

PRACTICE-ORIENTED ARTICLE

Veteran Transition from Military to Civilian Life: Towards a Sociocultural Framework for Social Support

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The transition period for reintegrating into the civilian environment can be challenging, posing unique challenges of socialisation and cultural adaptation for young Danish veterans. However, young Danish veterans have not yet been targeted by social support that handles them as a distinct category of veterans. Therefore, this article analyses a widely used Danish framework for social support, the Battlemind-Homemind framework. The article discusses how the framework supports the challenges of young Danish veterans, in order to identify support needs. The framework is found to hold limitations for providing social support in relation to young Danish veterans' distinct challenges. A case is made for an alternative choice of sociocultural frameworks, specifically transformative learning theory, to understand and support socialisation and cultural adaptation challenges. Transformative learning theory is used to explore social challenges in young Danish veterans' narratives on transition. The analysis reveals how veterans attempt to deal with social challenges, and how their attempts are limited by three elements: (1) Norms that suggest that people in authority define the culture of environments. (2) A veteran perception that different norms constitute an unstructured environment. (3) Aggression control as a veteran behaviour that limits cultural adaptation. Based on these analyses, social support recommendations to the Danish Defence are provided within three themes: (1) Recognise young Danish veterans as a group facing distinctive challenges. (2) Consider sociocultural frameworks for the conceptual foundations of social support. (3) Increase awareness of challenges in education environments.

Keywords: Veteran; transition; identity; transformation; sociocultural; narrative

Introduction

This article presents and compares two frameworks that are used by veteran support professionals to scaffold veteran transition from a military to a civilian environment: (1) The Battlemind-Homemind framework, currently utilised by the Danish Defence to provide a course for reintegration of veterans. (2) A sociocultural framework, currently utilised by the US Department of State to provide counselling to veterans who undergo reverse culture shock. The Battlemind-Homemind framework relies on the concept of social navigation, describing veterans as passive subjects who need to exercise aggression control. In contrast, the sociocultural framework views socialisation and cultural adaptation as central to young veterans' transition. This framework stresses that veteran transition involves cultural adaptation which the sociocultural framework enables because it considers transition as a phase of identity development: Veterans want to preserve their military identity and are simultaneously tasked with transforming their identity in order to adopt a civilian identity.

This paper focuses on transition challenges of young veterans who have ended their service in the Danish Defence. Here, young veterans are defined as persons up to 25 years of age who have been deployed in an international operation by The Danish Parliament. Transition is a period of reintegration from military life into civilian life, entailing a process of transformation that a veteran undergoes when his military career

comes to an end (Cooper et al. 2016: 2). Transition often brings challenging experiences for young veterans and, in research on civil-military relations and policy, supporting them in making a successful transition is widely regarded as a priority. The challenges of young veterans commonly relate to themes of socialisation and cultural adaptation (Bergman, Burdett & Greenberg 2014). These challenges have an impact on the life of young veterans because they experience a transformation in identity: Their identity transformed when they became soldiers, in transition from civilian to military environment, where they were assimilated into a military culture in which they experienced war. When their military career comes to an end, the young veterans once more have to undergo an identity transformation as they have to learn to function in the civilian environment to which they return.

Transition challenges are especially common amongst younger veterans who have experienced a rapid shift into military identity and, then, back into civilian identity (Bergman, Burdett & Greenberg 2014). These transition challenges are particularly evident in a Danish context, where a large number of young soldiers was deployed in Afghanistan between 2001–2014 during International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations. While there is no comprehensive data on the age of Danish ISAF veterans, the existing data indicates that most veterans had a background in Hærens Reaktionsstyrke Uddannelse (HRU) and could be characterised as newly educated professional soldiers (Kofod, Benwell, & Kjær 2010), with around forty percent of HRU staff being constables (Kofod, Benwell, & Kjær 2010). According to Værnepligtsudvalget (2012), the average age of the 744 constables in HRU is 22.8 years, out of which 696 were 25 years old or below. Constables typically take on 15 of 20 roles in a HRU platoon, indicating a significant share of young Danish veterans in ISAF.

