"It's our damn country" | The motives for military service and the self-identity of Fort Belknap veteran Americans

William Ernest Maxwell

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"IT'S OUR DAMN COUNTRY":  
THE MOTIVES FOR MILITARY SERVICE AND  
THE SELF-IDENTITY OF FORT BELKNAP VETERAN AMERICANS

by

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Native American participation as United States military regulars has rarely been investigated from their perspective. This study analyzes the life history of six military veterans from Fort Belknap Reservation in north central Montana to expand what is known about self-identity theory. Spanning three generations, the challenge here is knowing how these veterans identify themselves and define social worth in an ethnically accessible, but Anglo-dominant America. I hypothesize that Fort Belknap veterans joined the military as an expression of either who they are or who they aspire to be culturally, from a broad spectrum of influences.

Following the transcription of case interviews, each life history was divided chronologically into four phases (Background, Pre-Service, Service, and Post-Service Experiences). The data within these phases was sorted between negative and positive conditions (Relative Deprivation and Relative Reward) imposed on the veteran's life and their choices of social avoidance and acceptance (Relative Dissociation and Relative Association).

The development of a national consciousness among contributors through schools and media was identified as the precondition for their service choices. Four motives key to these six veterans joining the military were as follows: military veteran family and friends, the limited economic and educational opportunities at Fort Belknap, the level of national crisis at the time of enlistment, and the personal need for excitement and escape. The life stories and analysis support the hypothesis that contributors' military service was an enactment of their inclusive view of themselves as Americans.
Veterans at the 1992 Milk River Powwow in Fort Belknap, Montana
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Why serve the nation?

The declaration of war following the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor marks a watershed in United States history. America’s involvement forced the country from an international policy of isolation to a position of dominance as a world military power. Reviewing US military Indian personnel experiences during this rise to power is now appropriate while those veterans are still alive. Without personal accounts, the actual motivations for joining the military, and the disadvantages and benefits incurred by regulars, will be left for others to infer. This is especially true for the United States military since many ethnic groups were integrated into service.

Historical facts can distort the experiences of those who participated in cited events. An example can be seen among Native American military personnel from World War II; North American Indians served in the military in higher percentages of their total population than did Anglo Americans or African Americans during World War II (Jerry Anderson, personal communication August 29, 1994). This general observation is cited frequently and surfaces whenever Native American veterans are the subject of discussion. Yet, few studies have detailed their personal motivations and life experiences in military service. The
"percentage served" fact is broadcast with vague understanding of what motivated those veterans to serve. In fact, one researcher has reduced these veterans to "pawns" of manipulative colonizers (Holm 1992:363-4).

One study that did address individual incentives and background is John Adair and Evon Z. Vogt’s fieldwork on Navaho and Zuni servicemen following World War II (Adair & Vogt 1949; Vogt 1951). My study is an actor-centered analysis following Adair and Vogt’s case study format. The data for this work are drawn from six Gros Ventre and Assiniboine military veteran life histories. These contributors are from Fort Belknap Reservation in north central Montana. My objective is to compare these contributors’ social frames of reference, given in their stories, to show how the social choices they have made relate to how they portray themselves. I hypothesize that Fort Belknap veterans joined the military as an expression of either who they are or who they aspire to be culturally, from a broad spectrum of potential influences. To investigate this, I expand on my own composite theory based on Elvin Hatch’s Social Honor (1989), Robert Merton and Alice S. Kitts’ The American Soldier (1974), and Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities (1983).

The central but limited role Adair and Vogt play in this thesis emerges in the literature review addressing Indian veterans and tribal identities. This review sets the
format for collecting and organizing the data for this study. The theoretical direction of this study is explained in the next section, as an incorporation of the three works mentioned above.

**Fort Belknap Reservation Brief**

Fort Belknap was fully organized as an agency for the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine in 1882. The reservation currently consists of 651,118 acres lying between the Milk River and Little Rocky Mountains in north central Montana (see Fig. 1) (Lopach et.al. 1990:117-118).

Among Montana Reservations, Fort Belknap is noted as having the lowest population living on the reservation and the fewest resources. The lack of resources has limited the size of the community at Fort Belknap. Fort Belknap was listed in 1983 as number two in the state for enrolled Indians (4,425), but was last in the percentage of enrollees living on the reservation (2,025). The unemployment rate (70 percent) is the highest of the reserves in the Big Sky state (Lopach et. al. 1990:table 1.1).

A primary reason for Fort Belknap's marginal conditions is the aftermath of the Dawes Act. This Act initiated Indian isolation from many resources on their already reduced reservation. The superintendent lured Anglo Americans to control Fort Belknap's resources not allotted to individual Indians. "By 1925, the Gros Ventres and
Fig 1 Fort Belknap Reservation (Fowler 1987:15)
Assiniboines had lost most of their timber, minerals, water, and land to White lessees and buyers" (Massie 1984:40).

Given Fort Belknap's prolonged resource shortage, military service would be a more optimal economic choice for the men at this reservation than others in the area. If this factor is relevant, Fort Belknap is a prime location for understanding how limited job and resource choices affect individual aspirations.

Indian Military Personnel In The Twentieth Century

Since Harry Truman's 1948 landmark decision fully integrating the military following World War II, the Department of Defense has been "America's most integrated sector" (National Public Radio report on General Collin Powell November 9, 1995; Powell and Persico 1995:63). For Native Americans, the full acceptance as regulars began in 1891 with General Order Number 28 (Tate 1986:419; Lee 1991:274).

This experiment placed recently-suppressed tribesmen into segregated Indian units. The basic assumption behind this experiment was that "wild" western Indians would be better suited for modern soldiering than their more educated eastern counterpart. The project's failure proved that an education in English was critical to any individual's inclusion into a modern Army (Tate 1986:421). This failure began a military doctrine that eventually included all
physically able African Americans as regulars. Indians were given an equal chance to prove themselves among White comrades.

The Spanish American War, the Boxer Rebellion, the Philippine Insurrection, and World War I proved that Indians were capable troops and were devoted to a nation that did not consistently recognize them as citizens. While their service numbers were marginal in these first three conflicts, Indian enlistments for World War I support a point made by Congressman Carl Hayden’s in 1913. His point was that the then current increases in Indian boarding school pupils would correspond to greater numbers of capable Indian soldiers. He saw the exposure to "white education and military training from the boarding schools" as directly preparing Native American young men for modern military service (Tate 1986:420). Native American participation rates were highest during World War I among less remote tribes (ie. Oklahoma 30-60 percent) and students (90 percent) (Barsh 1991:278). The overwhelming response of Indian volunteers in World War I directly lead to the acceptance of Indian veterans as US citizens in 1919, and all Native Americans in 1923 (Finger 1986:307).

Yet, this 'reward' really only corrected a "clerical error" that previously omitted granting Native Americans citizenship (Cohen 1942:82). Many were granted citizenship by meeting the terms of the General Allotment Act. Sixty
thousand Indians had met those conditions by 1901 while 150,000 had not allotted their lands by 1923 (Cohen 1942:154). "Since many of the veterans already had citizenship through the allotment process and others saw no advantage in seeking it, the numbers who requested the status were relatively few" (Tate 1986:435).

The publicized successes of Native American servicemen and women during World War II presented a false image of reservation limitations. The federal government misinterpreted these soldiers' capabilities as reason to end federal assistance and the reservation system. Federal assistance was given to aid Indian family relocation to urban areas rather than investing more in reservations. The reservation system was spared, but it was not until President Johnson's Great Society in the 1960's that any federal aid was directed toward solving resource problems on the reservations (Fixico 1986:20,21,199).

The Cold War led to American involvement with conflicts in Korea and Vietnam. These "police actions" were more obscure threats to national defense than had the eminent danger of World War II. Complicated explanations for U. S. troop involvement on unknown soil, with the constant home threat of a Soviet nuclear attack, distanced popular support for the military. The American public's response to returning veterans from these conflicts changed from the welcome extended to World War II veterans. Korean veterans
received a muted acceptance from fellow citizens, while Vietnam veterans received a sometimes hostile reception by the American public.

Indian Regulars and Tribal Identity

I have selected Adair and Vogt's research format because it works within a gap that exists between historical and anthropological literature. Their work established a central niche between historians' depiction of Native American military regulars as a social group and anthropologists' attention to tribal specific details (Adair & Vogt 1949; Vogt 1951). In fact, the contributions by historians and anthropologists on the Native American military experience and tribal identity have an oppositional relationship. Social historians focus on American Indian veterans as their topic, while anthropologists narrow their analysis to tribal identity across generations and even to generation subgroups. Inversely, social historians largely confine the scope of their research to single conflicts (ie., World War II), just as anthropologists embed tribal identity within the context of synchronic or protracted cultural histories that exclude reference to nation-state identity. Historians have overlooked the particulars of tribal cultures and histories in their portrayals of Indian veterans, while Indian veterans seldom, if ever, appear in ethnologies. Few works focus on the life experiences of
Indian servicemen. Most publications address Indian veterans on a nationwide scale through a documented past consisting of events, policies, perceptions, and statistics (Barsh 1991; Bernstein 1991; Hale 1992; Holm 1985). The strength of these works is their ability to trace, in a macro-historical context, major events, policies, and conditions faced by Native American veterans. These works however, assume an elite position. Tribal actions and individual comments, in these texts, are referenced only as they relate to a dominant theme of national events and policies. The particular cultural, historical, and political economic aspects of Indian actions and comments are buried under an assumed national Indian consciousness.

The large percentage of American Indians participating in the military during both World Wars is an often-quoted reference in the historical works (Barsh 1991:277-278; Bernstein 1991:22; Hale 1992:409; Holm 1985:151-152; Tate 1986:430; Warrior 1991:55). Government enlistment documents from World War I until 1976 list American Indians, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans, with few exceptions, as White military personnel. These groups were incorporated into White units (Jerry Anderson, personal communication August 29, 1994). These ethnic groups' inclusion into Anglo American units was advantageous for them compared with the segregated inequality experienced by African American troops. They were not fully integrated into the military
until 1948. Yet the distinctive ethnic features of the three "incorporated" minority groups were subdued by identity of the dominant Anglo American group.

The problem of appropriately addressing ethnicity within a society that is both ethnically mixed and dominated by one ethnic group continues to be a challenge in anthropological writings. Contemporary Fort Belknap Gros Ventre and Assiniboine studies focus on separate tribal identities (Fowler 1987; Siegel 1983; Cooper 1957; Miller 1987; Rodnick 1938). These works usually avoid dealing with many facets of identity of the reservation veterans and focus solely on tribal identity. In acculturation studies, a distinct ethnicity is depicted as a trait that will eventually be subsumed by the dominant culture (Rodnick 1938; Cooper 1957). However, in Sanford Siegel's and David Miller's works, they recognized that alternative identities remain. This is contrary to the one-way assimilation model assumed to have emerged at Fort Belknap (Seigal 1983; Miller 1987). In Siegel's (1983) dissertation, pan-Indian symbols are offered as post-acculturation alternatives to explain the persistence of Gros Ventre identity in contrast to Anglo-oriented Indians who do not aspire to remain ethnic. In Miller's (1987) analysis, he recognizes that it is only a minority on the reservation who are concerned with Assiniboine cultural renewal, but that this cultural
redefining process is fueled as an alternative to a less distinctive minority label.

Loretta Fowler’s (1987) *Shared Symbols, Contested Meanings: Gros Ventre Culture and History, 1778-1984* is a far more refined work dealing with identity at Fort Belknap. Fowler succeeds in discounting acculturation as too simplistic and misleading for understanding the complexity of cultural identity. She narrows Gros Ventre and Assiniboine identities to their own interpretations of symbols and actions. Both tribes’ symbolic interpretations have changed, often opposing each other. Yet such translations are, in other instances, shared by both groups. Fowler’s work is the most comprehensive historical study of the Gros Ventre, and it exposes the varying perspectives of their culture and history that continue to evolve with each generation.

Adair and Vogt’s works lack the ethnohistoric depth of Fowler and Miller’s works. However, Adair and Vogt’s analysis of veteran life histories and comparison of case studies reveal that differences in Zuni and Navaho responses to innovation are based on each tribe’s particular cultural histories (Adair and Vogt 1949:557). Both Adair and Vogt worked within the acculturation spectrum, or "stages" from White-orientation to Indian-orientation, yet their comparison of the Zuni and Navaho veterans’ life histories challenged the assumption that assimilation occurs evenly.
Orientation toward military service and the nation was expressed differently by these veterans and their communities depending on specific cultural views toward "outsiders" and the veterans' exposure to the modern world. Should any such variations exist between Gros Ventres and Assiniboines at Fort Belknap, they will be revealed similarly in this study through the veteran life histories. Except Adair and Vogt's two works, previously mentioned studies typically do not use life histories; they approach identity only at a tribal level. It is through the individual veteran narratives that different relationships of ethnic affiliation (i.e., Spanish-American, Filipino, local Anglos) and external influences (i.e., alcohol, wage labor) are described.

Theoretical Direction

The theoretical focus of this study is on self-definition when a wide range of social choices are available. I have drawn from the following four theoretical inspirations to address this problem.

The first is Elvin Hatch's (Hatch 1989) self-identity theory. According to Hatch, personal motivation is shaped by one's own sense of self-worth as judged by social criteria rather than assuming social prestige as the agent's goal (Hatch 1989:349). This theory approaches personal aspirations as internally oriented to one's identification
of self within society, not externally as simply one's attempt to prove self to others. Hatch draws from Harvey Goldstein's analysis of Max Weber's and Thomas Mann's shared central concept of "calling." Calling is a key part in explaining human efforts beyond immediate physical needs (Hatch 1989:349-50). As Hatch notes:

The calling confers meaning on a person's life by justifying the lines of action in which he or she engages. And it rests on the principle that the individual is interested not simply in the approval of others, but in achieving a sense of self-worth (Hatch 1989:350).

Hatch's argument defines the motivating force behind human struggles as the value one places on their own identity (1991:351). My intention is to expand Hatch's theory of personal motivation by examining the life choices of these six veterans (Hatch 1989:341-353).

Self-identity theory allows for the potential cross-cultural influences, but Kirin Narayan (Narayan 1993) explains why a more inclusive view is needed. Narayan argues that cultural identity has taken on a greater complexity due to expanding markets, political communities, media and travel. She uses her own multiethnic background to show the limitations of the traditional objective/subjective perspective of anthropologists to define the complexity of identity (Nayaran 1993). This approach is appropriate for studying veterans. These veterans have participated at local, national, and even international levels of social interaction. Their identities are embedded in a wider
world, not just a semi-isolated reservation setting. Such a wide range of influences can only be assessed by the way in which these men refer to their own experiences.

The third theoretical influence is the primary interpretive tool by which veteran life stories are analyzed. I extend self-identity theory through Robert K. Merton and Alice S. Kitts' approach to reference group behavior. Reference group theory explains the selective processes people use to justify their actions and attitudes by referring to the values of groups, individuals, or social categories (Merton and Kitt 1974:41; Merton and Rossi 1968:338).

I apply reference group theory to analyze veteran responses and stories since Hatch mentions no research method. Merton and Kitt's discovery shows that individuals "frequently orient themselves to groups other than their own in shaping their behavior and evaluations" (Merton and Rossi 1969:336). Merton and Kitt's work is of use here to detect and analyze relationships that these veterans identify as relevant.

However, Merton, Rossi, and Kitt's treatment of minorities in their study of The American Soldier is confined to the same acculturation models already mentioned. These sociologists assumed that different social categories eventually aspired toward an archetypical model. For them, minority soldiers aspire toward the dominant White culture,
which was a group "other than their own." Criteria of social structure reflect this assumption since they dichotomize membership/nonmembership, in-group/out-group, and eligibility/ineligibility. This "is or is not" analysis leads to static and incomplete conclusions about the dynamics of individual social value selection when applied to their large sample (Merton and Kitt 1974; Merton and Rossi 1969). Yet their model eliminates the many complexities concerning self-identity.

To solve this problem, I have limited my study to six oral histories. Personal narratives allow each contributor to reveal his own significant networks of social interaction at many levels from an array of personal experiences (Greetz 1973:5). The "myriad processes involving many relationships and aspects" are compared for analysis (Peacock and Holland 1993:376). This "actor-centered" orientation potentially reveals Indian participation and identities at multiple levels (ie. the modern nation-state, the local Anglo community, Post 110, etc.), rather than limiting analysis of Native Americans to portray them as submissive wards of state (Clow 1993:221; Foster 1991:13; Ortner 1984). In narratives, veterans see themselves in relation to dominant and local cultural influences. Benedict Anderson (1983) addresses how the national consciousness of diverse groups can be shaped by dominant cultural influences.
Benedict Anderson contributes the final theoretical inspiration for this thesis. He evokes the context where nationalism is reproduced in schools and maintained by the media. Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* evocatively shows how diverse groups are manipulated by their state government into accepting the idea of nation (Anderson 1983). Anderson’s nation definition is important as an interpretative tool for understanding the creation of patriotism. He defines the nation as an:

... imagined political community-and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them; yet in the minds of each lives the image of the communion... In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact... has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself conterminous with mankind (Anderson 1983:15-16).

Anderson links the manipulative use of images, symbols, and language through "print-capitalism" to integrate diverse peoples into a nation-state. The state initiates a legitimizing process, which he labels "official nationalism" (Anderson 1983). This sets the stage for local patriotic sentiments to motivate social action.

Anderson’s "imagined communities" approach enhances Hatch’s model regarding the individual’s perspective of the nation-state. This idea places the personal sense of belonging at the center of understanding national loyalty among peoples who have been mistreated and given a low
status by the dominant culture and government. For exploring patriotic motivations, this is a preferable format to "false consciousness" which assumes foolishness as the determining factor among the oppressed. Hatch’s self-identity theory allows for the expression of patriotism, and military service, by the marginalized members of American society who, at first glance, have the least to gain by such efforts. A consequent question is: did government Indian policies affect these contributors’ will to serve their country, or is their motivation for their country a separate matter? Broadly stated, how is patriotism linked to an individual’s aspiration to an identity?

From this array of perspectives and methods, my approach toward understanding the personal motivation of these men joining the service developed. Chapter two is a review of the methods used in this study including the conditions under which information was attained, and the ethical considerations. Chapter three contains the six case studies.
CHAPTER TWO

Ethnographic Field Methods

The information for this thesis was derived from ethnographic fieldwork, which consists of the following phases: initial inquiry, initial interview, and follow-up interviews. To maintain a standard of consistency for the context in which this data are gathered and safeguarded, I followed the procedures listed below.

Twenty-five men and women veterans expressed interest in an ethnographic study during my initial inquiry at Milk River Days Powwow on July 24-26, 1992 at the Fort Belknap Reservation. They gave me their addresses and phone numbers. During the initial inquiry, I could not separate the views of Gros Ventre from Assiniboine veterans. Many on the address list were descendants of both groups and members or former members of American Legion Post 110. While all veterans I talked to voiced their identity as veterans and association with their fellow comrades, their tribal identity was given only after I asked directly. The veterans of Fort Belknap Reservation are chosen as the study group because their affiliation as a community of veterans was more pronounced than their tribal identity.

I interviewed one person at a time in follow-up-visits to reduce distractions and to safeguard the personal confidentiality of each contributor as advised by John
Manning (Manning 1983). Questions were open-ended to allow the contributor to formulate connections significant to him (Schatzman and Strauss 1973). Following initial questions about why they joined the military, most veterans felt compelled to give a narrative of their life history. Following this life history, I asked questions, from a prepared list, that had not already been addressed in the narratives (Appendix A). This list of questions was generated from topics mentioned by V1 (Vietnam veteran one) in the initial interview.

Ethical Standards for This Study

To reduce possible damaging and negative public responses to the contributors' views, experiences, and stories, several precautions were taken. Contributing veterans are referred to by code (ie. W2). Potentially sensitive identities are noted as (person's name) for other individuals referred to in this thesis. Initial letters will represent each of three veteran generations. Servicemen from each conflict era will be listed as follows: World War II (W), Korean War era (K), Vietnam (V). Numbers following this initial will distinguish individuals from that conflict.

