this list by only including organizations that were currently recognized by the IRS, arriving at a list of 79 veterans' organizations and 32 veterans' auxiliary organizations (111 organizations in total).

From this list, I then collected information on the gender of the top leadership. Initially, I attempted to do this by searching for the organizations online. But I soon discovered that many of these organizations did not maintain websites. Therefore, I used the names of the "Principal Officer" listed in the GuideStar database to discern the genders of organizational leaders. Of the 111 501(c)(19) organizations on my list, I could discern the gender of 83 principal officers (57 veterans' organizations and 26 veterans' auxiliary organizations). The remaining 28 organizations either did not list a principal officer or the name was ambiguous (i.e. the name was an initial or was gender-neutral).

This method was not ideal because the name of an individual is not always a clear indicator of their gender and the principal officer may not necessarily be the top leader. However, this method was the simplest and most straightforward way to capture general trends,

even if there may be some granular variation. The principal officer of a nonprofit was the next best thing to finding the president of each organization because the principal officer is "a person who has ultimate responsibility for implementing the decisions of the organization's governing body, or for supervising the management, administration, or operation of the organization" (Internal Revenue Service 2018). While names are not a precise indicator of gender, many names are clearly categorized as "boys" and "girls" names. This is especially true considering that many of the members of 501(c)(19) organizations are older and thus born before "gender-neutral" names became more common.

Another limitation of this method is that I relied on the GuideStar database to generate the list of organizations. While GuideStar's database is comprehensive, it is not absolute. Furthermore, GuideStar is more oriented towards 501(c)(3) organizations (e.g. public charities and private foundations) than other nonprofit types. As a result, many 501(c)(19) organizations likely do not appear in the database. But much like the decision to rely on the names of principal officers to discern gender, the decision to rely on GuideStar was both pragmatic and reasonable for observing general trends among the leaders of these organizations.

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