Research on Danish veterans has predominantly focused on cognition, with emphasis on mental health (Longaard et al. 2016; Karstoft, Nielsen, & Andersen 2017; Petersen & Norlyk 2016), while little research has focused on cultural adaptation (Sørensen 2015; Sørensen & Trolle 2019). International research stresses that it is especially young veterans who face challenges with respect to cultural adaptation and the transition to a civilian environment, while older veterans are significantly less challenged (Bergman, Burdett & Greenberg 2014; Cooper et al. 2016). However, young Danish veterans have not yet been targeted by social support efforts as a group with particular challenges. We use the following section to explore the conceptual framework that is currently used in Danish social support initiatives and to discuss how this framework allows veteran support professionals to provide support in relation to the challenges of young Danish veterans.

Current Social Support Initiatives in Denmark: The Battlemind-Homemind Framework

In Denmark, ISAF veterans of all age groups are offered a range of support initiatives. These include questionnaires that scan for symptoms of PTSD and depression, psychologist-supervised group conversations, employment counselling, individual psychologist treatment, guidance on stress management, and individual counselling from social workers. Most of these initiatives are bundled through the Danish Veteran Centre. Amongst them is a social support initiative grounded in the Battlemind-Homemind framework (hereafter: BMHM framework). The BMHM framework is particularly relevant to explore due to its focus on the social domain and its nationwide application. The BMHM framework has a strong focus on the reactions of veterans after they return from deployment and argues that this focus supports their social navigation. We will therefore explore the way in which the BMHM framework illustrates social navigation. The BMHM framework was originally devised in 2008 and was subsequently rolled out in a national effort by the Danish Defence through the Acclimatisation and Reintegration Course which lasted for six years, from 2008 until the end of ISAF deployment. The BMHM framework aims to help with post-deployment challenges through the suppression of reactions that are found to be inappropriate in a civilian environment (Jonasen 2009; Kofod, Benwell, & Kjær 2010: 102). More specifically, the BMHM framework focuses on veteran reactions to stimuli after deployment. Behaviour control and the suppression of undesirable behaviour are thus supposed to assist veterans in mental and social adaptation processes during the transition (Jonasen 2009: 40; Kofod, Benwell, & Kjær 2010: 102). We subsequently analyse the assumptions that build the foundation for this approach and illustrate how the approach addresses and relates to social challenges. These assumptions rely on the juxtaposition of a warzone and a peace zone, in which veterans act differently:

- In the warzone, the soldier relies on a *battlemind*, and soldier behaviour follows a highly reactive *stimulus-response model*.
- In the civilian environment, the veteran relies on a *homemind*, and veterans are expected to modify their behaviour through the adoption of a *stimulus-reflection-response model*, and through *social navigation*.

The following sections present a systematic analysis of the assumptions on which BMHM relies, namely that veterans are passive subjects, and that veterans can learn to navigate the civilian environment through aggression control.