Once the data were collected, immediate transcription was the exception rather than the rule. To safeguard original material, the University of Montana Archives agreed
to retain master tapes and to furnish me with copies for transcription and blank tapes for interviews. The University of Montana Archives agrees to release the interview tapes only after I have given them permission. I reserve the right to withhold sensitive material. On November 11, 1995 each of the six veterans were given transcriptions of their own interviews and field notes relating to them. A copy of this thesis will be given to each contributor following its completion. The contributing veterans were told the purpose of the interviews and that interview tape copies were deposited as confidential material at the University of Montana Archives. All contributors signed an oral history gift agreement consenting to this arrangement before each interview (Appendix B).

Besides these precautions, efforts were taken to be sensitive to local etiquette toward elders, veterans, and formal requests for knowledge. The primary contact was through American Legion Post 110. I interviewed any willing and available military veterans. I did not press any veterans who felt inconvenienced by the inquiry. My request for an interview included a gift of tobacco. I avoided interrupting veteran stories unless I was responding to contributor questions, clarifying misunderstood points, or verbally describing the narrator’s gestures.
Interviewer

The following description is based on the background information about myself provided to each contributor, and my appearance during interviews.

I am an Anglo American Protestant graduate student at the University of Montana studying cultural anthropology. At the time of the interviews I was in my late twenties. I grew up on a cattle and crop farm in rural eastern North Carolina. I was an Artillery officer in the United States Army Reserve, and I had worked for four years on ranches in Wyoming.

During fieldwork I had long hair bound at the back of my head. I wore glasses and was causally dressed in jeans or slacks with a long-sleeve shirt or T-shirt. I was not consistently clean-shaven which contrasted with the contributors, except V2.

The Case Studies

With 190 Vietnam veterans from the Fort Belknap Reservation, interviewing only a few of the men was more practical (1980 US Bureau of the Census). From sixteen recorded interviews, six were selected as a manageable number to analyze for this thesis. Two veterans represent each of three war eras (World War II, Korea, and Vietnam) from 1940 to 1973. One veteran from the post-Vietnam era was interviewed. These six veterans were selected because
they presented the most material of their fellow cohorts. These six presented the best in-depth personal accounts.

Except the initial Vietnam veteran interview, obligations of work and family hindered the availability of younger contributors. Fewer Vietnam veterans were interviewed than the older veterans. The second Vietnam veteran life history used in this thesis is shorter than the first because that person had a limited amount of time for an interview. Retirement and the less hectic lifestyle of World War II and Korean War era veterans were more favorable situations for research. Their narratives are longer and have more detailed description than those of their younger comrades. Except for one Vietnam combat veteran, every veteran approached expressed his willingness to contribute to this study.

The following six life histories are extracts from interview transcriptions, which were originally taken verbatim from the interviews. These life histories were written closely to approximating the actual speech performance. Two veterans reviewing transcriptions on November 11, 1995 were shocked by the awkward presentation. I have since changed quoted sections to be grammatically correct. Editorial breaks with original transcription are marked by an ellipsis. Original transcription references are noted by contributor label and the page number (ie. W2:13).
The following selected material best reveals the experiences and relationships that each veteran chose as sufficiently significant to tell me at the time of their interview. Their stories are reminiscences collected between November 11, 1992 and July 24, 1993. These reminiscences are an "image of self" that these six selected "to transmit to others" (Vansina 1985:4&8). Since answers and stories are oriented to an audience of one, a brief description of myself, based on what these veterans knew about me, is included.

Analysis

To understand relevant affiliations and conditions affecting Fort Belknap veterans' sense of self, I focused on the stories they told about their past. The contributors' personal views and identities were shaped, in part, by events they have experienced and later recalled. "Reminiscences," as Jan Vansina writes (1985:4,8), "are bits of life history, the image of self one cares to transmit to others." Contributors reenacted their own significant impressions and aspirations through their reminiscent narratives.

My opening inquiry - Why did you join the military (V1)? - dominated the first half of the unstructured initial interview with a member of Post 110. This veteran's lengthy response on the influences swaying his decision to join the
Marines led me to the question above. Earlier that same night at a Post 110 Veteran's Day dinner local veterans had explained their different motivations for joining the Service. Various reasons for "joining up" are one topic of inquiry that allows for comparison within this group. Their reasons for enlisting reveals something about each person's background and how each veteran identifies himself.

Topical analysis was applied in the first interview (Driessen 1970). Relevant questions were developed from V1's life history. Drawing from the responses to questions and the narratives given by the veterans shared topics were identified among the group. As pointed out by Narayan:

... narratives are not transparent representations of what actually happened, but are told for particular purposes, from particular points of view: they are thus incipiently analytical, enacting theory. Analysis itself is most effective when it builds directly from cases evoked through narrative (Narayan 1993:681).

Individual case histories provide a grounded base for understanding the contributors' view of their own motivations, ideas of nation, and personal social status.

Responses to questions and stories from the six case studies are summarized as the data relates to key topics. Veteran life histories, compiled from interview responses and narratives, are divided chronologically by background, pre-service, service, and post-service experiences. Each case life history is divided into headings and subheadings.

Background relates to experiences and impressions these
veterans had among their family of orientation or in the childhood home. Pre-service experiences overlap with the background, but the material pertains to their experiences and impressions just before joining the military. Service and post-service experiences denote veteran reference to events occurring while they were in the military and after their discharge.

The four subheadings, listed under each heading, are Relative Deprivation, Relative Dissociation, Relative Reward, and, Relative Association. These terms served as dissections from which each phase of veteran life histories was analyzed. These terms are used "to help account for feelings of dissatisfaction (personal avoidances, satisfaction, and affiliations)... where the objective situation would at first glance not seem" obvious (Merton and Kitt 1974:52).

The four ideas divide contributor life histories into negative and positive aspects of matters that affected them and how they responded. Just as deprivation and dissociation reflect negative veteran assessments, reward and association are positive. Deprivations and rewards are factors affecting agents beyond their control. Similarly, Merton and Kitt saw "deprivation and reward" as "incidental and particularized components of" their concepts (Merton and Kitt 1974:52). Dissociation and association are the actions
and personal judgements each contributor makes based on his own sense of worth.

Relative refers to the behaviors and standards of "the groups of which the individual is a member (or not) that yield the significant frame of reference for self-evaluations" (Merton and Kitt 1974:56). This is the continuous process in which an individual compares new experiences with those he is accustomed.
 CHAPTER THREE

Indian military veterans are an ideal source for insight into the dynamics of individual choice in twentieth century American life. The six men presented here grew up on a rural reservation where their life options were few. Yet they have had an array of experiences within their nation and across the world. These service personnel have dealt with a dominant culture unknown to many locals. Their stories are as follows:

Case W1

W1 produced a life story of twenty-nine pages: five pages about his pre-service experiences, nineteen pages addressing his service experiences, and five pages referencing his post-service experiences. W1 gave more information about his service experience, but this was not all transcribed because of its repetitive theme. His attention to detail and process in his stories reflects his engineering aspiration and background. W1 followed a loose chronological sequence focusing more on key points which he illustrated through an array of events from different places and times in his life. His stories often reminded him of new points and other stories to bring up. W1 has been interviewed on two other occasions; he is directly quoted by Loretta Fowler (Fowler 1987:143). He is also a contributor
to a local history. This work will not be referenced here to protect his identity.

Background

W1 was born in 1917. He has spent most of his life living in the Hays area just west of the Little Rockies. He is mostly of Assiniboine descent, but he grew up in a Gros Ventre home and is enrolled as such. He was raised by two elderly ladies, one of whom was his grandfather’s sister (W1:29).

He lived with these women until he attended Fort Belknap Boarding School in 1923. This was an industrial school where the students attended classes in the mornings and labored after lunch. He spoke only Gros Ventre until he started school. W1 was bussed to Harlem Grade School in 1929 after council member George Cochran succeeded in closing the Fort Belknap Boarding School and integrating Indians into the local public school system. W1 finished the tenth grade and completed his GED after World War II (W1:23,25).

He volunteered for the Army at the outbreak of World War II. His brother was in the Navy during World War I, and his son served as a Marine in Vietnam (W1:23,25). Five other last-name relatives are listed as veterans from Blaine County (The Blaine County Journal 1995:12).
Pre-Servive Experience

Relative Deprivation The farthest W1 had traveled before he joined the Army was to Yakima, Washington, where he had relatives. He and four friends went to earn money by picking vegetables in 1930. This was a hard experience; he remembers nearly starving to death until African American and Hispanic American pickers took them in and showed them how to do the work. This was the Great depression era before any federal relief was organized, yet W1 points to it with very few deprivation references. Instead, he remembers it as a time of self-sufficiency and neighborly cooperation at Fort Belknap and abroad. W1’s "everybody helped everybody" depiction is evidenced in Yakima where Black and Mexican workers helping to feed and teach him and his friends to work in the fields (W1:1).

Relative Dissociation No form of dissociation was identified in W1’s pre-service stories. He recalls associative rather than dissociative experiences during this phase of his life.

Relative Reward Before the war, W1 was married with two children. In 1935 he worked heavy equipment for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to build irrigation reservoirs. The CCC allowed W1 to pursue an occupation that he developed as a child.

I worked for CCC since 1935 with equipment here when equipment first started in here you see building reservoirs. And, when I went into the
service hell it was just like a civilian job because I knew all of that (W1:18).

W1’s CCC experiences included reservoir and mountain road building plus operation of graders, trenchers, shovels, and draglines. The advantages of his CCC work would reverberate not only in the war but beyond.

Relative Association W1 recalled his childhood community as engaging in subsistence and commercial farming and ranching. He worked for local White farmers in the Fort Belknap area as a boy. He described the White farmers’ attitude toward Fort Belknap Indians as favorable. After he finished the tenth grade, he went to work for the CCC until the war. This setting established W1’s ideal of community and his own calling for machine work.

W1 got to know some Ozark farmers while he was stationed with the Army in Arkansas. He identified with these farmers because their mode of living was similar to that of the people around Hays during his childhood.

I really loved those people (Ozark Anglo dirt farmers), because they reminded me of Indians. They all had their little (garden plots). God, they would farm chop in places, side hills and everything. They just farm enough to sustain them (corn, wheat, oats, and hay)... They all got a few cows... they make their lard, they make their own meat, you know, and they got their own eggs. Shit, about all they buy is cloth [laugh]... I noticed that in the spring. He was getting ready to plant, and shit they were wagons bouncing out of the hills there from all over. It was still kind of in the horse and buggy days, even around here in the forties. But they all helped each other. That is the way we used to be here. Everybody used to help everybody (W1:1).
He saw both groups as subsistence farmers producing a variety of crops and animals. Since the priority was on meeting family needs, the quantity of products grown was far lower than what local commercial farmers produced at the time of the interview. Manual and animal labor was the dominant means of production, with few machines being used until after World War II. As a direct result, W1 saw the two communities as closely knit. Families were dependent on neighbors for exchanges of labor, goods, and socializing.

It was in this cooperative community that W1 developed a calling for machine work. This personal aspiration came from his childhood contact with two reservation equipment engineers.

... the guy that got me started in equipment, he was a World War I tank operator... He had been gassed, mustard gas... he was a Gros Ventre, Frank Running Fisher... he got gassed in France... He got a little pension from the Army... He used to work with steam engines and stuff. I got acquainted with a guy. His grandfather was John Herman, he was a German from Michigan, some place. He used to be a steam engineer here. See the government used to have steam engineers. They sawed lumber and plowed fields with steams and he was a steam engineer. That’s where I got interested in them. In fact, I learned how to pour babbitt (alloy lining for bearings) from him, and stuff shaved babbitt. And, that’s where I learned how to solder and weld ... when I was just a kid (W1:24).

W1’s association with machinery was developed early in his life because of these two mentors. His early apprenticeship with these two men developed into a rewarding life long personal calling.
Service Experience

W1 was inducted into the Army at Fort Douglas, Montana. He took basic training at Fort Lewis, Washington (W1:2). W1 was mustered out of the Army in 1945 (W1:19).

Relative Deprivation One of the most regrettable situations in W1’s Army training was that he could not attend the Army’s engineering school and testing ground for new equipment at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

I wanted to go to Fort Belvoir, Virginia because they were sending all them bullet heads there. They were sending all of their latest equipment there. But if you had had any training they made you a T-4 (technician fourth grade), and then they shipped you to Arch Field, California (W1:3). It griped my damn tailbone. I would have liked to have went just for the vocation (W1:18).

Ironically, his experiences as a child and later working for the CCC made him too valuable to be absent for additional training. The Army had an immediate need for heavy machine operators.

His trained in the Mohave Dessert with General George Patton’s tank corps before being assigned to the Pacific. He witnessed many casualties from the heat and the reckless fast-paced training. Commenting on the death of his comrades crushed in their foxholes by tanks on training exercises, W1 said that, "... they killed a lot of them guys. You do not read about it in the Stars and Stripes either,"... (W1:12).
Relative Dissociation  Three sources of dissociation expressed by W1 during his service years were: Southern racial divisions, a lost lieutenant, and Japanese war atrocities. While his shock over the atrocities is to be expected, his rejection of the other two situations shows that W1 is not someone to accept conventional norms when they run counter to his own values.

As for the racially segregated south that W1 observed while taking amphibious training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, W1 pointed out his problem of knowing where he fit in as an Indian in Anglo American and African American divided communities (W1:2). He resolved his dilemma by ignoring the divisions for himself. Once while in Saint Louis with Anglo American comrades W1 went into a "Colored" bar against the socially inclusive concerns of his buddies. An additional personal freedom W1 made for himself in an exclusive society was going in the bar to be served alcohol. The ban on serving alcohol to Indians on reservations was enforced at Fort Belknap. This fact was known, but avoided, by the bartender who by grew up in Havre, Montana (W1:2).

While W1 professed his attitude of "making the best of it" rather than being like the openly rebellious troops in the brig, he was not a passive follower of rules or orders (W1:26). While on patrol, W1 disobeyed a direct order by his lieutenant to stay with the unit.

... we were going right into the Japs, the thick of it. You know, there was a lot of them all over
in the brush. "Ah bullshit!" I said. His name was Hinsley. I said: "Lieutenant Hinsley, I don't give a shit what you do to me. But you see that ridge over there? That's where I'm heading." I said, "And, then I'll be heading home. I don't give a shit if you shoot me in the back or what you do to me. And, you wouldn't dare shoot me because these Japs are right below us here and they'll get you." By God he threatened me with court-martial stuff. I said: "Well, I'm leaving. I don't give a shit what you say" (W1:10).

W1 considered leaving the lost lieutenant, who would not listen to him, a better alternative than being killed. While the officer had grounds to court-martial him, W1 hedged his risk by persuading another lieutenant to come with him. Seven from the patrol of sixteen returned safely with W1. The officer's group was finally found by an infantry search party. They were lost an additional four days and had three men killed. The hardheaded lieutenant was court-martialed instead of W1.

His assessment of the Japanese is a surprising contrast to his usually positive reference to others. He simply states, "They were cruel people, you know, them Japs" (W1:16). It could be said that W1 was reflecting the anti-Japanese sentiments that grew out of World War II. Yet only one story, which he had heard while in the service, about Japanese eating habits echos American propaganda and rumors dominant then (W1:10). All other stories in which W1 refers to the Japanese are from his own observations.

Three examples of Japanese atrocities he referred to the ill-treatment of Filipinos. W1 and his unit set in the
massive 240 millimeter siege guns that brought an end to the Japanese hold on Manilla (Wl:4). The most horrific abuses that Wl saw followed the capital city’s opening.

They told us, "This is going to be a sight that you will never forget."... There was a road coming out of Manila like that. We weren’t very far from that high wall shit, maybe five miles. Christ! It was the most pathetic sight you ever seen of people. All them little kids, you know, hardly had any clothes on. They looked like they was from Africa potbellied, and shit their arms, you know, just sticking on out and sunk way back, you know... some of them had open sores, and you could actually see, I guess it was maggots or something, but there was something in them that was wiggling (Wl:5).

Malnutrition was one way the Japanese controlled the Filipinos during their occupation.

Torture and sex abuses were other control methods inflicted by the Japanese. Wl stated that an Army officer showed a grizzly sight at the University of Manila. Pregnant women who were tied to chairs with their bellies cut open (Wl:16). As a Catholic, Wl was particularly struck by their offences against the sacred.

Shit, I had seen pregnant nuns (he is Catholic) down there on this island. I saw pregnant nuns. Makes me wonder what the hell. I mean the church, I wonder how they confronted the church with that. It wasn’t their fault. Well, they just took them and enslaved them, you know, and made whores out of them or prostitutes (Wl:16).

Wl’s sympathy for the victims and his frustration with the horror of what had happened is expressed within his descriptions.
Relative Reward  Many benefits W1 got from his military experience were based on his skill as a heavy equipment operator. Within a few months after enlisting, W1 was promoted to T-5 [technician fifth class]. Before being sent overseas he was promoted to T-4. He was the only man from Fort Belknap to receive this classification. Overseas W1 made first sergeant, but he was later demoted back to T-4 for taking up for his men (W1:23). Reflecting on his military experience, W1 stated:

…it was educational to me. I would not want to do it again. But, I would not give a million dollars for what I got out of it, you know. I know what the rest of the world is all about. I know what the other side is like (W1:29).

W1 was in combat frequently, but his main duty was combat support as a combat engineer. He defines his situation compared with that of the combat soldier.

It was not like being in the infantry. You did not stick your neck out every day like an infantryman there. I feel sorry for them (W1:20).

Although he had to go out on patrol once every two months, he considered himself fortunate compared to infantrymen to perform his craft and not be constantly exposed to danger.

Concerning others in the armed services, W1 commented that they should serve in the military because it teaches discipline, respect, and how to take orders. He added:

Especially us Indians. We learned how to mingle... . I had no problem... . I can go any damn place and fit (in)... in a few minutes I’ll be chatting with anybody ... it helped me out because I never did get out. Just... that little fruit picking... (W1:27).
W1 acknowledges that it was the military that gave him the opportunity to express his extrovert personality to strangers. While he also credits the Army with teaching him to "mingle," he showed that he could mingle early in his training when he entered an African American bar. Therefore, military service offered a broader environment for him to meet others.

Both his technical skills and his personality helped him in an enterprise with an Army buddy. W1 soldered and brazed mug sets out of ammunition scraps for extra money. His friend sold these sets to officers. He made enough money to fix up his house and buy a secondhand car and truck when he returned home (W1:19).

Relative Association W1 presents himself in his service related narratives as someone who is a patriotic American, capable of getting along with a wide range of different people, and who can act on his own values.

When it was implied that W1 joined the Army for economic rather than patriotic reasons, he sharply countered this assumption.

Well, we love our country! This is our damn country, you know! It was ours before you fellows (Anglos) came ... So, it is natural that you didn't go into the service for (money). I didn't have to go; I was a family man. I could have stayed at home. But I thought, "Well, it was my civic duty to go make it so that guys like you now can enjoy life... I'd say a patriotic duty. I felt it was my duty to go and fight for my country, all of us (veterans) I think" (W1:27).

W1 identifies himself as an American. He served in the Army
out of compassion for his country. He includes all his fellow veterans' military involvement as linked to their common love for their nation also.

Yet, W1 believes he has mandate over Anglo Americans and all others in his tie to this country because he is a Native American. Since his ancestors were the first immigrants to this place, their claim to it takes precedence over others' assertions. He sees his bond to the nation-state as a logical progression from Indian identification to their areas. Although his use of the land has been minimized on the reservation, his claim to the imagined community is maximized by his military service.