The Veteran as a Passive Subject

The BMHM framework describes a warzone as an environment which exposes soldiers to significant stress. This environment creates a state of battlemind for soldiers, which is considered positive in a warzone because this mental state accelerates reactions to the environment and increases chances of survival (Jonasen 2009: 40–41). When a soldier returns to his country of origin – also called the peace zone – his mindset transitions from a mental state of battlemind to a mental state of homemind: ‘For an infantry-man in a warzone, thinking for too long can cost him his life. Here it is obviously an advantage that the distance from stimulus to action is not too long ... The increased stress responses initiate a hormonal chain reaction’ (Jonasen 2009: 41–42; our translation). The quote demonstrates that behaviour control starts with a stimulus and illustrates a central assumption of the BMHM framework: The framework assumes that actions are typically grounded in thinking, described as cognition that involves reflection, thus delaying a rapid reaction. Furthermore, the BMHM framework assumes that the stress of being in a warzone causes biochemical changes in the soldier’s brain which enables him to efficiently respond to danger. The biochemical changes involved are (1) increased production of adrenaline, cortisol, and endorphins in the brain, (2) increased activity of the mammalian brain associated with *fight, flight, or freeze* functions and (3) reduced activity of cortical layers associated with reflection. These changes are still in effect when a soldier re-enters a peace zone and has to react to stimuli in a civilian environment. It illustrates that the BMHM framework relates cognition and action in a specific way: It assumes that the processes of cognition and action have a linear relationship and are mutually exclusive. This assumption builds on a difference between conscious practice that includes reflection and reactive practice that responds to a stimulus without involving reflection or thought. From a BMHM perspective, veterans should learn to engage in conscious practice that includes reflection. This learning process, however, is not included in the BMHM framework which focuses on aggression control.

To sum up: The BMHM framework relies on a cognitive-behavioural perspective which describes soldier action as a reactive process that relies on a stimulus, and in which the soldier is a passive subject. In consequence, this framework does not view veterans as subjects in a civilian environment that prompts veterans to actively engage with it. Often, civilian environments do not provide stimuli to which veterans are expected to act, and the civilian environment therefore requires active engagement in order to reintegrate into society. This is a noteworthy limitation of the BMHM framework, especially with respect to veterans that experience challenges in transition processes and with respect to the reflective thinking that takes place in these transitions. Due to this limitation, the veteran is not described as a citizen who can actively aim for social reintegration. This lack of description comes with impairing consequences, since the BMHM framework illustrates social reintegration of veterans through the term *social navigation* and thus can become inadequate with respect to reaching its own aim.

The Notion of Social Navigation as Aggression Control

The BMHM framework describes a social challenge when the veteran returns from deployment: He must learn to meet civilians’ expectations despite his high adrenaline levels. The proposed way to do this is to control his aggressions and think before he acts. This is called social navigation and is introduced in this quote: ‘When the soldier returns home again, the surroundings demand that he can navigate socially. This means that he must no longer be on the highest alert and react quickly, instead, he must calm down and train the ability to think before he reacts’ (Jonasen 2009: 42). The quote demonstrates that social navigation is associated with reduced alertness. In the cognitive-behavioural perspective of the BMHM framework, alertness comes with increased adrenaline levels because of warzone experiences, while a reduced alertness is related to a reduction in adrenaline level (Jonasen 2009: 40–41). Social navigation is thus associated with a reduction in adrenaline. In the stimulus-response-model, veteran reintegration is enacted by reducing alertness in order to stop certain aggressive responses to stimulants. Also, in this case, the veteran is framed as a passive respondent to a stimulus, underlining that also in its conception of social navigation, the BMHM framework sees the veteran as a passive subject.

The quote furthermore emphasises one additional perspective: That the veteran is expected to navigate socially in peace zone surroundings, and that doing so means meeting civilian expectations. The quote implies that veterans navigate socially through a stimulus-response model, and that they do not think before they act – the BMHM framework stresses that the veteran must learn to think

again before he reacts (Jonasen 2009: 44). The quote also demonstrates that *thinking before you act* is associated with *social navigation*. To sum up: Social navigation is described as a tool to avoid adrenaline stimulation and aggressive reactions and as a behaviour which helps a veteran to suppress aggressive reactions when he is passively stimulated by his surroundings (Jonasen 2009: 44). The following quote contains an exemplary illustration of a situation in which a veteran soldier exercises social navigation:

'A [veteran] soldier is going for a drive, 3 weeks after his homecoming. A female driver prepares to drive by and signals with her lights that she intends to pull in, in front of the soldier's vehicle. The soldier reacts instinctively by stepping on the speeder and turning the car towards the woman. A few seconds later, he corrects his behaviour, while loudly saying: think, think ... after which he immediately steps on the brake and turns his car away from the other driver.' (Jonasen 2009: 44; our translation)