He views the past by what is accepted by both the scientific community and local stories as the migration of Indians to North America. W1 commented:

Discovery Channel and National Geographic that’s the ones I watch. They were giving the history (Indian), and its the same way as these old Indians tell it. You know, they come across the Bering Strait there, and, whether we are descendants from a "Chinaman," or Mongolian, or whatever the hell we are. Nevertheless, we did migrate this way because they tell this story of this old lady and her grandchild. They were the last, well, not the last, but they were towards the tail end. And, they had seen this horn sticking out. This little guy wanted that horn, so that old lady busted up the ice and half was on that side and the other half was on this side. From there we migrated on down this way into Canada. So, it could be so (W1:22)...

Just as W1 constructs the past where both popular culture and oral tradition are complimentary, his patriotism is not an exact reproduction of what is taught by the
dominant culture. While W1 accepts other ethnic groups' claim to being Americans and fought to defend their rights, he does not accept every Anglo icon.

... we don't claim Columbus, just you fellows claim him ... It was ours before you fellows came, you know, until that (W1:26) Columbus came over here. He's the guy that raised hell with our damn country, you know (W1:27).

While his ideas about civic duty probably developed in boarding school, his interpretations of the imagined community are not limited to that instruction.

He states his education gave him the tools for dealing with the larger community. W1 referred to his boarding school education in manual drill and handling arms as the main reason he easily adjusted to military life.

I went to boarding school see. And, I learned how to drill and handle arms there, just like ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps)... so that didn't bother me (W1:25).

He saw other recruits' rebellion against authority as pointless. W1 believes that his personal successes in the Army came from his attitude to be the best soldier he could be while in the military (W1:25). He had already accepted the commands of authority while in broading school, so he was prepared for knowing when to obey and when not to obey.

W1 maintains an open relationship with Anglo Americans and Non-anglo Americans in several of his service stories (W1:1,2,10,16,17,26). W1 aspired to be "able to mingle" very well with a wide range of people despite cultural or physical differences.
I was kind of in between, I did not know where the hell I was. I did not know if I should drink with the White fellows or drink with them Black fellows. It did not make a shit to me, just as so I got a drink. I noticed the bars were that way. I went into a bar, hell they thought I would come out of there all cut to hell these guys that I was with. They said, "Oh hell Chief that’s just for Colored only." "Well, shit, I am neither Colored nor White!" I said, "I will go in there and have a drink anyway." And, you know, they always used the old additive "it is a small world." I went in there. This bartender, a great big burly fellow, he said, "I know that you are from the north." He said, "And, I know that you are Indian." He said, "Where are you from?" "Montana." He said, "Well, you know, I am from Montana. I am from Havre, Montana" (W1:2).

W1 acts on his own values in spite of his comrades’ warnings of possible danger. He uses Southern racial segregation to his own advantage as someone that is neither Anglo nor African American. W1 shows his open personality to his Anglo comrades by finding a bartender that once worked with his uncle in a place that was illegal and socially tabu to enter.

W1 mentioned New Guinea natives and his fellow soldiers as people he associated with and who sought him out for his skill, rank, and easygoing personality (W1:16,17,26). W1 found commonality with the people of New Guinea just as he had with the Ozark farmers.

But they’re great people (New Guinea natives). Their culture is similar to ours too. They used feathers. They live off the land... But the Dutch come over there. And they sent a guy up, and he goes up to these little barrios. And, the headman comes down. And, he brings all the able bodied men down. He goes down, and they work off a damn head tax. They take them off to sea, fish, or they work them, we used to call them "Palmolive..."
Pete. "All them damn islands, you would think you were going into a corn farm on the edge of them islands with those trees... Jesus Christ, they don't grow natural like that. Shit, it was all these ... soap outfits here in the United States that had all them damn islands planted into... palm trees for that palm oil. And, I heard that they got twelve and a half apiece for every tree that we plowed up a (W1:16).

Simple subsistence living, feather adornment, and colonial exploitation of their labor and land are four themes W1 identified as a Native American. His interest in technology is obvious in his detailed description of their use of simple tools to build dwellings, garden, and fish (W1:20).

W1 depicted his relationship with his buddies, at least with one officer, with subordinates, and with African American recruits as good (W1:10, 11, 17, 26). He assumed some respect given to him was based on incorrect assumptions of Native Americans' innate outdoor skill.

... of course, I appreciated all of my buddies and stuff, just because I was Indian, I guess, they thought I had a sense of direction like a jackass or something. They said (in a whisper): "Hey Chief! What do you think?" "Ah shit, this son-of-a-bitch is lost," I said. "That's what we thought too!" they said (W1:10).

Nevertheless, W1's navigational success out of Japanese-held portions of jungle saved him and those from his unit that abandoned a lost lieutenant.

Shit, we got home, and reported to the captain. We had ... another lieutenant with us, but he was a regular engineer, Army engineer. He came back with us. He told his side of the story. That is what got me off. They wanted to court-martial us for leaving him back there (W1:11).

While W1's abilities earned him respect from his fellow
soldiers of equal rank and at least one superior, his subordinates reciprocated his guidance with cooperation.

I got along good. Those soldiers liked me. You know, they all did. I had no trouble. I was the equipment sergeant. If somebody moved up to H and S (Headquarters and Staff) and stuff then there was ten guys to: "(whisper) How's going Chief? Put in a good word for me." We got along too and we did a lot of work too. If we had to work around the clock, it was no problem. Nobody bitched. We just got to work (Wl:17).

African American troops identified Wl as someone closer in skin color with whom they could relate better.

... when the war was over with, why, we trained these Colored people. Shit, I got along good with all of them. In fact, I had more Colored guys than I could handle. They were coming in too fast. They didn’t want to go to those other guys, they all wanted to come over to where I was. We had to train them to operate equipment (Wl:26).

While his extrovert personality aided him socially, it was of little help to him when facing dangerous situations. Wl sees surviving the training and combat hazards of Army life as more than just luck.

I know that there is a God. There has got to be somebody looking out for you because boy,... I took some chances at that, just plain skin head, you know. It was new to me, and, not only me, but a lot of the others. ... Never let anybody lie to you that they were not scared. I mean a lot of fellows get medals, citations, and stuff, but they just do it foolhardily (Wl:14).

His religious convictions are not based on a blind protective faith.

... Japs they were great for sneaking up on you, and cutting your Goddamn throat or stabbing you to death. You had to behave yourself (Wl:12),... But it was entirely up to you. You had to look out for number one, (Wl:13).
W1 repeatedly called caution the only guarantee for personal safety, he considered any good fortune beyond that to be the grace of God (W1:10,12,13,19).

Post-Service Experience

W1 used the secondhand truck to start a trucking business with his brother. He went back to work for the road department after his brother died. W1 retired from the road department in the 1980's after thirty-five years. He was helping his kids farm wheat and cattle at the time of the interview. He claimed that he had been on and off the farm for fifteen years. W1 has never had an unemployment problem.

Relative Deprivation W1 sees the collapse of community interdependence as the biggest moral and economic change to occur since he was a boy. This veteran summarizes the shift as: "Everybody used to help everybody, they will not go across the street to visit you now, you know. Things really changed here" (W1:1). ... W1 identified several fricative trends between local Native Americans and with local Anglos. He also pointed to Indian apathy over the Fort Belknap Tribal Council as the reason local veterans are losing job influence on the reservation.

It used to be mostly veterans. We need more veterans on the council. But the people have been so damn disgusted with the people that are on the council, that they just don't take any interest no more. But you can't do that. You've got to get out there and do politics (W1:28).
Yet Wl knows that the politics that needs to be "done" urgently is among Anglo Americans from along the High Line (Highway 2).

I worked on farms around here, but at that time they liked us, you know, these farmers. But they don’t now; you would be surprised at them. God, it’s bad; it didn’t get better... It is worse now than it ever was, yeah. Christ, Harlem hates us something furious, all these towns. Never was that way. Shoot, we could go any place, up to Oglands, Truner, Havre, Chinook, down the line, any place... (Wl:27).

Travel beyond the reservation had been restricted by the superintendent earlier to restrict horse stealing and to focus Indians on farm work. When local Anglo pressure forced a rise in White access to reservation resources in the early part of the twentieth century, Indian travel was opened. This was to ease wage dependent labor for the Anglo farmers rather than Native American use of their own resources. The cooperative racial relationship Wl referred to is based on Indian dependancy on an Anglo American controlled economy. Unrestricted travel was policy by the 1920’s.

Wl outlines that current federal aid at Fort Belknap gives an impression of competition to the local Anglo farmers. He stated:

I think mostly it is just over maybe cash (Wl:27). But, you know, I think it is just poor communication really. A lot of guys, you know, that are away from a reservation, they put a big writeup in the paper where the government is giving away millions of dollars to Indian reservations. They think that we get a cut out of that. Hell, we’re lucky if we see one dollar of
that. It is all just like it is now in education, hell that all goes into administration. And, by the time it gets down to the Indian, well hell, there ain't enough there to buy him a sandwich hardly. And then, taxes is another thing, see we get exempt from taxes. I think that they hate us over that... There's not enough information that gets out from our side to the outside to explain what we have got to go through here (W1:28).

W1 points to an editorial as an example of, and fuel for, racial frictions. The article miscommunicates what Indians receive in benefits after administrative cost.

Relative Dissociation  W1 dissociates with the social distance which has split races, neighbors, and families. He did not distance himself from anything other than the trend mentioned above.

Relative Reward  When W1 returned home, his relatives put on a victory dance in his honor. Two drums (singing group) were present that night. W1 is Assiniboine and Gros Ventre. One drum was made up of his Assiniboine relatives from Lodgepole; the other drum consisted of his Gros Ventre relatives from Hays. The dance was held in the old Hays community building that was built by the CCC.

I did not have a grandmother (Anglo kin term), so old lady Many Coups danced for me (father's sister). I did get back with a Japanese flag and some other little goods. We were cleaning out in Manila there. By God, somebody come a running and said that there were some Japanese coming down that Bisig [sic] River, you know. So, we ran over there, ... there were three of them. Shit, maybe they didn't even have weapons. God, a man just kind of bloodthirsty. Of course, (laugh) we didn't see it that way. The enemy is the enemy, you know. You don't shake his hand or pat him on the back, you know. Shit, we plugged them! There was one officer in the bunch. They give me all of
his stuff. He had a bag and this flag and stuff was in it. I left it over at Dave's; it's still here. Some of it I gave away (W1:22).

Following an old format for celebrating the successful return of an individual from combat, W1's family showed respect to him. It was the grandmother's place to dance in a circle with her veteran grandson and any war trophies that he brought back. Many Coups danced with the Japanese flag with which W1 returned. W1 recalled that most of the two-hundred World War II veterans and their families participated in this Victory Dance for these returning veterans (W1 personal communication, Feb. 8, 1996).

He saw the honoring ceremonies at Fort Belknap as a sign of respect for World War II veterans, since nearly every man of fighting age was away serving then.

The reason World War II had it better was because they were coming back in gobs. Hell, they'd (World War II) be four or five people discharged where later veterans would just come one at a time, you know, stringing in... World War II just about cleaned all of the men folk out of Hays (W1:26).

During the Cold War, individuals rather than whole groups of people, left and returned home without notice.

Other than the victory dance, W1 was also given two hundred dollars in war bonds and cash from the Hays chapter of the War Eagles Club. The chapter was headed by Mrs. Kern, a local Anglo American merchant. Originally organized by the veterans' wives and mothers, the organization was no longer active after the end of World War II (W1:24).
Relative Association  W1 returned home after the war where he continued his career and community service. His interests, beyond his job, were veterans, part-time trucking, and education. He pursued a Veterans of Foreign Wars membership after the war.

I joined the VFW Club in Harlem. Then we formed our own out here. We had this (Hays), darn I forget the name of it. I was the commander out here when we formed... Oh, that lasted about ten years (W1:25).

W1 dissociated with the Harlem VFW because they refused to serve alcohol to Indian veterans. The Hays VFW followed the same pattern of involvement and collapses as the War Eagles after the war (W1:24). While the Hays VFW was short lived, W1 took the leading role with his involvement.

He reinvested the profits he made from making mug sets in the Army. He remarked, "I bought a secondhand truck. I used to do a little secondhand trucking around here, my brother and I" (W1:19).

W1 continued to pursue his calling for the road department. He stated:

I was working for the road then (before the war). I took a military leave then, and when I came (W1:18) back had thirty days. I was real fortunate, you know, a lot of them could not find work because there was no work, you know. But I went right back to work see (W1:19).

W1's talent and experience for engineering and heavy equipment was ideal for him to maintain employment from the early 1930's until the 1980's. His occupation allowed his family to remain in the Hays area throughout his life.
His successes at his profession are evident since W1 never needed to take advantage of his GI Bill for home loans or education. He applied for a house loan through his GI Bill, but he chose a reservation home without using his military benefit option. Following the war, he completed his GED in order to maintain his federal job (W1:23). He retired following thirty-five years of working for the highway department. He then farmed for fifteen years and served on the Hays School Board for nine years after he retired from the highway department (W1:25).

Interpretations

W1 openly refers to engineering and operating heavy equipment as his personal calling; he has consistently followed this interest since his childhood. Because of his personal success in pursuing this profession, and the demand for his skill, W1 was able to continuously support himself and his family.

W1 was motivated to volunteer for the Army because he understood the crisis facing the nation at the time Pearl Harbor was bombed. Although his personal combat record was celebrated by his relatives and community upon his return home, this recognition was not W1’s reason for joining the Army. W1 labels individuals pursuing personal honor in combat as "foolhearted" (W1:14). Yet, W1 refers to his military training as life threatening as his occasional
combat exposure over several years.

W1 celebrates his personal ability to get along with a wide range of people. Just as W1 is inclusive in his religious views being Catholic and respecting bundles, he is inclusive in his personal attitude toward others despite language or culture. W1 does not claim to understand his Japanese enemy, from the way they prepare fish to the atrocities committed during the war, yet he offers to repatriate the items he took from the officer he killed.
Case W2

W2 gave a twenty-five-page life history. To describe his pre-service experiences, W2 filled only three pages. Twelve of the transcribed pages were devoted to W2’s service experience, and ten pages to his post-service experience. W2 followed a chronological order beginning with his service experience, and again when asked about his pre-service experiences. He varied from this order only when background description was needed.

Background

W2 was born around 1919. He grew up in a Gros Ventre home where he spoke that language until he started school. His father was an Army scout at Fort Assinboine, Montana in 1894 (W2:2). W1’s son served in the Army during the Vietnam War where he earned a Distinguished Service Cross. Four other last-name relatives are also listed as having served in the military (The Blaine County Journal 1995:12).

Pre-Service Experience

He was bussed to grade school until the sixth grade. W2 attended this boarding school in Harlem until it was closed in 1932. Students were required to wear uniforms and to conduct parades every Sunday morning. W2 added that the female students usually won marching drill contest (W2:12). Boarding school training prepared W2 for military duty.
the Board Advisor, he used to be in the National Guard or the Army; he was a captain. He used to give us these close order drills, and they would teach us these survival skills. Well, it was mostly Boy Scouts you know, but it was a survival deal. Take you out to Snake Butte or some place and march.... I really was not (a Boy Scout) but I would go along ... they used to have, they used to take everybody you know take out. Kind of a survival deal. I guess is what it was. They would say that it was a Boy Scout camp out, hell a lot of the people would a lot of guys kids were not even in Boy Scouts you know. But, they would take us out anyway ... we would all go out and we would all have sticks you know. We had made a big circle, tried to circle them rabbits .... We did not have a very big troop you know. We just mostly young kids you know. I do not think there was much to it you know. I think the most we ever did was to take them out on hike butte and them overnight hikes (W2:12).

In 1933, W2 went to Flandreau Indian School in eastern South Dakota near the Minnesota state line. He stayed there until the spring of 1937. Only once in those four years did W2 go home. He and a friend from Lodgepole jumped a freight train for home in the Spring and returned to school on a cattle train in the Fall.

W2 remembered life at Fort Belknap when he was a boy as a few Indian families subsisting by what they could raise on their allotment. He estimated family plots as ten to twenty acres of wheat. Families cared for ten to twenty head of cattle. W2 remembers doing a great deal of plowing. Other than growing their own wheat and milling the flour, Indian families would also grow large gardens. The surplus vegetables for winter were canned and stored in the cellar. Houses, mostly log cabins, were built by each family.
He mentioned often that people at Fort Belknap did not receive any assistance, other than rations, from the Federal Government when he was young. He stated that, "They had no give away programs in them days until the CCC's coming. Then people worked for the CCC" (W2:12). New Deal Federal assistance was earned primarily through labor.

W2 said that he had few peers when he was growing up. Much of he and his peers’ time were spent doing hard work. Conducting self-sufficient farming on a few arid acres was labor intensive. Unlike the current trend at Fort Belknap where children are many, with few or no responsibilities, W2 grew up when reckless behavior was limited by the continuous demand for work.

Relative Deprivation W2 describes deprivations from his pre-service life as struggles relating to self-sufficient farming in a very marginal climate with no outside assistance. Hard work, few friends, and years of isolation from his family because of boarding school are identified here as three struggles W2 had to deal with as a child and later as an adolescent.

Relative Dissociation While describing his pre-service life, the reference group, with which W2 contrasted his own childhood was the current social and economic conditions facing children and parents at Fort Belknap Reservation. W2 dissociated with these conditions of federal welfare as "too easy" on the people. By not having support themselves, W2
saw them as unprepared and unwilling to deal with the world beyond the reservation. W2’s successes in dealing with his early struggles were his reward in life, in contrast to the dependant situations facing many at Fort Belknap today. W2 did not reveal anything in which he dissociated within his pre-service experiences, but he associates with that era as a time when people were independent and struggled to stay that way.

Relative Reward Other than the lessons of deprivation that shaped W2’s work ethic, a few camping trips with the Boy Scouts, and his one trip home from Flandreau Indian School are the only reward-oriented experiences identified in his narrative. Ironically, these experiences could be considered deprivations in themselves.

Relative Association Boarding school offered some programs for W2 to interact with his peers. Two activities that he has recalled are the marching drills in school and the few times he went out on Scout outings.

The three deprivations identified above could be considered rewards due to their experiences preparing W2 for life beyond the reservation and maintaining his sense of self-sufficiency and independence.

Service Experience

When the war broke out, W2 was reclassified to the infantry (W2:2). He went through basic training in
California in March 1941, and was sent briefly to Fort Lewis, Washington. By that summer he went back to Pittsburgh, California from where he was shipped to Honolulu; he took jungle training in the Hawaiian Islands.

W2's unit started the island-hopping campaign at Guadalcanal. They skipped past New Ireland because it was too heavily fortified, then landed at Cape Hastings in New Britain. From there on, his unit was assigned primarily to patrolling.

After seeing action on Raubal, W2's unit was at sea for a month on a small landing craft enroute to the Philippines. The invasion took place in the Ming Gang Gulf (W2:2); the unit's objective was Fort Saul, a former US Navel Base. Then his unit, the 41st, moved onto the Bambam mountains. But, this objective proved difficult. W2's unit was eventually relieved by another unit. His unit moved on to land in Los Negros.

It was during the action in Los Negros that W2's company was ambushed in a little creek canyon. W2 had been in many ambushes, but this one was memorable to him for five reasons. The first two reasons were that W2 very narrowly escaped being shot, and that the unit's situation was severe. W2 was first scout for his unit when the shooting started. He walked under a large rock in the middle of the creek as the bullets rained down. The company was pinned in with enemy fire coming from both sides. The radioman was
killed; the experienced commanding officer was in mental shock; and men were being hit under the heavy fire. Only when someone reached the radio for artillery support did the firing ease.

At this point survivors started rushing out of the canyon. The third reason that the ambush was memorable was that W2 and Campbell (a comrade from Hays) saved a wounded Hispanic comrade by carrying him out while under fire (W2:4). The fourth memorable event was the comical situation that came out of the escape. As men rushed for cover in their terrifying retreat, troops clustered under a very large eucalyptus log for cover. A frail medic finally appeared to attend to the injured. One soldier fired over the medic’s head, and the medic fainted, which acted as comic relief to all for their fear(W2:5).

The final reason W2 remembered that particular ambush was that he had to return to the scene the next day and retrieve his buddies rottenning bodies. He could not rid himself of the dead smell even after washing and donning a new set of clothes (W2:5).

**Relative Deprivation** Two distinct forms of deprivation surface from W2’s recollections of his combat days. The first is prolonged personal discomfort that comes from exposure to a tropical environment for three years. The second is related to the emotional shock that comes from the prolonged daily stress of combat.
The personal discomforts W2 acknowledge were sleeping on the ground for three years, hunger for red meat, and jungle pests.

You take guys like Indians they didn’t give a damn because they were used to a hard life. I never slept in a goddamn bed for about three years. I was in a damn foxhole all that time on the ground (chuckle) (W2:12).

While W2 was accustomed to "hard living," unlike younger soldiers from urban areas, he was not immune to discomfort.

... we used to get hungry for fresh meat, you know (W2:7). When they had us down in the South Pacific we used to get these natives to barbecue us this wild [pig] (W2:8)... Later in the war W2 discovered a disturbing fact about some Japanese troops he had ambushed the previous evening.

It was just skeletons you could see with that red meat. And, here these damn pigs that night had been rooting around. Shoot, they had eaten all them damn Japs... boy after that we never did hire them guys to barbecue us pigs [laugh] (W2:12)!

The disturbing factor of cannibalism once removed accentuates the humor of his story years later, but not all his discomforts were this grave. He stated, "So we made these shelters. And, we dug in. We used banana leaves in order to make, it rained you know. Goddamn sand fleas kept us awake all night" (W2:8).

Having spent years away from home in Indian boarding school and later serving in the Montana National Guard, W2 knew what to expect from the active-duty Army. These expectations ranged from being accustomed to being away from home for long periods of time to dealing with a chain-of-
command. The one exception to W2’s anticipations was combat itself and the deprivations related to it.

I never realized what war was until I saw some dead guys. People getting killed then you start to realize. ... I also say that I am a combat veteran... . Hell of a lot of difference. When you are in a war you live like a dog. That is why they call us "dogfaces"... (W2:23).

W2 is proud of his service in the military, but he sees combat as a defining difference between himself and peacetime veterans.

The deprivations W2 was exposed to were enough for him to consider that he had done his part in the war. He had an opportunity to serve a relative easy tour guarding in Japan after the war, but he flatly turned it down. He stated, "I wanted to get home. I saw that shit for thirty-eight months. Shit, I saw that was long enough" (W2:6). W2 still did not leave for the states until November 1945.

Relative Dissociation W2 contrasted the older experienced comrades with those younger troops who had come from an "easy life" background (W2:11). W2 pointed to eighteen-year-old kids from rich families or the city as the most likely to panic under fire unlike the thirty-year-old veteran. W2 was in his mid-twenties during the war.

The military was the eventual target of W2’s deprivation once the war was over. He voiced his frustration with Army life when turning down an easy guard duty in Japan and later at Fort Lewis in front of many other soldiers being discharged.
They made a big spiel about they want you to reenlist or join in the reserves. Oh, I walked out of there. I said, "Take me the hell out of this damn place![laugh] The other guy he walked too... I was sure glad that I did not join the reserves (W2:12).

After years of exposure to the elements and combat, W2’s sentiment of "having done his share" is not an alien expression among servicemen at the end of their enlistment. At Fort Lewis, W2’s buddy Sid followed his lead out of the reenlistment formation.

Relative Reward The dominant benefit that W2 recognized from his Army service was his comrades.

I met a lot of good people. They were all good, in my book. No prejudice. Nothing... Everybody was treated the same... People are closer together when you are in a [tight situation] (W2:24)...

Comrades were the only daily source of personal security W2 had to depend on over several years of combat. Any cultural or personal differences between soldiers during war either killed them or they were quickly forgotten.

He did point to the relatively large number of older men in his unit as a benefit.

I was single. I was twenty-four years old. Practically all the guys in my outfit were in their thirties... we used to really depend on a lot of them old guys because they had cool minds... had steady minds... . anyway I was glad when the war was over (W2:11).

Other than his personal abilities and the aid of his comrades, W2 directly attributes his avoidance of injury to his bundle. After being in many battles and ambushes, he
credits his going untouched to one of the most famous bundles among the Northern Plains tribes and the continuous prayers of relatives and neighbors while he was away at war.

I had old (noted Gro Ventre 18th century fighter’s) medicine pouch. My old Grand-dad gave it to me before he died. He told me it was old (man mentioned above’s) medicine bag. He had it hanging up down the hall. All this time that I was in the service, my old Dad, my old lady, and Garter Snake, she lived in the next field there, they used to pray for me (W2:19).

While W2 was not given the songs and ritual rights to this bundle, he believes that protective benefits were passed on to him.

Relative Association W2 identified joining the Montana National Guard as a chance at a job, but he saw enlistment as a national concern after Pearl Harbor was bombed. His combat stories are a selected memory of a painful past. His source of "good memories" come from the protection and survival he shared with the members of his unit.

When the word was out that there was going to be a Guard call-up, W2 said that no recruiters came to Fort Belknap because most people needed the employment (personal communication Nov. 11, 1995). W2 participated in General Marshall’s initial mobilization plan in the spring of 1940. He was in the 163rd Infantry (heavy weapons) in Harlem. The National Guard unit consisted of Anglo, African, and Native American men from the surrounding counties. The call-up was short lived and W2 was discharged.
After Pearl Harbor, W2’s reason for going back into the Army shifted from his economic need for Guard duty. He cites patriotism as the reason he reenlisted into the Army. He remarked, "... everybody was gone (to work and serve), and everybody was kind of patriotic at that time, and they all wanted to go. I went anyway (W2:1)..." When W2 joined the National Guard the depression was still on and finding work was the priority of most. Once the United States itself was attacked, W2’s attention changed from thinking about his own survival to that of his nation’s survival.

Because of traumas from his combat days W2 prefers to reflect only on the war in limited ways. "I haven’t talked much about my a... But I do just the funny parts... Comical things happened" (W2:24). In every combat story told by W2, all have some element of humor, especially irony.

One humorous story recounts his seeing a friend from Hays. W2 was not separated from his Hays friends while being stationed halfway around the world. Robert Morgan was in Company K and Buddy Campbell’s brother was in the same company as W2. W2 met with Robert Morgan after watching a movie on Guadalcanal. He commented, 'I told him, "Jesus Christ they must have really cleaned out Hays." "I did not think that you would be over here because you have a big family." (W2:3). Later on, Fort Saul was well defended with large US coastal guns mounted atop a large bluff; three times, W2’s unit was forced off the slope by the heavy guns.
While waiting on a road for air support to take out the guns at Fort Saul, W2 talked to Robert Morgan as K Company advanced toward the bluff.

"I want to tell you guys they run us off that hill about three times," I said. "Off this mountain" I said, "we have been waiting for air support." He said, "I know where we are going [up the mountain]." "Well, do not forget to duck," I said (W2:4).

Other than associating with his combat past through humor and irony, the strength of W2’s bond to his comrades is evident in the stories he tells. Just as every story has an element of humor or irony, his comrade stories have a particular structure. W2 leads most of his stories with the last name of a particular buddy or buddies. Referring to others by their last name only is a universal habit among servicemen because only last names are printed on uniform name tapes and plates. What defines W2’s comrade stories is that he leads with the name of the actors of the plot, where they were from and/or ethnicity, and then the event. He told twelve of these "comrade stories" in his interview.

Just as with W1, W2’s descriptions of comrades are minority ethnic inclusive. W2’s refers to the second scout at the ambush at Los Negros as, "Quintero, he was a Mexican, and he was thirty-six years-old (W2:4)." W2 related more with his older comrades since they were also from difficult backgrounds, but he includes himself as one of those who looked to the older veterans for direction. He identified Anglo comrades by name and their hometown.
Post-Service Experience

Relative Deprivation  W2 attributes the difficulty of living at Fort Belknap as positive experience that helped him cope with the deprivations of being a soldier in combat. He believes that the current Federal assistance at Fort Belknap has destroyed the Indians' motivation to go out and deal with the dominant society. W2 contrasts the community conditions in which he grew up to Fort Belknap's current federal aid dependency. Even after the war, W2 stated that he had to go out and work on ranches, in the oilfields, and for logging companies; he was not aware of any welfare option. Since W2 has invested his life in labor-intensive work, it is not likely that he would have opted for welfare should it have been available. W2 blames parents for not giving incentive to young Indians to go away from the reservation, to get an education, and find employment. Now trapped economically on the reservation because of his age, W2 resents the local attitude of unmotivated government dependance.

... young people they won't go from these reservations because they get this PA (Public Assistance) and all that stuff is free stuff... (W2:12). Yeah, we used to have to work for what we got (W2:13).

His background of work and independence has alienated him from the jobless and dependent state of the reservation.
Relative Dissociation The hardships and occupational independence that dominate W2’s life history are stark contrast to the relative ease and dependency of contemporary life in America. Two sources W2 distanced himself from were Fort Belknap adults’ increased dependency on Federal programs and the trend toward comfort in Army life. He summarized his frustrations with local acceptance of government paternalism with, "All I want is to get off this goddamn reservation. I want to be some place, any place other than here. I hate it here (W2:24)." W2 dissociated also with the Army’s conformaty to a more leasurly pace.

Nowadays, the Army has got it easy nowadays Christ they are home every little while. Christ, now these infantrymen do not even walk anymore. They ride in the airplane and trucks and everything. In my time we had to walk. Every morning we used to take twenty-five mile hike with a full field 60 pounds, besides your rifle (W2:24).

His rejection of current trends toward the "easy life" could be seen as jealousy for what he did not get in life. Yet, it is as much his disheartenment that cooping skills are lost when shortcuts are taken rather than dealing directly with problems.

Relative Reward The only recognition that W2 received from the local community when he returned was during The Boy’s opening of the Flat Pipe Bundle in honor of those who served in World War II (Fowler 1987:110). W2 and Elmer Main were selected as veteran representatives to smoke the pipe. W2 suspected that they were chosen because they were the
only two servicemen that knew Gros Ventre. W2 was instructed to go to the "big doings" by his father.

His part was simple, "you take three puffs, and you pray and make a wish (W2:17)." W2 had written some bad checks. He was worried about being sent to Deerlodge (Montana State prison). So, he prayed for some money to make up for the checks he had written. Within a few days of the bundle opening, W2 received a military dividend check in the mail; he paid off his checks. Years later, he asked Elmer for what he had prayed. Elmer responded, "I wished for education, and I got it too." W2 stated that,

After that I kind of believed in that, I kind of, I really believed in that Pipe. In them days you could not get any money for education here. By God, Elmer, he got it... (W2:18).

W2 claimed that he and Elmer were the only two living men to have truly smoked the Flatpipe. Properly opening the Flatpipe Bundle required procedural songs, prayers, and the retelling of each object's history.

W2 commented that The Boy forgot and missed certain procedures in the bundle opening. These errors were considered as contributing to the death of The Boy's son in a mining accident soon after the ceremony and his daughter's death much later, in 1950 (W2:19). W2 also attributes the recent transfer of the Flatpipe to an error that resulted in the former bundle caretaker's sudden ill health (W2:18).

The other honor W2 was given by a close White veteran neighbor who offered to pay for W2 and four of his drinking
buddies’ initiation dues if they would join the veterans’ post in Harlem. This honor backfired when the White bartender at the post would not serve these Indian veterans any alcohol. W2 and his friends left and never returned. W2 claimed that the Hays and Fort Belknap posts were formed to avoid the Indian alcohol ban.

W2 noticed that the reservation and peoples’ lives were changed for the better after he returned from the war. Both jobs and money were more available than before the war (W2:23). He never found employment within the Fort Belknap reservation system; instead, he found work on local ranches and in other states, including the Wyoming Arapahos’ Matador Ranch.

Relative Association  Hard work and personal struggles are valued by W2 since he has invested his life in doing both. Self-sufficiency and mobility are W2’s goals in life. To accomplish this he pursued a variety of jobs. Every job W2 took, including his Army service, was both labor-intensive and outdoors. After World War II, W2 continued the same work pattern that he had maintained before the war. Two differences were the jobs distances from home and the variety of the jobs he held.

Interpretations

W2 did not refer to his family background. He did not directly state that his father’s service as a scout in the
Army influenced his branch choice when he joined; however it should not be ruled out as a possible motive.

He repeatedly referred to himself as hard-working and capable of dealing with adversity. He linked these qualities to the challenges of growing up on a self-sufficient, resource-marginal reservation, to Indian Boarding School experience, and finally to the Army. While he never went to school beyond the high school level, he encouraged his own children to pursue education as their opportunity for personal success. His son has received his doctorate. W2 identifies Federal aid as eroding the very struggles on the reservation that challenged him to function successfully overseas and across the United States.

W2 has an emotional connection with the "old" Gros Ventre religion, and cultural events, while actively pursuing wage jobs across the western portion of the United States. This is an example of how self-identity can be simultaneously restrictive and inclusive in one's personal aspirations.
Case K1

K1 delivered a twenty-seven-page life history, but gave little attention to his pre-service experience only one and one-half transcribed pages. Most of this material deals directly with his personal debate on which branch of the military to join, and his struggles with his parents to allow him to leave home for the Air Force during the Korean War. Most of K1’s transcription, sixteen pages, pertains to his service experience, while nine and one-half pages contain material about his post-service life. From beginning to end, K1 closely followed a chronological sequence in his account.

Background

He is from a strong Catholic Gros Ventre/Assiniboine family. They lived in the Fort Belknap town area where K1 currently lives. Only K1’s sister and one brother did not serve in the military. One brother enlisted but was rejected because of a previous injury; K1 and his three other brothers served in the military. His Mother was an active organizer in the Fort Belknap chapter of the War Mothers. She helped to organize and raise money for the stone World War II monument at the Fort Belknap Tribal Council Building. The monument was dedicated to the local veterans killed during the war. She knew, from her neighbor’s grief, the loss of loved ones to war.
Pre-Servive Experience

Relative Deprivation K1's parents were against his joining the military. Instead they wanted him to go on to college after he finished high school. K1 did not consider himself as a very good student, but he saw the crucial factor in his not going to college as the lack of money (K1:17,2).

I just told them, "Pa you cannot afford to send me off to college, you have got a bunch of kids." ...he was just barely making it. It was something that I was going to have to go anyway because the situation (Korean War) was continued to grow. So I wanted to get away (K1:2).

K1's decision to join the military was an ideal option for him at the time given his limited resources and personal desires. He wanted to do his part for his country and "to get out and see the world," although he could better satisfy his parents' desire for him to attend college through the GI Bill than any other way.

Relative Dissociation K1 dissociated with most Indian parents' relative lack of education compared with his mother and father, the ethics of his draft registrar, and his parents' resistance to his leaving for the Air Force. K1 distanced his understanding of the "typical" reservation parent from his own. He characterized most reservation parents from his generation and before as not being very fluent in English. To K1, this limited parents' ability to know what was best for their children's future and how to
find the options that were available. He commented:

They did not know what was going on. So they did not realize the importance of college. When a situation (war) comes up you go. In his (K1’s World War II veteran friend) case when the war was on, there was no other way (K1:1).

K1 views education as offering better opportunities for anyone in any situation; however, he choose his own wish for excitement as the avenue for improving his education. K1 would join the military.

K1 did not care for the recruiting methods used by the Anglo draft board registrar in Chinook.

...he was always trying to talk all the Indian boys there on the reservation into enlistment... . You had to go see him to register for the draft... . I turned eighteen on the sixteenth and I was still in school. I said, "I have got five days." I went up there on the twenty-first. He gave me a little hell there. He said, "I thought you were going to be up here on the first day." You know all that red, white, and blue stuff... . So I said, "I will go when I want to go." I said, "You do not have to worry about me sliding out because I am going." See he wanted to make his sliding scale. He would not come right out and say that. We knew that. He did not say any more and I signed up (K1:2).

The draft registrar laid a patriotic "guilt trip" on draft enrollers to make himself look good for meeting or exceeding his quotas. K1 was not dissuaded from registering himself despite the obvious self-serving motives of this draft board member.

K1 stated, after the interview, that his parents were very proud of him for joining and serving in the Air Force. They resisted his decision only when he tried to join. His
parents dreaded to see him leave with the threat of losing him in the Korean War (K1 personal communication, September 17, 1995).

The Korean War was on at that time. They drafted the two guys out of our class, but they were two years older than the rest of us. I was seventeen when I was a senior. They were twenty-one already ... When I finished high school, I had a choice (K1:1).

K1 chose to volunteer for the military and participate in the same excitement and profession of which his peers were a part.

K1's father resisted his son's decision three times by promising to drive him to the recruiter's office in Havre and then being somewhere else at the appointed time. K1 caught onto his father's plan. K1 worked that summer for the road department, so he drove himself to the recruiter's office while picking up a part (K1:3).

I knew that my old man was never going to be there when it came time. I came back and I told him, "I am leaving next Thursday." He said, "What?" "Where are you going?" "I am going to Butte." "I have enlisted in the Air Force." He said, "Well, I will take you." I said, "No, don't worry Dad." "They are going to send me a ticket, and it should be here in a couple of days." "All I have to do is to get on a bus here in Harlem." He and ma got real quiet. They said nothing for the longest time. They did give me a ride over there. I said, "Thank you," and got on the bus (K1:3).

The tension between K1 and his father suggests that, although joining the Air Force offered him personal opportunities, the choice did not come without an emotional price.
Two aspects surface from Kl’s pre-service dissociations. The first is that Kl was better aware of his life options than his peers because of his parents’ English abilities. The other aspect is that once Kl decided which option he would take, he did not back down from it. Kl’s determination to join the military was quite strong considering the resistance of his parents. Kl’s detection of the unsavory tactics of the draft board registrar’s appeal to overt patriotism, attest to both his awareness and his presumption toward military service.

Relative Reward Kl believed that his parents prepared him well for life on his own, in spite of their limited income.

In my case we (also) came from a large family, but there was always that pressure (to go on to college) (Kl:1).... Mom and Dad were real strong disciplinarians. We had a real good family background, better than most kids. They were real strong-minded individuals. They really looked out for us (Kl:2).

Kl’s parents were fluent in English and knew the benefits of a good education for their children. Kl’s grandfather had been a janitor at Harlem High School. He lived with his son’s family. This grandfather was the family’s leading advocate for education in spite of his own limitations with English. His janitorial job at the school also allowed him to be one of few at Fort Belknap to receive a pension after he retired. His grandfather’s pension impressed Kl with the advantages of selecting a job that carried long-term
benefits (personal communication, Nov. 11, 1995).

Relative Association  K1’s branch choice decision was largely shaped by two friends. His first influence was his summertime softball partner who had been in the Navy. K1 told him he planned possibly to join the Marines after graduating (K1:2). He stated that his friend, "started cussing me out," "They live like dogs." "You do not want to join in that outfit." ... He said, "I have seen how they live" (K1:2). While his softball buddy dissuaded K1 from enlisting with a ground combat branch, it was his former schoolmate who directed him toward the Air Force.

One of my classmates quit school. It was February of '51, and he joined the Air Force... . I wrote him a letter telling him what I was going to... probably join the Army or the Marines. He wrote me back a letter giving me hell. He says, "Join the Air Force." I thought about it. "You will get some training if you go into the Air Force." "If you go into the Army or the Marines, you will not have any (occupational) background when you get out (K1:2)."

By signing up with the Air Force, K1 stood a potentially better chance of finding work after his military service days. While both friends heightened K1’s service branch knowledge, the poetintntual for better job training persuaded K1 away from his ground combat service pursuit. He told each friend that he was going into the Marines or Army when asked. K1 had even considered being a paratrooper, but wearing glasses prevented that (K1:2). By following his friends’ advice, K1 not only had a comfortable service experience but he spared himself from frontline hazards.
Service Experience

K1 enlisted in the Air Force in August 1951 and was honorably discharged on August 13, 1955. He was a SAC Air Base guard at Loring Air Force Base [AFB] and Maine and Kawaki AFB, Japan.