In this illustration, a veteran shows an aggressive reaction while driving a car which may relate to a reaction that in a warzone environment could prevent a vehicle-borne suicide bomb attack. In this illustration, reflection takes place after an initial stimulus, followed by a correction of behaviour by the veteran. The quote demonstrates how veterans in a transition process might react inappropriately in a peace zone environment, and how reflection could help the veteran navigate in this social setting. The quote also illustrates that the notion of social navigation highlights the prevention of aggressive stimulus-triggered behaviour, where thinking before action enables emotional regulation and behavioural correction. This perspective limits veteran reintegration efforts, because it does not consider that a veteran may choose to actively engage with the civilian environment through reflection, in order to nuance and transform his responses. Social navigation thus conceptualises veteran action as a linear behaviour and excludes the possibility to conceptualise veteran action as a reflective engagement with the civilian environment. The BMHM framework focuses on more immediate changes in behaviour which may be relevant for veterans in order to prevent battlemind behaviour, while more profound changes in veteran practice may call for a different theoretical view. We suggest that the reflective engagement of veterans with their home environment offers a more sustainable perspective for reintegration because it reaches beyond the control of aggressive behaviour. Such reflective engagement relates to the social context in which veterans live, and this engagement can be supported by social science perspectives that provide an understanding of social context.

To conclude: The BMHM framework conceptualises social challenges to a limited extent because concepts such as aggression control and social navigation suggest that veterans are individuals who need to adapt their behaviour, without taking into regard that adaptation has a social context, and that this social context itself can provide challenges for veterans. This social context is emphasised in sociocultural conceptions of transition. Such a conception provides an alternative framework to describe social challenges, emphasising that social challenges take place in a social context, and that veterans adapt to the culture in which a social challenge arises (Bergman, Burdett & Greenberg 2014; Cooper et al. 2016). Sociocultural approaches also emphasise that veteran transition fundamentally is a transformation of identity, where a person transforms his soldier identity into a veteran identity (Nichols 2016). International reviews of research on veteran transition (Cooper et al. 2016; Bergman, Burdett & Greenberg 2014) highlight that in contrast to cognitive-behavioural approaches, sociocultural approaches provide an elaborate conceptual foundation for social support because they frame veteran transition as a socialisation process in which veterans address a range of themes for cultural adaptation. In the following section, we present this sociocultural approach and illustrate its benefits for an analysis of veteran transition and, more specifically, the social support of young Danish veterans.

A Sociocultural Framework for Social Challenges of Veterans

In empirical studies, the social challenges of veterans have been found to relate to socialisation and cultural adaptation which is why learning theories that use a sociocultural approach provide a relevant set of concepts to grasp social challenges of veterans (Bergman, Burdett & Greenberg 2014; Cooper et al. 2016). In the following sections, we present a review of research on veterans' social challenges in transition that draws on sociocultural theory. Subsequently, we demonstrate the benefits of a sociocultural framework, namely transformative learning theory (TLT), to analyse social challenges of veterans.

Sociocultural Theory and its Focus on Identity Transformation

Identity concepts are central to sociocultural approaches and, in research on veterans, the transformation from military identity into civilian identity is widely agreed to be a relevant component to illustrate social challenges (Green et al. 2016; Nichols 2016; Flint 2013). Identity plays a role already in the basic training of soldiers, where the formation of a military identity begins. From a sociocultural perspective, basic training provides a forced separation from the civilian environment which 'ensures that any sense of a prior identity or individuality is removed' (Cooper et al. 2016: 4). As recruits spend all their time on a military base, they have nowhere to withdraw to in the military institution and are assimilated into military culture (Cooper et al. 2016). This effectively forms a military identity. At the end of a military career, the veteran will find that not only his identity has changed, but also his perception of the civilian environment which is no longer familiar due to the forced separation. When veterans return to a civilian environment, these changes frequently result in an experience of disorientation because they often do not expect challenges when going back to the previously familiar civilian environment. Here, the veteran faces a negotiation process, where he needs to resocialise and culturally adapt, again transforming his identity. This negotiation process is thoroughly described in sociocultural theory which provides an elaborate framework for the analysis of identity and identity transformation.