Relative Deprivation K1’s service-related deprivations stem mainly from his basic training. The one feature that stuck out in his mind was the cussing. He commented:

I had never been so cussed out in all my life. My old man was really a strong disciplinarian, so I was used to that. They really cussed us out. They just raised hell with us. That is just the way basic training is... . I would wake up the same way that I laid down there for a while for, about four or five weeks.... the mental part of it. I guess it was the cussing. I was not used to that damn cussing when that guy would stand right up next to your ear and cuss right into it..... I was expecting it, but I just did not expect it to be that constant(K1:5).... I had never heard that four letter word. That was one of them. I was not used to that. Mom did not allow us to cuss. Dad did not allow (K1:6) us to cuss. Boy, I never heard that damn word so damn much in my life in just a few minutes (K1:7).

While cussing was a shock to him, small errors in judgement could have painful consequences for him and his fellow recruits.

We were out in the field the night before. About some twenty some miles out there. They said, "Well, this is a speed march." That is the hardest thing that I ever went through was speed marching.... . we did not have to carry the pack that night. We had to carry our weapons. That was heavy enough that M-1 rifle. Oh, we did have a modified pack. It was not a real field pack (K1:7).... . I made a mistake. They march you like hell for about fifteen minutes. Now speed march is not running. You just march fast and you
hold it-- a real fast walk. That part did not bother me. I was holding on (K1:7) real good. What I made a mistake was I did not clean my socks out. We were out there in the sand. We got that break and I said, "Hell I ought to clean my socks off and get the sand out of them." I did not do that. Oh boy, that last hour or so I really felt it. I said, "Damnit I have made a mistake." My feet started getting sore from the sand. Most of us were that way. We had all made a mistake. We were afraid to take our shoes off because about that time they would say go again. That is what I was thinking was, "About time I get my shoes off their going to move us again." So I said, "Well, I will just rough it out (K1:8)."

Basic training is generally designed to bring individuals from various backgrounds down to a common level of equality. That level is ideally maintained so that trainees will learn to depend on each other, work as a unit, and know their place within the command structure. This level is reached by depriving the group of personal comforts. The greatest deprivation that K1 identified was the drill instructors' verbal abuse.

**Relative Dissociation** His exposure to social differences was broader in the military than the familiar characteristics of his home community. The military placed K1 in personal encounters he would otherwise avoid. K1's confrontation with each new experience defines who he is by what he values.

At that time I did not like the South at all. That was the worst place I could ever think of in my life. I would think, "What in the hell am I doing (here)." You could just feel the hatred down there... they did not bother me, but it was what I would see (K1:9) that was not right. Black and White, Black guys would go to town and they would just drop out of sight (K1:10).
The social stratification between Indians and Anglos around Fort Belknap was not as rigid as the institutionalized racism of the South in the early 1950’s.

A couple of hours later we got into Washington, D.C. that was the trashiest town I have ever seen. Well, maybe not as trashy as Augusta, Georgia, but it was just as bad right in within a few blocks of the National Capitol. I was really shocked. "Look at this." I did not expect this from studying American history and all of that (K1:10).

Kl’s response to District of Columbia slums shows how education can shape student political and social consciousness and expectations. Kl’s travels in the military exposed first-hand the nation he had before only imagined.

While Kl stated that he enjoyed both of his duty stations, the boredom of his job dissuaded him from reenlisting.

I got back from Japan in July of ‘55 and my discharge was due the thirtieth of August. I had less than thirty days, so they lined us up there. I think there were 3,500 guys on this ship. Most of us were getting out. They had another ship coming in, so they needed the space. They kept trying to get us to reenlist--for about a couple of weeks. I told them I would go if they would change my career field, but they would not do it. So, "I am not going to reenlist then (K1:1)."

His military occupation skill (MOS) as a SAC base guard required him to have a high-level security clearance. This clearance barred him from having another MOS(K1:17).

"I come from a large family." "It was a pretty good life to me." I said, "I want to switch." "I’m bored, that duty was too easy." "I want to be put in maybe armaments, taking care of weapons and so forth." The way it was then all I did was
fool around riding in the jeep... Then he told me, "We cannot do that... You have got a clearance." "It cost us money to clear you." ... You see they only issue orders for a secret clearance and nothing beyond that... Everybody at SAC is cleared for much higher than that. But I did not know that and they do not tell you... "All right, I will not reenlist then (K1:17)."

K1 joined the Air Force for excitement, to receive training that would be useful after his military service, for educational benefits, and to see the world. K1 saw parts of the United States and the Far East. Yet his confinement to a boring job with no prospect of training or change led him not to reenlist.

Relative Reward Two rewarding experiences for K1 during his service days were being allowed to choose his branch, and to travel. K1 considered himself at an advantage over other recruits because he was a high school graduate who had volunteered for service. This status allowed him a choice in the branch of service and some preference as to where he wanted to be stationed.

Before joining, K1 had debated which service branch would be the best for him. His final option came during his in-processing in Great Falls, Montana:

They said, "You have a chance here to change your mind if you want, or if you don't want to go into the Air Force, to go into the Army or something." Some guys were going into the Army. I found out that they were going for three years. See I was not sure that I was going for three or four. I was not paying attention. Then I found out that I was definitely (K1:4) going for four because I was going into the Air Force. "Geez, I do not know, four years is a long time." "Besides, I want to go to Korea anyway." I almost changed my mind
right there.... I looked at the orders and they already had my name on the orders, and I said, "Ah to hell with it." "I will just go into the Air Force (K1:5)."

K1’s personal desire to go where the action was, and the promise of a shorter tour, almost persuaded him to go against his Air Force friend’s advise. K1’s personal debate on his branch choice outlines how trivial life-long decisions were, based on the limitations of what he knew about each branch.

After basic training, K1 was given some choice where he would be initially stationed.

They asked me, "Where do you want to go?" I told them, "Well, I want to go to the Far East." I had joined for that. He said, "No, you are on the list to go to Germany." "You do not really have to go." They were giving us a little bit of a led way (K1:8)... . I fooled around and ended up not getting any choice because they kept telling me that, "Well, we have got a shipment going to the Far East." ... Finally they told me, "You are going to Maine, that is it," because I waited too long. Strategic Air Command, Limestone (Loring) Air Force Base, Maine (K1:9).

While K1 first choice of duty stations was not granted, K1’s delay did prevent him from working at two bases where he did not want to go.

The base selected for K1 contrasted with his motive of wanting "to get away" from his home (K1:2).

We got out there in about two feet of snow (laugh). I said, "Oh hell, I do not care for this." "This is where I came from." It was in a little town that did not have much more than what Harlem (MT) has got now (K1:12).

K1 did not receive his choice of duty stations at first, but
his second duty station in Nagoya, Japan exceeded his expectations.

I really had an easy tour. I had a good time. I was one of those guys that wanted to go over there and go to Korea. The guys that did not want to go over there got sent over there, and I got all the easy duty (Kl:14).

Kl considered himself lucky compared with those who faced the hardships of combat in Korea.

Travel was a primary reason that Kl joined the service. Air Force duty gave him access to this one personal aspiration. Kl gave more attention in the transcripts to his transfer trips than to his three and one-half years at air bases in Maine and Japan. His bus trip to Maine and his cruise from Japan dominate his travel narrative.

Relative Association While in the service, Kl continued to associate with combat oriented duties. He also found that an Italian-American buddy he met in basic training held similar social values and expectations about their nation. Yet, the Air Force experience removed Kl’s from combat and altered his understanding of the US.

Kl’s choice to follow his schoolmate’s advice to join the Air Force ended his chances of service in a ground combat unit. However, it did not end his own desire to be associated with an arms-related job in the Korean Theater (Kl:8,15). Ironically this personal motivation led Kl to an easy duty of guarding planes in peaceful Maine and Japan.
While he was in basic K1 found a buddy who would also share the same guard post at their first duty station. He described this friend as, "an Italian kid. We met going to church. He was from Los Angles, Metzabeno. He got sent with me. So him and I hung around together" (K1:9). Besides both being Catholic, both men, not from the South, had the same dissociation for the racially segregated customs in the South (K1:10).

She made sure that little kid went right straight to the rear of the bus. She stood there until he got right in the back, and you could see her eyes rolling. She was not comfortable at all. That made me feel funny as hell. Then she paid the bus driver. She went right straight to the rear. "Hell, this isn't right people living like this." Nick and I where just talking it over among ourselves. (To the) Southern people we did not say too much. I thought, "This is not right." I never did forget that (K1:10).

K1, and his buddy, took notice of the woman’s situation. Racial segregation on the level K1 saw in the south was still alien to him. Yet he associated not with the Anglo Americans but with the woman. K1 stated later that one bar in Harlem, Montana had a sign posted reading, "No dogs and no Indians." While K1 pointed out that this sign did not characterize Harlem, he no doubt empathized with the woman’s humiliation (personal communication November 11, 1995). Both Airmen’s view of southern racial segregation was imprinted by this first-hand observation.
Post-Service Experience

Relative Deprivation  Following his military discharge, Kl's greatest source of personal stress was work related. The marginal job conditions and bad weather convinced him to return to the Los Angeles area. His first layoff from a factory he where was working in California exposed him to the economically vulnerable nature of wage labor in private industry. Kl eventually left his blue-collar occupation for higher education and a professional government job. He had financial security while living close to home, but was exposed to ethnic discrimination for the first time in his life.

Kl's return home after the Air Force was met by marginal recognition by his community.

You just come home and that is all. People do not really care, just those in your immediate family. They are glad to see you and a few guys at the store that will shake hands with you and that is about it (Kl:17).

Like most Cold War veterans, Kl returned home alone. Since veterans were not returning home in groups, as they had at the end of World War II, the community incentive acknowledge was lessened. Yet the "traditional" public gatherings, where veterans would be recognized, lost popularity. Victory and Grass dances were in sharp decline at Fort Belknap during the 1950's and 60's. While Native Americans maintained a warm regard for veterans, the public gatherings
honoring veterans were seldom held. It was not until the early 1970's when powwows were on the rise that opportunity to honor veterans in public returned.

Once home, Kl still had no more chance of getting a job than before he left.

I went down to the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) to see if they had any jobs. "No, we do not have any jobs and so forth..." Every time that a guy would ask for a job there was nothing. At that time there was no Indian Preference in the BIA (not until 1974). All of the technical jobs (gives examples) were all filled by White people.... I did get a temporary job with the irrigation down there building irrigation headgates.... I got out (of the Air Force) in the middle of October. (That went on for) about a month and a half or so.... We were unloading creosote (Kl:17) lumber to build headgates and so forth. I had twenty-six weeks of unemployment coming. That was one of your fringe benefits of getting out of the service. I think it was twenty-six dollars too. You have to wait a certain period of time before you can get it.... I did not want to do it because it was twenty below that time.... work was hard to find just for two days... It was cold, dirty job, and heavy. You would just get soaked with all that oil. Goddamn, it was miserable (Kl:18).

Kl’s move back to California improved his job site conditions, but not job security.

It was the early January of ‘56. I ended up working down there for fifteen years. I worked in an aircraft plant North American Aviation. It was easy down there, but there was no real retirement and no real job security. Finally, after I got married, I left there. They would lay you off without any notice at all. I do not care how many years you worked there. I belonged to the union. They went by seniority. It was fair. Now there are no contracts down there. They can lay them off by the thousands. You would see guys cry and everything else. I said, "I do not want to live like this for the rest of my life. I said, "I had better get back home and start going back to
school." I made a mistake by not going to school. I did not go to school until late in life. That paid off. I should have done it a lot earlier (K1:18).

His parents' emphasis on education had not been a lesson lost to K1 until after his initial layoff.

I signed up for an airframe and power plant school at Northrop Aeronautical Institute. I probably would have finished except that I got laid off. When I got laid off, I did not have a job or anything. I really did not have the money saved up like I should have. I was not getting enough money to get by because I had a car and I had car payments and all that (K1:19).

The strain to meet his debts without wages or unemployment benefits drove K1 to briefly reconsider reenlistment in the Air Force. He stated:

I thought, "Gee, I should have stayed in the military." I almost reenlisted that time... that was the first time that I ever really experienced hard times. Before then, I always had my parents to take care of me through high school. The military took care of me. I always had an income and had a good life and never had to worry. Then I got laid off that time. I know what it is now. If I had lied to them, like a lot of guys did, if I had walked into that unemployment agency and told them that I was available full time for work, I would have gotten my unemployment. I could have kept on going to school... I guess I was trying to be too honest (K1:20).

In the civilian world K1 discovered he was responsible for himself. Friends and coworkers had offered advice, but decisions ultimately were his. He had seen the hassles of bureaucratic regulations from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the Department of Defense. Yet, while on his own, K1 learned that benefits come only from knowing and addressing the details of regulations attached to them. K1
eventually left factory labor for a professional future after seven layoffs and eight pay cuts in fifteen years (K1:20).

K1 solved his financial security problems with his shift to a professional career track in the Bureau of Land Management. Yet as a white-collar employee he later found discrimination from some of his key BIA bosses.

I went to the public school here in Harlem. At that time they had good teachers, much better than they do now. They were fair. I can't say that I ever felt any discrimination in school for twelve years. Then I went into the service. I can't really say that I ever felt any discrimination there... oh maybe a few minor little incidents. In California, they were fair down there. I went to work every day, I had a job so I worked at my job and everything was pretty much fair. I come back to the Bureau and they were advertising for some guys to go down to Glendive. I took a surveyor's course. I didn't have a job or nothing. I got out, got done. Well, I was the only guy that finished. I came back and then (name of BIA boss) says I do not have to hire you. Indian preference might not be legal. So this is in June of '73. So then he says, "I do not have to live up to that." "I have nothing to do with that program of sending you down there" (K1:24).

K1 had no problem with the first government job he found (K1:24). The irony for K1 was that it was at the height of his professional career when he encountered ethnic discrimination and unfair working conditions.

Yet his professional job opportunities were limited.

If you stop and think about it, there are not too many places that an Indian can work right now other than the government--with retirement and so forth. He really does not have much choice. There a lot of people who are not Indian that are in the same boat (K1:23).
Kl acknowledges that limited opportunities are a problem for Native Americans and the general population as well.

**Relative Dissociation** In the same way Kl left the Air Force, he dissociated several times from his living and working conditions. Kl’s life changes usually occurred when his job became too routine with no hope of changing, and work conditions became too harsh to continue. Both trends were major factors for him when he left Fort Belknap for California. Kl would probably have made this transition sooner if his unemployment check had arrived earlier. While his first layoff was his harshest, he found enough reward in the lifestyle and his work to maintain it for fifteen years.

The biggest career transition Kl made was when he finally left factory work in California and started college. This life change was prompted by the rising stress of the layoff routine on Kl’s growing family. The professional job market opened for him after he graduated. In the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), he was successful with a promotion every year for several years.

His transfer to the BIA from the BLM, gave him a new work experience and higher pay at first. Yet the new job’s routines became pronounced for him as he was passed for higher positions. While he was passed over for jobs he was qualified to do, Kl could not find alternative to replace his level of pay and benefits. He commented, "I am mad at the government in many ways." The only reason I went to
work for the government was because there was nothing else here" (K1:24). K1’s anger primarily stems from the discriminatory attitudes and unfair working conditions he encountered while working for the BIA. He conveyed his frustrations to his kids. K1 said:

I told them, "I do not want either one of you working for the BIA. I want you to go out and learn how to work" (K1:21).

The BIA was a contradiction for K1 between his success as a white-collar employee and the compromises to fairness he had previously taken for granted.

K1’s occupational opinions were largely shaped by the ethnic compromises and struggles he had to put up with while employed at the BIA. These opinions rely less on group loyalty and more on self-enhancement through education. This direction is evident in a lecture he gave his son. K1 stated:

"(son’s name) you are not going into the military. The first thing that you are going to do is that you are going to get an education." I said, "Because this world is not fair." "When they talk about red, white, and blue, and when that trumpet blows you answer a command." I said, "You are not going to listen to that crap." I said, "You are going to go out there and you are going to do like one of these guys all the big wheels down there (BIA office) (K1:22).

The bosses that K1 struggled against while working at the BIA became his examples of control and independence.

While K1’s job changes never led to anything he could define as fulfilling a personal calling, each transition put him consistently in a better financial secure position
(personal communication Nov 1, 1995). The lessons K1 learned from work, he passed on to both his children.

**Relative Reward** K1 identified the rewards of his post-service life in terms of the benefits he got from the different jobs he held. K1 enjoyed both spare time and money while he was in transition from Air Force to the civilian job world.

> I had never ever had any real freedom in my life from school, to the military, and I am just going to loaf and do what I can all day for a couple of weeks. I did. I had some relatives down in Los Angeles. I got on the bus and went down there. I loafed around there for a while. I went to a football game and watched the Rams play an expedition game. I went to the Vikes. I just threw around all the local sites down there (K1:16).

K1 followed his relatives’ lead by doing factory work.

Other than the life style advantages that he enjoyed, K1 also found value in the fairness of industrial labor. The time-clock system at his plant developed a strong sense of personal responsibility in him.

> That is one good thing about working out there in private industry--the private sector--you learn how to work. Yeah, you work by the whistle and you work... You used a time card. There was no argument. There was no way out for you. There was no politics. If you punched in late, there was nobody there to take up for you or anything like that. You were late (K1:21).

K1 eventually tired of the insecurity and began taking full advantage of his military benefits. The GI Bill for education was what helped him through a four-year degree, a two-year technical degree, and additional job training.
that GI Bill was a godsend. I still use it--like a couple of years ago... I signed up for a computer class at Northern Montana College. I think the class started at some three hundred dollars, by the time I got all my veterans' papers in there and everything, it was only twenty-one dollars (K1:1).

K1's first application for a federal job for the Bureau of Land Management was a quick success for him because of his new educational and Veterans' Preference status.

I got in as a GS5 after six years of college. I went to Glendive for two years. I got a two-year degree in civil technology... They wanted somebody to go down and to train as a surveyor. I was a highway surveyor. I had six years with a four-year degree from Missoula in sociology, and a five-point veterans' preference. I was in the Korean area when they gave me five points for (combat theater). I was the only veteran and college graduate that had (K1:21) applied. I just got in at a lucky time when there were not that many people that applied for the job (K1:22).

While his Veterans' Preference aided him to get the BLM job, his skill qualifications earned him the job.

I called Helena. That was the quickest I ever got a job. I did not have any problems at all.... It was a Federal Job Center. I called them up and in forty-five (K1:24) minutes, I had a job. They did not ask me what I was whether I was a male or female or anything. I just told them, "I just graduated from Joslen College with a two-year degree in Civil Engineering" (K1:25).

Not only did K1 land the BLM position because of education, but he rose rapidly because of his ability to do his job. He remarks, "... but I got in as a five; second year I was a seven; third year I was a nine; and my fourth year I was a eleven" (K1:22).

Fairness was the consistent quality K1 admired about
his factory labor and BLM job. While personal responsibility was a rewarding lesson he gained from being held accountable by a time-clock, it was the credit the BLM gave him for his abilities, rather than ethnicity or sex, that gave him greater rewards. One benefit was the financial security he gained through higher pay and a pension. He fulfilled the pension advantages that his grandfather had also enjoyed after his retirement.

Relative Association Following his discharge from the Air Force, K1 debated what he would do with his life. He was better aware of his job and educational options than before. He explored the diversity of urban living while staying with his relatives in Los Angles.

They were all working down there in the aircraft plant. That is where I ended up working at. I thought, "Well, I suppose they (relatives) are living pretty good." "They get paid every week (K1:16), which is a lot better than the reservation." It was nice warm country. Boy, I liked it. I said, "Well, if things get bad or I do not reenlist or go to college next month (I will work here)." I enlisted so that I could go to college, and I decided that is not what I wanted to do... "I am not a good student"(K1:17).

While working at a plant in California, K1 attended Northrop Aeronautical Institute. The school specialized in airframe and power plant training. He enrolled in hopes of landing a job as an aircraft mechanic with an international airline company. He was impressed by the mechanics' international lifestyle and skill. K1 first met these men while stationed in Japan. K1 recognized this profession as
suited for himself. He stated, "Boy, this is a good life." I said, "Well, I guess that is what I will shoot for." ... Fly around and enjoy the world for a while" (Kl:19). Again, Kl's search for travel and technical training motivated him to go back to school while holding down a job. Midway through his training Kl was laid off and subsequently had to quit Northrup.

While the layoffs were one of the greatest stresses he ever experienced, Kl did learn lessons in personal responsibility and independence.

I just did not go back (to Northrop). That is my own fault. I cannot blame anybody. I cannot point fingers at anybody because it is there (points at self). Somebody said, "You cannot blame the country because you can do it." It is up to you. That is (Kl:20) the way I taught my kids. I said, "I made my mistakes and I do not want you to make those mistakes." I said, "I did not listen to my parents, but you are going to listen to me." So they both graduated from college. My son graduated from Humboldt State in California. He is a wildlife biologist now. He is a GS-9 making twenty-seven thousand dollars a year now. He has a professional status with the Forest Service. My daughter, she went to Hawaii (Kl:21).

He passed the lessons he learned on to his two children who both succeeded early in life because of their father's guidance.

Kl did advise his son not to go into the military, yet he does not dissociate from veteran organizations and activities. He is enrolled in the local American Legion Post 110 where he participates in the 110 color guard.

(Milk River Days powwow) It looks real nice. It
does look impressive when you get out there and so forth. You have got your uniforms on, or remnants of your uniform, American Legion hats and so forth, war bonnets. It does look good. I will say one thing for Indian people. They do recognize their veterans. They do recognize and honor their veterans and most people do not (K1:25).

K1 missed any public recognition when he returned home from service. His participation makes up for that gap in his life and insures that future veterans will not be forgotten. K1 does his part to honor other veterans also through his writing (K1:26). K1 continues to try to memorialize all veterans who would otherwise be overlooked and forgotten.

**Interpretations**

K1’s stated goal to "see the world a bit," is a theme that is often repeated in his interview. Travel and finding new experiences are K1’s callings. Although K1 has a great interest in military history and his fellow veterans, being in the service was never an end unto itself for him. He used the military as a means to achieving his personal objectives.

Two struggles K1 identified were joining the Air Force against his parents’ wishes and finding a stable job after his discharge from the Air Force. K1 identified both struggles as directing and motivating him to find a balance between personal freedom and financial security. Ironically, higher education was the path his parents had long urged him to pursue.
Kl’s parents and grandparents pressed their son to get as much education as possible. In the wake of World War II and the eve of the Korean War, Kl developed his own ideas about seeking out a combat oriented future. He listened to his friends’ advise against his combat focus. In turn, Kl had an easy tour of duty. The Air Force did not give him the training he could use to find civilian employment later. However, his service contacts with a wide range of people and places broadened his personal appreciation of the world and lifestyle opportunities. The GI Bill later allowed Kl’s to earn two college degrees which, in turn, allowed him to hold a stable professional job with benefits and higher pay.

Ultimately, Kl’s struggles to live at home among family and friends, have a college degree, draw a pension, and be able to travel were accomplished because of his military service. Yet he no longer considers the submissive nature of military service to be an advantage. Kl oriented his children to pursue higher education. While he realized the rewards of professional employment late in life, both his kids have experienced the same success and independence earlier in life than he did. Kl continues to participate in American Legion Post 110, march on that Post’s color guard, and promote the memory of Native American veterans through writing and displays.
Case K2

K2 delivered a five-page life history. This was the briefest interview of the entire study. K2 gave only a few sentences about his pre-service life. His service experience was transcribed to only a page and one-half. K2 devoted most of his life history to post-service experiences. This is particularly true for K2's concern for the current political situation of veterans at Fort Belknap. The three and one-half pages of K2’s post-service stories are primarily directed at his fellow veterans, especially on the decline of respect and privileges for veterans, nationally and locally.

Background

K2’s mother is a Gros Ventre/Assinibone, born and raised in Hays. He was born November 8, 1941 at the Fort Belknap Hospital where he is currently employed. His father was Sioux/Assinibone from the Fort Peck Reservation (K2:2).

Pre-Servive Experience

Relative Association K2’s statements regarding his pre-service life are too brief to distinguish deprivation, dissociation, or reward. He does reveal a strong link between his joining the military and his family.

It was almost expected of me to go into the military. All of my--I had four uncles killed in World War II. I had one surviving aunt and my dad survived World War II, but I had four uncles who
were killed in World War II ... My father died December of 1965. He did not die in the military. My dad was in the Army and (later) the Navy (as is K2) (K2:2).

The loss of the four uncles during World War II created a powerful emotional link to the military for his family. K2 grew up with a sense of loss punctuated by each uncle’s personal dedication and investment toward their nation. Their example of sacrifice directly placed before him four role models to live up to.

K2’s eagerness to "fill his uncles’ shoes" can be seen in his volunteering for the Navy when he turned enlistment age, rather than waiting until after graduation from high school (K2:2).

Service Experience

K2’s quitting school to join the Navy was not because he lacked ability or motivation in academics. He earned his GED through the Navy at his first permanent duty station. This accomplishment was followed by his taking a Naval electronic training that had value in the civilian job market. K2 finished a six-month electronics school for his Navy MOS (K2:2).

Relative Deprivation K2 recalled going to general quarters during the Cuban Missile Crisis as the closest he ever came to combat. The detection of a Soviet Attack Submarine tracking his destroyer triggered this alert.

I was stationed on the USS James C. Owens, a World
War II destroyer. We were down in the Cuban Crisis... The closest I came to combat in the military was going to general quarters in the Red Sea. That is a funny feeling, being trailed by a Russian submarine. We found out by intelligence reports that we were being trailed by a Russian submarine during the Cuban Crisis. We did not even know it was there because they were so deep and silent. We did not know. If something had of happened, they would have blown us out of the water and we would have never known it was there (K2:1).

While K2 does not mention his training, he does mention the one situation in which he could have been killed.

Relative Dissociation The military was not sensitive to identifying particular ethnic and racial groups. Nevertheless, K2 found his own way of distinguishing himself from the established norm.

There was not even a slot on my enlistment form for American Indian. It had "other." I was "other."... There was no such thing as American Indian in the military. When they asked me if I spoke any foreign languages fluently I put down "Indian" (K2:5).

While K2 has identified himself ethnically as Assinibone/Gros Ventre/Sioux, when he refers to himself to the military he generalizes his ethnic background as Indian. In an organization where few racial types were acknowledged on enlistment forms, K2 selected a different, though less cumbersome, label for himself.

Relative Reward K2 enjoyed the military and considered it a good life. He defines his personal rewards as dealing daily with an array of people in faraway places. These rewarding experiences, while sometimes funny, ultimately
expanded his social skills and his view of the world. Besides the training and good pay, K2 was recognized as a serviceman and respected accordingly by the American public.

K2 saw the rewards of this "good life" as directly linked to its deprivations. He considered every serviceman to have matured often from the struggles of military life.

It brings out the best in them, in most people. It gets them away from mommy and daddy, so they can see the real world. It gives them a different outlook on life. It exposes them to different people than they would ordinarily not be exposed to. It helps you to mix better with people (K2:1).

K2 acknowledges that the military expanded his ability to interact with a wider social range of people.

K2’s exposure to diverse cultures and areas of the world was just as memorable to him as the background diversity of his fellow sailors. The traveling he did while in the Navy was a rare opportunity in his life.

You get to see places in the world that you would never be able to afford. I was in Beirut, Lebanon; Karachi, Pakistan; Machina and Naples, Italy; Rolla, Spain. We were in the northern North Atlantic and all over the Red Sea. I have seen Haden, Africa... We were along the coast of Africa (K2:1).

Having worked his way across two oceans, two seas, toured ports of two continents, and viewed another, K2’s Navy duty broadened his world knowledge. Part of what made the Navy a "good life" for K2 can be seen in two humorous episodes in two faraway locations.

We did not get to go ashore when we were in Africa. In one place our Captain went ashore and
he met and offended a sheik. He became
overbearing with a sheik. The Royal Marines,
English Marines, escorted him back to the ship
(laugh).... . We lost our anchor in Haden.... .
We got under way without pulling our anchor up and
lost our anchor (laugh)(K2:1).

K2 reflects on his cruise as an exotic experience not
without its comedy of errors. The rewards of service were
not limited to his duty overseas.

During the time that I was in the service, the
military was still pretty well accepted from '60
to '64. I even hitch-hiked in my Navy uniform.
I did not have to stand on the road very long. I
was treated very well anywhere that I went (K2:3).

K2's hitchhiking experience shows the strength of the United
States imagined community before the Vietnam War. Complete
strangers trusted K2 enough to give him a ride in their
vehicles. This open trust response was based, in part, on
the uniform K2 was wearing.

Relative Association  K2 did not directly refer to any
personal service associations in his narrative other than
his obvious regard for military service. His references to
his service experiences were always given as "we" (K2:1).
This inclusive acknowledgment may be expected of sailors
since most external events to the ship involve the crew as a
whole.

Post-Service Experience

Relative Deprivation  K2's reference to his post-
service life lacked any sign of personal problems. The
problems K2 identified were for his fellow veterans, particularly Vietnam veterans.

I never noticed ill treatment to veterans on an Indian reservation. During Vietnam or anytime. Indians always treat their veterans with respect. This is changing (K2:3). There is resentment among some younger generation. There are a lot of non-veterans who are getting into positions of power that were formerly held by veterans. They are either ignoring Veteran’s Preference laws or bureaucratically out-maneuvering them. Post 110 submitted a letter to the tribal council quoting government regulations requiring hiring practices. We were not even given the courtesy of a response... (K2:4).

While the negative reaction to US service personnel during and after Vietnam was not publicly an issue at Fort Belknap Reservation, those that did not serve took advantage of the political vacuum at home.

When I was in the service there were still a lot of World War II veterans who were still in their prime. They have all retired or they have all died. There is a void of veterans in the power structure. The veterans are suffering because of it (K2:4)... While the Vietnam veteran was away, the non-veteran upgraded himself to a position of authority. Is now using his position of authority to countermand federal regulations to by-pass the hiring quotas on veterans in any way that they can (K2:5).

K2 plans to enter tribal politics to curb the loss of veterans on the Fort Belknap Tribal Council.

I have talked to a lot of veterans. One of the things I plan on doing is giving up my job, getting on the council, and getting a Veterans Advisory Board. The Fort Peck Reservation has a Veterans Advisory Board. The Blackfeet Reservation has a Veterans Advisory Board that is chartered by the tribal council. That is what needs to be done on the Fort Belknap Reservation otherwise the veteran will be further discriminated against (K2:5).
K2 lists the veterans who were serving on the Port Belknap Tribal Council at the time of the interview.

John Capture is a veteran of World War II. Lyman Young was in the Army during the Korean War. Grant Cochran is a Vietnam veteran. Three out of twelve on the council. Oh, that is four. John "Woody" Allen Sr. is World War II isn't he? So that is one third of the council is composed of veterans, where as ten years ago it was probably at least 90 percent (K2:4).

Although the dominance of World War II veterans on the council has greatly declined over the years, they still are the majority among the veterans on the council. K2 stated that the Vietnam veterans were slow to step into leadership positions because of the social stigma they had when they returned. It appears that this trend is true for Cold War veterans in general at Fort Belknap from appearance of their numbers on the council.

**Relative Dissociation** K2 lived in California from 1965 to '72. He was distressed at how GI's were mistreated by, what he terms, "the hippies and by the establishment" (K2:3).

K2’s dissociation from federal Affirmative Action program for minorities and women is based on the earned privileges of veterans. K2 disagrees with giving job preference to those who are marginalized over those veterans that have personally sacrificed for the nation’s benefit.

**Relative Reward** K2 never used the GI Bill for education or house loans or any other veterans’ programs. Veteran’s Preference has helped him to get jobs (K2:2); he was employed by the Fort Belknap Hospital.
Relative Association  Unlike the other contributors, K2 maintained his military service through the National Guard and an association and support of his fellow veterans through Post 110. K2 explained his associations during his post-service life as, "involved heavily with the American Legion and the National Guard" (K2:3). Although he is on active-duty status during his annual two-week training, on weekend drills, and additional training, his Guard duty is considered here as a post-service experience, since he is not on full time active-duty.

Right now I am in the Montana National Guard, E Troop of the 163rd Armored Cav. I am a communications Sergeant and a scout for them ... I have one year to go to retire to get my twenty-year letter. My tour of duty expires in 1996. My enlistment expires in 1996 (K2:2).

K2 tries to compensate for the social fallout to which Vietnam veterans have been victims. He commented:

A lot of the Vietnam veterans, because of the shame that was put on them by our country, are still ashamed to be involved in veterans' affairs. But they are changing. So I have been carrying the flag waiting for them. When they come back, I'll step aside. I do a lot of veterans things, and I always make sure that the American Flag is carried by a combat veteran. If there are four combat veterans there, I will step aside and let them do the grand entry because I'm just there (K2:4).

While K2 helps where he can, he is mindful of respecting those whose sacrifice was greater than his in their military service.

He comments that the military enabled one to "mix better with people." K2 proved his own relative open-
mindedness when referring to the most sensitive issue among veterans, homosexuals in the military.

... by acknowledging that they are in the military and by putting restrictions on them so that they do not impose their lifestyle on anyone else. It is just the same as religion. Somebody from another religion does not try to tell me how I should worship or have sex. If they strictly control it, they have always been there anyway. Why not legalize it (K2:5).

K2’s pragmatic approach toward gay servicemen reflects his inclusive view toward all people who have served their country in the military. A veteran is a veteran to K2. The only priority he gives is the deserved respect for combat veterans.

Interpretations

K2 grew up in the shadow of World War II. His uncles’ death in combat and the service of his father oriented him to a military future. The close ties and persuasive nature of his family are further shown in K2’s choice of military branches. His father’s career in both the Army and Navy is matched by K2’s active duty in the Navy and long enlistment in the Montana Army National Guard.

K2 has invested most of his life in the military. It has become a calling for him. This is reflected in his continued involvement in veteran organizations and concern for veteran issues on and off the reservation. While his interview was brief, every page reveals a consistent
positive association and pride that K2 holds for the military and his fellow veterans regardless of their ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. K2 does not politicize the differences among veterans, yet he discriminates respect for combat veterans above all other veteran types.

His service memories hinge on his travel and the deprivation of going to general quarters during the Cuban Missile Crisis. While K2 was not a combat veteran, he does not dwell on the deprivations of his basic training. This may be explained by his prolonged service in the military. However, K2 mentioned briefly that he is in the National Guard. His primary concerns are maintaining veteran benefits and public honorings.
Case VI

VI’s fifteen page life story contains one page about his pre-service experience, nine pages of his service experience, and five pages about his post-service experience.

Background

His mother was employed as a factory worker in Seattle, Washington during World War II. She returned after the war to Fort Belknap with VI. There he grew up in his grandmother’s home.

Pre-Servive Experience

Relative Deprivation The lack of resources and occupational opportunity at Fort Belknap had a direct impact on VI’s decision to join the military. These conditions also fueled his own pessimistic attitude.

VI had been influenced early by his uncles’ military service, honors given to veterans during dances at Fort Belknap, the movies, and even playing war as a child (V1:3). Yet he chose additional schooling instead of military service at first.

I knew that I had to finish school or have some type of schooling. I really did not elect to go into the military right after high school because I was only seventeen years old. I graduated in May of ’63. I would not turn eighteen until October. By then I had already had plans made to go away to school at Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas (V1:3).
Even after receiving his technical degree from Haskell, V1 doubted his ability to succeed because he lacked money to establish himself. He found a way out of his dilemma through the advice of two dorm attendants.

The reason I elected to go into the Marine Corps was because two of the guys that worked in the dormitory, dorm attendants, were former Marines. They talked highly of the Marine Corps. I also knew that the Marine Corps had a two-year program. I did not think that I could stay in the military for three years or four years, so I figured I would try two years. And, if I wanted to stay in longer, I could (V1:3).

V1’s branch selection reflects not a highly motivated decision, but a hesitant choice. When V1 is finally persuaded to join the Marines, his choice reflects his own lack of self-confidence. He selects the Marines because of their short enlistment period.

In spite of V1’s many childhood military influences, the ultimate reason he cited for joining the military was a need for money and his own pessimistic attitude toward finding a job.

After I did my two and a half years in Lawrence, Kansas, I could have gone to San Francisco to work like many of my classmates did when they finished school there. I did not have the money to go out on a job, to get an apartment, to buy the clothes that I needed. So, around October 1965 I went down to talk to a recruiter (V1:3).

V1 chose military service, an option that had long preoccupied his attention.

**Relative Dissociation** The only dissociation V1 acknowledged before he joined the Marines was electing not
to attempt civilian employment with his Haskell degree.

Relative Reward V1 recognized that his childhood social environment helped him to deal with personal challenges without falling into trouble.

I felt I had some values and morals before I left, and because of that I did not fall into the trap that a lot of younger soldiers did. I thought that because I was raised on a reservation that I had Indian values inside me. I knew what was right. I knew what was wrong. I knew when there was trouble, how I could get into trouble, and how to stay away from trouble… I did booze before I joined the service. But, I always stayed away from the other stuff. (V1:14).

The values that V1 grew up with were enforced by a supportive family that prayed for him while he was away.

... when I did go over there. My father gave me a beaded thing. He did not tell me what was in the middle of it, but it was my protection. He said, "This is going to bring you home." He said, "Put this in your pocket." He said, "When you comeback, I want you to give it to me." And, so I did. I had that in my pocket all of the time (V1:14).

During his military service, V1 carried a physical reminder of his relatives' love for him, who he was, and hope.

Relative Association V1 had a strong attachment to all things military when he was a child.

At the time (1950’s) they had movies. And I always liked to go to movies when there were war pictures. Even though I always like to go to those types of movies, I used to wake up with nightmares about them. Being attacked, things like this. And as kids we use to play war (V1:3).

Although V1 suffered from nightmares, he continued to act out the military theme presented at the movies.

The Cold War world he lived in echoed not only at the
movies, but inside his home and through community events. Yet the mementos and pictures of servicemen relatives in his home had a direct influence on him.

My first inclination to be apart of military service was when I was a young boy living with my grandmother. I had seen pictures in our home of my uncles with their uniforms. I had always admired their pictures in their uniforms (V1:3).

While the movies were abstract representations of the military, his relative's uniform jacket offered a tangible object for him to associate to the military.

I remember going to see servicemen in uniform being honored by the Indian people at the Indian dances. And, how great an honor it was for a person in a military uniform to serve their country. When my uncle came home on military leave, he had a uniform, and I always admired that. I used to take his patches, and sew them on my coats. And, go to school with them on. And, pretend like I was in the military. I had always wanted a tan jacket because it matched the tan khaki uniform that my uncle wore... I know I was in the third grade (V1:3).

Movies, service photos, veteran honoring ceremonies, and his uncle's uniform jacket all were childhood military influences on V1. He actively identified, at an early age, with the military influences around him.

**Service Experience**

**Relative Deprivation** Fear was one of the few deprivations that he acknowledged experiencing during the war.

I've been in fear. I've been under stress. I really did live in fear when I was in Vietnam, daily. My biggest fear was stepping on a mine.
Coming home crippled, blind, loss of a leg or a limb (VI:14).

The nature of VI’s duties did not place him far from the comforts of base life.

I was very fortunate. I did not know that I was because I was scared shitless when we did get hit with rockets, and that metal was flying all over. There was nothing that you could do anyway. You would hear those sirens going off, you would run to your bunkers, and wait (VI:14).

The guard and clerical jobs VI had kept him away from heavy combat areas, but it did not isolate him from surprise assaults.

Relative Dissociation VI clearly dissociated with the low morality of many US troops while he was in basic training and in Vietnam.