Current research in the sociocultural tradition highlights two central challenges for veterans: The need to transform their identity, and the need to experience a continuity in their military identity. The first need is illustrated by Cooper et al. (2016) who argue that veterans must prepare to undertake a significant shift in identity in order to reach the cultural adaptation aim. The second need is illustrated by McDermott (2007) and Zogas (2017) who focus on the continuity and integration of military identity into the civilian environment.

A recognition of the continuity of veterans' military identity and a focus on the integration of military and civilian identity may empower veterans to balance social challenges. Some research highlights the identity loss that veterans experience (Petersen & Norlyk 2016) which may be due to the identity development in basic training (cf. Cooper et al. 2016). While veteran support professionals may be inclined to focus on coping with identity loss, we suggest an alternative focus which can be addressed through a sociocultural framework: Veterans will benefit from support that draws on a notion of identity transformation, in which a previous identity is not fundamentally changed, but rather transformed, and where a veteran maintains parts of his military identity and understands the difference between military culture and civilian culture.

The concept of identity transformation is widely accepted in the field of veteran studies (Haldén & Jackson 2016), where transformation highlights how veterans can expand their identity so they are able to 'know and understand two different cultures, and [are] able to switch between them without compromising their cultural identity' (Bergman, Burdett & Greenberg 2014: 63). Identity transformation and the underlying transformative learning theory thus allow us to establish a framework in which veterans can perceive challenges as a disjuncture, in which they do not lose some part of their identity, but where they can expand identity and find a balance between the military culture and the civilian culture.

Transformative Learning Theory and the Benefits of a Sociocultural Framework

TLT provides a sociocultural framework that is centred around the concept of learning to be a person in society (Jarvis 2012). It focuses on how identity is shaped in a social environment, on how social challenges occur when the identity does not naturally fit into a new environment, and on the transformation processes that occur as challenges are dealt with. This enables exploration of social challenges in the transition.

Learning is relevant in processes of transition, but often overlooked in the field of veteran transition. We argue that sociocultural research approaches already do recognise important learning processes of veterans. This is for instance the case when Bergman, Burdett & Greenberg describe transition as 'a learning and developmental process ... characterized by a series of crises, each one of which generates a new learning experience' (2014: 62). However, current research does not emphatically relate to a dedicated learning theory such as TLT. This may be due to traditional disciplinary boundaries in research which separate psychological research on identity and educational research on learning. However, learning is a fundamental human quality (Jarvis 2009: 24), and so we consider sociocultural learning theory as a field that can greatly contribute to research in the field of veteran transition. Furthermore, TLT provides a framework that focuses on identity transformation and illustrates that social interaction is a transformative process, regardless of whether it is perceived as a failure or a success by veterans. This is because even a failure to adapt makes the veteran more experienced, which can be seen as a transformation.

The sociocultural framework of TLT that we suggest includes a set of concepts: *Secondary experiences*, *the lifeworld*, *taken-for-grantedness*, and *disjunctures*. In TLT, learning begins with the sensory system, where it makes a distinction between primary and secondary experiences. Here, a primary experience can be to hear a sound, such as a gunshot, and a secondary experience can be to hear a spoken word, such as an officer's statement that has meaning attached to it about how to understand the world.

Secondary experiences thus rely on language or other forms of mediation. Consequently, the meaning from a secondary experience is socially constructed, as the meaning is an answer to the implied question 'what does this sensation mean?'. The answer may include knowledge, attitudes, emotions, norms, and trust and is influenced by a social environment and culture (Jarvis 2009).