Later on a couple of guys came by and picked us up in a jeep. We went through downtown Di Nang. I noticed that the people that picked us up were being real mean to the Vietnamese. They kicked them. The traffic was real crowded. The Vietnamese were on bikes and motorscooters. They kicked these people and kids calling them "zipper heads" and "gooks." It was kind of shocking to me that we were over there to help them, yet we treat them like that (VI:5).

Some Marines were just as abusive to themselves.

A lot of guys got hooked on drugs... It was real sad. You could see that some of the young American soldiers lost all of there morals. They were just different people. They just did not give a shit... They did not care what they did. They did not care about authority. They did not even care if they got sent to the brig or not. They just wanted to go home. There was no way that they could go home because they had to serve their time, just like everyone else. Some of those guys were trying every way possible to find a way to get out (VI:9).
While many of his fellow Marines did not adjust to the deprivations of the Vietnam War, V1 was able to maintain his own respect for himself and others. This fact can be seen in his description of those young Marines who did not.

**Relative Reward** V1 noted several benefits from having served in the Marines. He listed both material and intrinsic values; wages, the GI Bill, and Veterans' Preference were material advantages. V1 went into the Marines with a positive attitude toward serving his country and finding a source of income to meet his basic needs. Even after graduating from Haskell Institute, V1 saw the military as his only real economic source in contrast to his classmates going to the city for jobs (V1:3). Military service was the only frame of reference that V1 saw himself as succeeding at, his relatives had, so the possibility was there for him also.

The Marines promoted V1's confidence in his own abilities, and he summarized his service experience as a positive influence on his life.

I felt that because of the experiences that I have had in the service, and the training that was offered, I've been able to handle a lot of things in my lifetime. Well, you have to have the mental stability to cope with everyday life. To cope with the problems you face every day with your children, with your family, with the people that you work with. I feel that it helped me with leadership skills. I feel that I have accomplished something. I am proud that I served my time. I served my country. I feel proud that I did my time with the Marine Corps. I am very proud of that. I got to see many places. I got to be around a lot of different races of people.
I have learned from those experiences ... I got to see a lot of country. I got to see a lot of the United States. And, it was a different experience being in a foreign country and to appreciate their culture (VI:14).

**Relative Association** VI identified two personal associations and two group-based associations that he maintained while in the service. His personal associations were with four Native American buddies and his commanding officer. His group-based associations were directed toward Vietnamese peasants and his fellow Marine.

When VI referred to his closest associations, he asserted:

I have good memories. I always think of my friends. There were a few other Indians that were stationed close to where I was. We used to often get together because we had something in common. A Navaho guy, a guy from Minnesota, a Chippewa, a guy from Browning, a guy from Oklahoma we could get together and talk about things that were common to us. Just to make it another week or another month. Some of the guys are dead now because they did a lot of drinking. I did a lot of drinking (VI:14).

Another important affiliation was his commanding officer (CO). In contrast to the drinking VI did with his buddies, church was the activity shared by him and his CO.

... an older guy, a Captain Ransen from North Carolina was the commanding officer for me. He looked out for me. He made a warrant officer out of me. He took a special interest in me, I think because I was a Native American, and because he would see me at church. I used to go to church. He always made sure that he came by on his way to church. We went to church together (VI:5). He took an interest in me. He protected me (VI:14).

VI found refuge in the assistance offered by his offered by
his commander. A promotion in rank and a skilled job that reflected V1's office skills were two direct advantages of his friendship with his superior.

He empathized with the extreme poverty of the common Vietnamese peasants from his own reservation life. Yet V1 also noted the greater extent of deprivation among the Vietnamese people. He stated:

I felt sorry for them... . I could see the poverty in our people after being around the poverty that they had. They had more poverty. The medical field in Vietnam, especially after the United States left maybe even before, it was limited (V1:15).

V1 could identify with the Vietnamese poor relative to his own people. However, his comparison did not equate Fort Belknap's lack of resources with the extreme marginalization of the Vietnamese.

When we would go to the dump ground to empty trash, the dump grounds used to be covered with Vietnamese people waiting for trash. They lived off the trash that was hauled there. It was a wonder that they did not get run over when we pulled in there. They were on your truck fighting over the garbage (V1:9).

V1 acted on the empathy he felt toward the Vietnamese.

I guess that I got along with the Vietnamese people, or I thought I did. I had a feeling for them. The people that worked in our area, when they would get abused by the soldiers, the other Marines, they would make their complaints to me. Because they felt that I was close to them, or that I could tell the right guy. Some of them were abused. The guys abused them (V1:8).

V1's efforts to undo the wrongs of his fellow Marines was a bold statement. V1 placed his own ethics above his identity
with some Marines. In this way, V1 did not compromise the Marine he was for behavior that was below standard.

While he lacked self-confidence in his civilian job skills, V1 practiced his convictions. The bad behavior of some in Vietnam did not shake V1’s confidence in the ability of his fellow Marine.

There were a lot of things that went on that do not come out. A lot of corruption ... the South Vietnamese soldiers, they would steal from you. Some of these guys (GIs) that would get mad at the Vietnamese people, I suppose that is why those guys would kick them and do things to them. But, it was not all of them (V1:15). The thing about it is that you believe in your fellow Marine because you know he has had the same type training as you. That he is capable ... that is the good part of it. You have all shot the machine gun. You have all shot the rocket launcher... we all had to do that, to be basic infantrymen. I don’t care what kind of job you have. You have to go through that training cycle all of the time. You have to keep up on that stuff. I guess it is trust. You believe it, you believe that your buddy will help you out. The odds may be against you, but you believe that you’re going to do it (V1:16).

Robert Burnette (Lakota) echoed a similar Marine association in his book The Tortured Americans. His Marine Corps experience changed Mr. Burnette’s anger toward whites. He stated that:

Esprit de corps, a war to fight, ... overshadowed my hate, and I soon became fast friends with young white men from all over the country.... We endured hardships together and enjoyed ourselves together, and by the war’s end I had learned that each man must be judged as an individual (Burnette 1971:28).

V1 referred to his Marine past as a positive source for depending on others to accomplish objectives. He commented:
It is just like now, with leadership, you can do it... It makes you believe in yourself. That you've done it before, you've got the worst part over with. You don't let it get to you mentally. You've already gone through all of that. They have broken you down. You know that you can do it (VI:16).

The Marines’ core training goal is to instill esprit de corps or a sense of group unity in every member. Success in training became a source of confidence for VI in his Marine comrades and himself.

I'm small and people think that you had to be crazy to join that outfit... I knew some other people that were already in there. I figured I could make it if they could make it. I've had trouble with the obstacle course climbing the wall because I was shorter than most the other guys. I had to climb up these walls with a pack on. I could barely make it (VI:13).

An ideal of group training is that the accomplishments of some motivate others to do tasks they would usually avoid.

In spite of the fear and other stresses, VI had while in Vietnam, he reflects positively on his military experience and his identity as a Marine.

I feel that it helped me with leadership skills. I feel that I have accomplished something. I feel proud. I am proud that I served my time. I served my country. I feel proud that I did my time with the Marine Corps. I am very proud of that. I got to see many places. I got to be around a lot of different races of people. I have learned from those experiences (VI:14).

Meeting the challenges of the Marine Corps is as much a benefit to VI as the exposure to places and people. His success to those challenges was so appealing to him he later considered reenlisting before the Vietnam War ended.
V1 found commonality with his service associations. Each association provided a source for responding to V1’s needs. He found comfort in socializing with his Native American buddies. All these men were from different locations within the US, but they offered familiar ethnic frames of reference for V1 while he was so far from home. His continued church attendance brought V1 recognition and assistance from his commander.

This relationship brought V1 promotions and improvements in his work conditions. V1 saw the Vietnamese as another abused ethnic group whose extreme poverty reminded him, to a degree, of his own people at Fort Belknap. Helping them allowed him a way to maintain his own values and self-esteem during a war that often ran counter to them. V1 dissociated from the abusive activities some inflicted on the Vietnamese and themselves without distancing himself from identifying with and depending on his fellow Marine. While in the Marines, V1 acknowledged no problems with his self-esteem.

Post-Service Experience

Relative Deprivation  V1 inherited a bad reputation as a Vietnam veteran from both the American public and by some at Fort Belknap.

When I came home I arrived at Great Falls Airport... a few days before Christmas. My parents did not have a telephone. They did not know that I was coming home. I had to catch a bus
from Great Falls to Havre. I got into the bus station. I did not know how I was going to get home because that was the end of the road for the bus... It was snowing. It was a pretty lonely feeling because I could see a lot of people shopping, and cars running around. I started hitch hiking out of Havre. No one would pick me up. I had my uniform on. I guess it was harder because I had my sea bag. It was heavy. I had my grip. I know that my grandmother lived in Havre, my aunt and my cousin, but I did not know where they lived. I just wanted to get home. But, it was hurtful because I did not have anyone there to meet me. So, (V1:9) I started walking down the road, and it was at night. All of the sudden this car pulls up, and, these guys picked me up. It was my cousin’s husband. He just happened to notice me. So, I ended up staying in Havre that night with my grandmother. She was in her late seventies. She was the one that raised me. She was almost blind. It was a good feeling, but still I wanted to get home (V1:10).

While in the Marines, V1’s success and the support of his comrades buffered him against his self-doubts. However, once on his own in the civilian world, he was vulnerable again.

I was one of the first ones that went over there, so I did not have anybody to talk to. Nobody to relate my experiences to because I had joined right away. Some of these other guys where just going in there and just a few guys were out (V1:11).

He experienced depression, loneliness, and a low self-esteem upon returning home. V1’s military experiences and gains in self confidence eroded in a society where veterans met dissapproval, jobs were few and low paying, and there were no other Vietnam veterans to talk to. V1 was caught between a strong desire to go college and his assumption that the cost of college far out weighed his ability to pay.
He increased his drinking.

... I felt that I was going downhill. So, I was going to go back into the service, even though I did not want to because Vietnam was still going strong still in 1970. I know that I did okay when I was in the Marine Corps. I was on the verge of getting sergeant just before I got out. To make sergeant within two years in the Marine Corps was uncommon (V1:10).

When V1 finished his first enlistment he nearly went back in because he could not find a sustainable job. He was also unsure of the risk of going to college even with his GI Bill benefits. V1’s pragmatic outlook were self-defeating because V1 doubts his own potential though he had the skills for a successful career before and after he was in the military. V1 had proven himself in the service and he could do it again. Civilian life remained a challenge until he entered college.

By following his friend’s advice to go to the University of Montana, V1 avoided the social dissociation rut that was dominating his life. Yet the labeling of Vietnam veterans as all drug addicts continues to pain V1.

Vietnam Veterans we’re singled out for being potheads ... on the reservation, people nowadays they assume that we all did drugs over there. It makes me mad because no one ever gives you the benefit of the doubt, you know. They assume that if you were in Vietnam you did dope. I can truthfully say I never did smoke marijuana. I never did do any dope. I had the willpower to not touch the stuff. Now, I did the booze. I did booze before I joined the service. But, I always stayed away from the other stuff (V1:14).

V1’s frustration is that he is labeled as the one thing that he took pride in distancing himself from in the war.
Relative Dissociation  When V1 returned home, he withdrew to sleep and drinking to cope with the employment and social rejection.

After I got home I did not know what to do with myself. I was only home for about two weeks, and I did wind up in college at Havre. I didn’t do much in college. It seemed like all I did was sleep... But even before that when I was home, it seemed like I could not get enough sleep. I did work with the Neighborhood Youth Program (a Federal program) as a foreman. I applied for other jobs with the Tribe. But, they would not hire me. They said that I was too young. I felt pretty hurt about that because I felt that I had some education behind me and that I was a veteran. I had a grade school friend that worked with the Highway Department. He gave me a job working on the road up here north of the Harlem-Turner Road. I worked there. I wanted to go to Billings to be in a town where I could go on to school. Even though I did go to Billings, I did not go to college there. I always had the feeling that a person needed a lot of money to go on to school. I just did not have it. I did a lot of drinking. I felt depressed (V1:10).

When a few job opportunities surfaced for V1, his education was not enough for him to be promoted. V1 was depressed because he saw no way out of his predicament other than returning to the war. It was only the advice and support of a friend that prevented him from risking his life again.

Relative Reward  The greatest advantage to V1 after he got out of the Marines was the advice and support of his friend Jack Plumage.

My friend Jack Plumage was going to college in Missoula. He needed a ride over there. I was going to give him a ride over there, and then I was going to go back into the service. After we got to Missoula, he said, "Why don’t you try going to college?" I said, "I don’t have any money." He said, "Well, see if you can charge until your
GI Bill comes in?" So, he kind of helped me and some other people helped talk for me. They helped me with the packet to help me enroll. I did not feel very comfortable living off of them because I did not have any money. Pretty soon though everything started to come together (V1:10). I got my GI Bill in January. All of the money that I had coming in since September came in. It was over a thousand dollars. I owed most of it to these guys that I lived with. But, I did apply for a job with the Forest Service. After that things started to go great for me.... I ended up finishing. I met my wife at the college where I was going. We got married in December of ’71. I did not really pay too much attention to Vietnam after that... I was just glad to be out, and that was history (V1:11)... 

Self-doubt led V1 into the Marines originally and persisted after his enlistment. His need to repeat the successes he had earned in the Marines drove him to reconsider. Yet with the support of his friends, he found an alternative solution to his problems.

V1’s friends were not alone in supporting him in college. Elmer Main assisted V1 just as he had most college students from Fort Belknap. He is the only known World War II veteran from Fort Belknap to use his GI Bill for college (Fowler 1986:277).

The education specialist here was Elmer Main... Elmer did buy my books. He did give me some money for college. He gave some of the other veterans money, even though he was probably not supposed to. I think that really helped us. He was really good about looking out for us, and seeing that we finished. We were very fortunate that we had a guy like that to help us go through our schooling (V1:11).

Mr. Main’s aid to V1 extended a sense of community acceptance and support he had previously not known.
V1 said there was an increase in Indians going to college during the 70's. He saw the GI Bill as the leading factor in this rise of mostly Native American male students since "BIA educational grants were not enough to fund many students" (V1:11).

Relative Association V1 returned from the war lacking the group-centered relationships he had known in the Marines. It was not until he found another group, college friends and Elmer Main, that V1 revived the productivity and successes he had accomplished while in the Marines.

While at the University of Montana, he was an actively supported fellow minority students and the Kyi-Yo Indian Club.

The students that were in school at that time were more aware of their culture. They wanted to comeback (to their heritage). I can remember that there were very few powwows. The Indian students going to school at the time started reviving a lot of the powwows. They started new powwows at the colleges, conferences, and it just started mushrooming from there... The first Kyi-yo Indian Days I think was in '69. It started in the Ballroom at the University (Montana) (V1:12).

As V1 progressed in his studies, work, and student activities, he was better able to break from his drinking problem. The sacrifice V1 made for his grandmother in turn further helped him to break from a cycle of self-doubt and depression.

When I was in my last two years of college, I quit drinking. I made it up with my grandmother, when she got sick. I wanted her to know that I was going to finish college while she was living. I told myself that I am going to sacrifice something
that I like so that the good Lord will spare her a couple of more years. And, that happened (VI:14).

VI returned to Fort Belknap to work for the BIA. When he returned home, he reciprocated the support he was given when he struggled through college. He was active in supporting powwows and, in the 1980’s, American Legion Post 110.

... about 1980... Post 110, some of the younger guys got it going. A guy by the name of George. "Chubby" Snell was kind of instrumental in getting it going... we do a lot of funerals, and we present the colors at powwows. We presented the colors at a senior citizens conference in Bozeman about two years ago. One of our problems is that we don’t really have a good meeting place. If we had a meeting place, a building, we would have a more active post. It is hard operating out of a home... Everyone is competing for the same dollar. Their income is limited on the reservation (VI:13).

Limited by their lack of funding and a building, the commitment of Fort Belknap veterans has keep Post 110 functioning for sixteen years.

Interpretations

His aspirations for military service were shaped by veteran relatives and the Cold War popular culture. While he completed high school and a business degree from Haskell Institute, three factors persuaded him to join the Marines. These factors were his lack of money, his own pessimistic view of being able to succeed in the business world, and the persuasion of two former Marines.

Once in the service, VI found his own moral values at
odds with many of his fellow Marines. While he acknowledged that he had a drinking problem himself, he did not give up respect for himself and others. VI distanced himself from drugs and worked against the abuses inflicted on Vietnamese peasants.

VI had a difficult readjustment to civilian life. Depression and drinking dominated his life to the point that he considered going back into the Marines. His problems were at an extreme for him to make this choice since the war was still going on. Yet his rationale was that he had only known personal success in the military. VI found the success and self-confidence he needed at the University of Montana. He took an active role in supporting minority students and the Kyi-Yo Indian Club while in school.

A network of friends and veterans from Fort Belknap had succeeded in helping VI get through college. After receiving his degree, VI returned to Fort Belknap with his family. Here he maintained contact and reciprocated the advantages that came his way. He got a government job and could support local powwows as he had done in Missoula. He later became more active with local veteran issues and activities through Post 110.
Case V2

V2 produced an eight-page life story. He devoted only one page to his pre-service experience. In most of his interview he was concerned with service and post-service life. He did not follow a chronological sequence in delivering his stories; instead, he frequently shifted between his Army days and post-service life.

Background

V2 mentioned little about his family. His father was deceased (V2:7); he was raised by his mother and grandmother (V2:4,6).

Pre-Servive Experience

Relative Deprivation V2 was urged to join the military by his mother, brothers, and sisters. They did this hoping to end his drinking problem. With little to do with his time, V2 went to bars and drank.

... they were glad to see me get out of here because about a month before I went that is about all I did was drink every day. I was not even old enough, yet I was in the bar. They were glad to see me leave here (V2:4).

V2’s family found no alternative to control his problem then. This part of his life was only made worse by the military.

Relative Dissociation V2 identified nothing that he dissociated with during this phase of his life.

Relative Reward V2’s pre-service life was economically comfortable. Land lease revenue was sufficient to allow V2 to own horses before he was a teenager. This money later
supported his teen drinking habit (V2:6,4). As he remarked, "I used to get a lot of lease money. I still get lease money and around here it would cover everything that I would need" (V2:5). While V2’s drinking habit shows that not all was well with his life as a teen, he still developed skills that aided him later in life.

He did not play war as a child; instead, he enjoyed long rides on horses.

... when I was a kid growing up around here I rode horses a lot. I used to stay with my grandmother down by Dobson (east on highway 2). I owned a few horses, I guess, by the time I was eleven... Sometimes we rode from the valley up here to the Paws (Bear Paw Mountains). That’s a good twenty miles (V2:6).

Living in a rural area helped to focus V2’s attention on the surrounding terrain. Associating where he was with familiar landmarks was the only way he could know where he was going. His ability to develop a sense of direction was an asset that directly benefitted V2 when he traveled through rural Vietnam.

Relative Association V2’s association with just to the military, but combat arms was an influence from his family.

There were quite a few of mine that went from here. I’d say all of them were combat... World War II, Korea, Vietnam... my dad and my uncle here were in it (World War II). (My uncle) was in Merrell’s Marauders over in the Pacific.... (Another) uncle [name], he was a POW in Korea. He escaped and he made it back to Great Falls. It is kind of hard to believe. He stayed in the hospital for quite a while... I think he was in the Air Force or the Army... he moved to Wyoming. He worked for a rancher down there for twenty years (V2:7).
His father’s service in World War II alone would have raised great expectations for V2 when he was growing up. Yet both his uncles are noted combat veterans who were locally known as having experienced unusually high levels of personal deprivation. This family background, along with the escalation in Vietnam, made it very unlikely that V2 would not have served in the military.

This expectation of service was shared by V2’s peers. Three of his male relatives and most of his friends saw combat in Vietnam. He commented that, "Most of them were my age. They all came back. All of them, but Louie. He was the only one that never made it. He was in the Marines" (V2:7). Even as late as Vietnam, the impression World War II veterans made on young men was still evident.

When asked if his family did anything for him before he left or while he was away, V2 simply responded, "They couldn’t do anything" (V2:7).

Service Experience

V2 joined the Army in January of 1969. He out-processed on December 14, 1971. He stated, "I went to Fort Lewis, Washington where it was wet and cold. And from there I went to Fort Knox, Kentucky. Then I went to California for ten months" (V2:4).

He was in the 4th Infantry Division, 1st\10th Calvary Reconnaissance. V2 served most of his Vietnam tour around
the Onkay area (V2:1).

**Relative Deprivation** V2 acknowledged an increase in his drinking, being wounded, fear, and malaria as deprivations he experienced while he was in the service (V2:1,3,4).

He felt exposed to the dangers of combat in the firebase. Firebases were supposed to be the safe areas for US Troops. They were fortified compounds where artillery was concentrated for support of infantry units in the jungle. While heavily armed, these areas were highly visible as V2 discovered.

We came out of VC Valley. I was there forty-five days. A cav. unit came in after us, tanks... We went back to LZ (landing zone) Sure. It was just like this (V2:3), quiet. I started walking to take a shower and they mortared us. Twenty-two guys in the cav. unit that were wounded... It was a good thing I never made it to the shower because the shower disintegrated (V2:4).

Exposure to mortar attacks at firebases is only one example of the deprivations V2 experienced in Vietnam. Despite the mental and physical strains, V2 left Vietnam after being wounded.

I was glad to get out. I had hit a pungy stick, (so) I had to just come back anyway, just to get out of the Army. (I got hit) in the leg. If I would have stayed in I would have retired at the age of thirty-nine (V2:3).

The pain V2 experienced from his injury was multiplied by the loss of a potential career.

Once back in the states, V2’s combat fears reemerged, along with his malaria.
... when I came back (San Fransico), the same family that had seen me off. I knew them. They were from up this way (Fort Belknap). I called them from Fort Lewis when I got back (from Vietnam). I stayed there for three days. That is all I did was sleep. I guess they said that I was having nightmares. I could not stay awake. They would wake me up and I would fall back to sleep. By the third day I come out of there all rested. It was quite an experience (V2:4).

The relief of returning to the states allowed V2 to relax better than he had in Vietnam. The repressed psychological strains from being in a combat environment found expression in his dreams.

Another strain, the malaria he picked up in Vietnam, also reemerged during V2’s final days in the military.

I made it back. I came back here (Fort Belknap) and from here I went to Fort Hood, Texas and I caught malaria again. I was in the hospital a week down there. They cured me in that week. In Vietnam it took a month. They did not have to put up convalescence down there. It felt strange (V2:4).

Though V2 was back home in the United States, his pains from the war continued to follow him.

**Relative Dissociation** V2 distanced himself from personal recognition in the Army and, eventually, military service. V2 dissociated with allowing the Army to notify his family and home community about him. His request to suppress public information concerning him included both good and bad news. V2’s avoidance of public recognition included awards. He commented:

I signed some papers when I got to Vietnam. I didn’t want them to know I was wounded. I didn’t want that written in the newspapers, unless I was
killed. I signed it away when I got there. They said, "Okay, if that's the way you want it." "You don't want anybody to know that you were decorated (Purple Heart)?" "No, I don't want them to know." When I came out of VC Valley, I had decorations already. I got the Purple Heart, and I didn't want that. I was put up for a Bronze Star, but this lieutenant he hid and he got it. So I told my commanding officer, "No, I don't want it" (V2:8).

While V2's motives for avoiding both public and personal recognition are speculative, it can be said that he did not serve in the Army for self-aggrandizement. V2 did prevent his family from worrying when he was wounded. However when asked if his family did anything for him during the war, he replied, "They couldn't do anything" (V2:8).

Returning to duty after his injury was not ideal for V2.

The last six months in Vietnam would have been the hardest on going back. I would have had to go to a new unit. Start all over. I might have had a desk job. More than likely I wouldn't mess with it (V2:3).

V2's desire to be outside and the stresses of reestablishing himself as a member of a unit were reasons enough for him to dissociate with returning to the Army. He had joined the military for excitement. Following his injury, only the boredom of paperwork in a new unit awaited him.

Relative Reward One advantage V2 gained from his military service was the opportunity to prove his own skills within an ethnic and racially open organization.

V2 learned from the Army that teamwork was critical to that institution, not personal differences.
...the Army helped you get along with other races. Back here you have people that don’t know what it’s like. They say, "Well, they are prejudice." Well, they are not... because they say Roundup (Wyoming) is prejudice. I would go through there. I’d stop there. I used to drink there. They never bothered me (V2:2)... just once, I guess, at Fort Hood. But after that everything turned out all right (V2:3).

The openness toward others that V2 saw in the Army did not mislead him to think that there was no racial prejudice. Instead, he learned to cope or address problems when they surfaced and to have a positive attitude toward people different from himself.

V2’s sense of direction was an advantage to him and his unit while he was on reconnaissance in rural Vietnam.

It is very easy to pick up a sixth (V2:5)sense if you don’t have it. It helped me a lot when I got into it... even in the woods today, I couldn’t get lost. Everybody was lost in our unit. They would ask me, "Where is the road?"... basically, I don’t get lost (laugh) (V2:6).

V2’s navigational abilities gave him leadership in his squad.

Relative Association He states that he joined for:

Excitement... I did see a lot of the country. But just to get away from here, away from the drinking, ... but I find that it did not help me. I got worse... Overall it helped me out. I got off the reservation (V2:1).

V2’s family wanted him to join the military but, for him, the Army was an escape from the boredom and drink consuming him at home. The particular excitement he sought was combat in Vietnam.
V1 was almost desperate to escape the boredom of stateside.

I tried three times to get out of Fort Ord, 10-49. The second one was approved. I got it up here on my thirty-day leave. They called me back to Fort Ord. So I got back to Fort Ord. I told my CO down there, "I’m going to put in one more. I am going to be in San Francisco. I will leave you a number where you can get a hold of me if you need me." Two weeks later it came, orders for Vietnam. I’d go home for another thirty days. This time there was no stopping (V2:4).

V2 found little excitement in the stateside Army. His repeated request for duty in Vietnam shows that he was eager for action.

I was looking for excitement and I found it. Why not, if I went home I wouldn’t be doing nothing anyway... I was not disappointed. I was looking for enjoyment, something different in life (V2:6).

While it is difficult to consider combat as anything other than a deprivation, V2 associated it with being in the open space of the countryside compared with the protection of a firebase. He stated, "I enjoyed it more in the bush than I did in base camp. I felt safe... because in base camp you never know when it is going to hit" (V2:3).

Safety, greater freedom, and success were all apart of V2’s attachment to being out in the countryside.

We got more, to me, in the jungle we whipped them. They got us going in and coming out. When we were out it was just an everyday thing. But I would come into new villages and burn them and stuff like that. We did a lot of that in VC Valley. Burned a lot of new villages. They controlled the whole thing (V2:8).

V2 had control of his squad when he was out on
reconnaissance. When he came in from the field, his squad's was open for attack.

He found the excitement he wanted while on reconnaissance in Vietnam. There he experienced personal successes, in part, because he could use his terrain navigational skills fully. Still, V2 recognized that ultimately that his successes were futile. The Vietnamese rebounded from his village attacks and persisted in fighting.

Post-Service Experience

Relative Deprivation The deprivations V2 experienced after the Army include bad health, public rejection, and denial of educational aid and his Veterans' Preference by the Fort Belknap Tribal Government.

Health problems linked to his exposure to Agent Orange, and his wound, are prolonged negative effects that continue to haunt V2 (V2:4).

My hips have a lot of aching sometimes. For that... he's got me on Darvon. Now he's got me on Motrin for in the wintertime October, November, December, January, February, March, 800mg. three times a day. One time it got so bad I used up the bottle (V2:4).

While V2 can work during the summer months, his health is strained during the winter. He remarked that, "They said that we would not get it until we were dead and that our families will get it. It is kind of a raw deal I think" (V2:4).
When asked if he was honored by anyone when he returned from Vietnam, his replied that he was not.

No, not really. They called us "baby killers." But shit, you look back on these 90-day wars, six-month wars. They killed babies or whatever they call them. Hell, they killed these Arabs (V2:4).

V2 illustrates the pain he has suffered from the American public's negative attitude toward Vietnam veterans through the violence inflicted by Desert Storm veterans. His point is that while neither conflict was without killing, the latter has gained public respect because the speed of their conflicts glossed over their carnage.

When V2 was asked if his family honored him in any way when he returned home, his answer was positive, though limited. He stated, "Yeah, they did I guess a little, but I never did come back is the problem" (V2:6). V2's answer may reflect his own attempts to distance himself from his military honors and identity when he left the Army. His move to Fort Washakie, Wyoming after the war made any such activities difficult for his family to conduct. It is at Fort Washakie where he did later join Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 0033 (V2:1).

**Relative Dissociation** V2 was thankful that military service spared him from becoming as dependent as most Fort Belknap Reservation residents.

... when I come back here, I look at them, and see what I would have been. I've been away from here after Vietnam for about twenty years. It was easier for me to cope with life on the outside... Yeah, a lot of these people here don't know what
it is like to pay state tax or nothing... they wouldn’t be able to last on the outside (V2:1).

Just as V2 found refuge away from the Fire Bases in Vietnam, he finds life options ideal away from Fort Belknap.

V2 dissociated not only with many locals’ narrow world views, but also the Fort Belknap Tribal Government and the BIA’s avoidance of him and other veterans.

I came back here last year and they would not hire me. And I was pushing ten points (Combat Veteran’s Preference maximum). Started a lot of trouble. This summer was more of the same thing. I even went to Baucus and the DAV (Disabled Veterans). They were going to come in here and check out why they would not hire ten point veterans or anything. I don’t know if they ever did or not but I would not move back even if I had a job (V2:2).

V2 distances himself further from Fort Belknap by protesting tribal and government hiring practices. Yet, as he dissociates from them, he also actively supports his fellow veterans, particularly those from Fort Belknap.

See, that’s what I got started when I came back. Now they are starting to hire veterans. Hell, you have a lot of veterans here just sitting. I said, "I’ll start something, so I did" (V2:6).

V2’s efforts to maintain veteran preference hiring at Fort Belknap were apparently successful. However V2 distances himself not only from living and working at Fort Belknap, but just a new generation of combat veterans as well.

Just as V2 dissociated from his own service experience initially, he distances himself from veteran organizations and activities. The source of his frustrations is the new generation of combat veterans from Desert Storm, Panama,
Grenada, etc.. V2 expressed his resentment toward the celebrity of these short war veterans.

I used to belong to the Legion and the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars). But I kind of dropped out after a few years. More so (attended less) after those Desert Storm guys got in. The DAV--I’m a life time member... these new guys that come in. It don’t take them long to get in. "Yeah, you were overseas ninety days and now it is time to get out." Hell, I served overseas, but it wasn’t the same amount (of time). It is a whole different story (V2:6).

V2’s resentment toward the new combat veterans is based on their sudden gain of public attention and resources. V2 views this new competition as taking both popular support and service benefits with far less effort and personal sacrifice than he and his comrades. While the Vietnam veteran inherited a prolonged unpopular war, the new veterans have gained access to the same combat veteran benefits with a quick popular war.

We made a lot of money off these last two. As soon as they got back they gave them big parades... You get the guy that just came back from them last two (Panama and Desert Storm). It takes them a couple of months for them to get calm. I’m still playing (V2:5).

Relative Reward V2 benefited, though to a limited degree, from the GI Bill for his technical schooling, and from the DAV for his disabilities.

It helped me out quite a bit. I run out of it and I asked the tribe to help me up here. They would not go to the last eighteen credits. And they were the one’s I needed too for the foreman position. I could have been a teacher if I had those credits(V2:6).

V2 has not found aid or a job from Fort Belknap. He did
find better opportunities away from home.

Although V2 did not receive the tribal job at Fort Belknap, he does have two sources of revenue. The first is a seasonal diesel mechanic job he landed in Billings. V2 summarizes job as, "Working for mostly contractors. It’s a job. I only get paid six months out of the year" (V2:2). Yet the job allows V2 to live in Billings away from Fort Belknap.

Another income source is his partial DAV benefits, but such benefits are limited. He states, "The DAV has got my power of attorney. I got a little check here awhile back. Not even five months, and it was all gone"(V2:5)....

Relative Association V2 started accepting his veteran identity, honors, and privileges when he applied for a BIA job.

At first it didn’t. So once I got into the Bureau of Indian Affairs, well then it did. Everybody was after me because I would not push my ten points (highest rating for combat service). Now I push it. I think that I am called a radical around here. (That is) sort of why I came back.

The resistance to veteran hiring preferences at Fort Belknap later inspired V2 to become an active advocate for veteran issues. While he openly resents the quick success of Desert Storm veterans, he maintains that the military is an ideal route for future generations from Fort Belknap.

When referring to the military as a recommendation for future generations, V2 regarded it as ideal for them.

I would have them get out, get off the
reservation. A lot of them will never see outside the state of Montana more than likely. Most of them travel Fort Belknap, Harlem, Havre. I’ve been all over... Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, Vietnam, and Kentucky... I went to Alaska on the way over, Japan, and then into Vietnam.

V2 has recently distanced himself again from veteran organizations, nonetheless he does continue to press for and claim veterans’ preference, and other veteran benefits. V2 no longer denies his veteran identity nor the accommodations he has earned. He concludes with, "... you can look on my car. I even have a Purple Heart license plate"!

Interpretations

V2 grew up enjoying being outdoors and riding horses. He did have access to allotment money, but boredom and drinking are two deprivations that plagued V2’s pre-service life. His family encouraged him to join the service to resolve his problems. His father and uncles found success while in the service, so this was seen as a solution.

While V2’s drinking was only made worse by his traumatic combat experience, he eventually did find an escape from his boredom. V2 capitalized on his outdoor skills and aspirations as a reconnaissance squad leader. This combat position earned him success and personal relief from Vietcong surprise assaults. Yet a wound forced him to give up this experience.

V2’s life is limited by his injuries, but he has
overcome, to a large extent, the social and personal dissociations that isolated him from his family and fellow veterans.
Conclusion

I hypothesize that Fort Belknap veterans joined the military as an expression of either who they are or who they aspire to be culturally, from a broad spectrum of influences. Fort Belknap veteran life histories in no way support the assumption that they joined the military "to fulfill their roles as traditional warriors" (Fixico 1986:5; Viola 1989:18; Holm 1984, 1985, 1995; Rawls 1996:12-13). Combat-related traditions do cast an individual’s military service as worthy of community recognition. These public reciprocations have helped to maintain a consistently positive view toward all veterans among most Native Americans. Yet these traditions alone do not explain these veterans’ ultimate motivations for joining the military.

These six veterans defined their military participation as relating to historic and personal circumstances. Each man’s enlistment was an enactment of their own national consciousness. This understanding of nation is identified here as precondition to their desire to serve in the military.

Benedict Anderson views the establishment of one language in schools as a premise for narrowing the mode in which the nation-state is made known to children. While
this monolingualism was a harsh experience for W1 and W2, the later public school generations grew up speaking English in their homes. An implicit image of the national community was made known to pupils in boarding schools and later public schools. While patriotism is not dependent on schools and the media, these veterans’ narratives are examples of how one’s understanding of the imagined community is shaped by both institutions. While they did not specify their classroom instruction and media knowledge, their knowledge of America and world affairs is the precondition for these veterans’ service.

Their joining the military are linked to four factors. Starting in the order of the most significant incentive, veterans stated specifically the following:

1. -previous family and friends who have military records.

2. -the level of contemporary national crisis when each contributor joined the military.

3. -the limited economic and educational opportunities at Fort Belknap.

4. -the need for personal excitement and escape from the constrictions of rural\small town life style.

The first factor, impact of service relatives and friends, is the primary frame of reference on veterans and their decision to join the military and the branch they choose. While W1’s and W2’s joining was more directly
related to the immediate crisis that World War II posed for the United States. They both had immediate family members who had previously been in the military. This is consistent with Merton's identification of the sway that family has on those who join the armed forces. He stated this as, "the individual's sense of being "at one with himself" is often only the result of being "at one" with the standards of a group in which he is affectively engaged (Merton 1971:384). Simply stated, military families beget military personnel. Serving in the military was nothing new at Fort Belknap. In fact, every contributor had relatives who had served in the military. This factor is both historic and personal; historic because of kin service experiences, and personal because immediate relatives' service creates expectations for an individual to meet.

Factors one, three, and four address local concerns while factor two is nation oriented. Both World War II veterans identified the immediate crisis from the threat of a foreign invasion as key to their joining the Army. The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor was a more direct threat to the nation than later efforts to prevent the spread of Communism, far from America's shores, in Korea and Vietnam.

The third factor points to the military as an economic solution. This is only generally the case since it does not hold true for W1, W2 (although it did briefly before the war for W2), K2, and V2. Yet this was directly stated by both
K1 and V1 as a key reason for joining the military. While economic opportunities remain the most marginal at Fort Belknap of all Montana's Reservations, the social program improvements made since the Great Depression are not reflected in this sample as significant influences.

The final factor was the least significant influence. It was a leading motive for only K1, V1, and V2. The desire of recruits to "see the world" and leave the limited social and educational opportunities available in rural areas.

Military duty always involves unknown risk to the individual. Servicemen exhibit a genuine conviction by being exposed to a real threat for the good of the nation. Those who have been exposed to varying degrees of combat are given higher regard than are peacetime servicemen. This sacrifice has held clout among both Native Americans and in American society usually. This respect has eroded politically at Fort Belknap Reservation, and socially throughout America since Vietnam. Public recognition has been revived at Fort Belknap through powwows and other events since the 1970's. Yet veteran hiring preferences and political representation continue to be struggles for local veterans.

Their success in the military is partly due to the basic skills they learned in school, and their expectations of the nation and world. This is obvious when their first-hand observations of the world, while in the military, prove
contrary to their assumptions about the nation as 'imagined community.' This learning process supports Hatch's assertion that individual aspiration is shaped within the context of cultural values; however for these veterans the relationship between schools, media, and the military is sometimes consonant (in conveying the same view of the nation), and sometimes contrary.

Hatch states that, "The underlying motivation is to achieve a sense of personal accomplishment or fulfillment, and the individual does so by engaging in activities or exhibiting qualities that are defined by the society as meritorious (Hatch 1989:349). While only one factor for joining the military was shared by these six veterans, they were all exposed to the same national influences through school and media as are all Americans. Military service for these veterans is not an expression of belonging to a nation-state. It is an enactment, rather than an aspiration, of their roles as Americans. Being American is no more alien to these men than being from Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana. What is alien to them is to question why they served the United States military, an apparently oppressive institution. Rather than submission, every man identifies his military service as a positive influence in his life. Native American and American identities are inseparable for these veterans.
Of all the writings on Fort Belknap, Loretta Fowler contributes one of the most elaborate and sensitive pieces on this dilemma of cultural identity. However, her broad "tribal-centered" orientation glosses over other significant identities with which these six Fort Belknap veterans strongly associate. Patriotism is an example of how these men define their own way of being American. These veterans associate to America as a socially accessible nation based on their struggles and successes with their military comrades. While their fellow servicemen and women were from several other ethnic groups from across the United States, it is their common military experience that makes all veterans less than strangers. Yet as the title suggests, these men have a dual exclusive identity not only from civilian America but ethnically as First Americans. This analysis of these life histories specifically identifies these contributors as Fort Belknap Veteran Americans.
Appendix A

Interview Questions

What motivated you to join military service?
What units did you serve with and for how long?
Did you have any relatives in the Service?
Did you have any relatives that served in World War I?
When growing up did you guys play army?
What is your educational background?
Did anyone give you trouble for joining the Service?
Did anyone honor you before you left?
Did anyone mistreat you while you served?
Do many veterans return home after they have retired?
Did you join a veteran’s post?
Are you active now in a veteran’s post?
Were you honored by your family when you returned home?
Was your military experience what you expected?
Was the military an escape for you?
When you returned home, did you see it in a different light?
Do you mind telling other people that you served?
Do you feel connected with other veterans?
How has your military background helped you?
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