The lifeworld is an interpersonal horizon of tacit knowledge that is specific to a social group and includes knowledge about the world and the personal relation to the world (Schütz & Luckmann 1974). Thus, the lifeworld is a horizon which a veteran brings with him, and which enables him to give answers to new experiences, based on their similarity to past ones, despite the fact that situations never repeat themselves precisely. Giving answers can thus be seen as an organisational activity which enables a veteran to make sense of the world. It is through his lifeworld that a veteran can take the meaning of experiences for granted in the attitude of common sense (Schütz & Luckmann 1974: 3). Lifeworld is interpersonal in the sense that the meaning must be constructed in social situations and can undergo transformations in social situations. *Taken-for-grantedness* occurs when answers become part of personal memory. This happens when the answer is practiced or repeated and provided that acceptance is granted from the social environment that the veteran is exposed to. Taken-for-grantedness is the usual mode in which veterans process new experiences, because it does not require conscious awareness.

A *disjuncture* is indicative of a social challenge. It is a gap between the veteran's lifeworld and the current experience. It can occur when the veteran has moved to a civilian environment and has a secondary experience of civilians who communicate some meaning that does not match the answers embedded in his lifeworld. Consequently, the taken-for-grantedness that the veteran used to navigate social situations in the past is now lost, and the veteran becomes aware of questions in relation to meaning. This presents a challenge for the veteran who may only return to the preferred state of taken-for-grantedness through negotiation with the other participants of a social situation, in an attempt to resolve his disjuncture. Either he transforms, they transform, or the disjuncture stays unresolved, producing a potentially unpleasant conflict in the veteran's awareness in everyday social situations. Ultimately, this could mean that the veteran fails to adapt, that he preserves his military identity, and that he is at risk of social exclusion. In contrast to other frameworks, the sociocultural framework of TLT enables us to illustrate and assess such risks and to support veterans at risk of social exclusion.

In conclusion, TLT provides a framework to describe, analyse, and address social challenges of veterans and to support them in a negotiation process between their military identity and their civilian identity.

From Social Challenges to Social Support Recommendations

The following section provides recommendations for the social support of veterans, based on our explorative study. The study is empirically grounded in an analysis of narrative interviews with young Danish veterans who were enrolled in HRU, served in Afghanistan, and experienced transition at the age of 25 or before. Our explorative study included four veterans who were recruited through veteran self-help groups on Facebook. Narrative interviews focused on their experiences in the civilian environment and their social challenges, and data collection and analysis relied on narrative methodology (Schütze 1983; Schütze 2014).

The narrative methodology developed by Schütze includes a strategy for both data collection and analysis. It provides in-depth insights into experiences and challenges of veterans because narrations enable veterans to use spontaneous personal language and prompts them to complete, condense, and detail lived experiences, thus providing a detailed illustration of veteran experiences (Bates 2004). Narrations can thus be analysed to reconstruct underlying implicit meaning (Nohl 2010), making narrations an important resource for understanding transformative learning processes (Jarvis 2012). Consequently, narrative analysis allows us to create accounts on transformative learning processes of veterans' challenges as an interplay of personal identity and social environment that goes beyond other approaches in interview analysis. Our narrative approach certainly has its limitations, due to its interest in creating a detailed illustration of experiences within a certain set of cases, rather than an interest in statistically generalising findings beyond a certain set of cases (Maxwell & Chmiel 2014). From a narrative research perspective, it is relevant to explore cases to understand experiences of veterans in their specific contexts, allowing a conclusion about internal generalisability, and highlighting what is typical for a given set of cases (Maxwell & Chmiel 2014). However, veteran

support professionals very rarely work with generalised findings. Rather, they work with concrete veterans in a 'natural setting' (Torrance 2018) who need support to transition into civilian environments and who, in this transition, relate to their experiences. Narrative research argues that this veteran support work is case-specific and similar to the case-specific analysis done in narrative analysis. Such case-specific work does not necessarily rely on a generalised understanding, but on close contact to research participants (Freeman et al. 2007). From a qualitative point of view, case analysis has a concrete relation to the work of veteran support professionals as the qualitative researcher and the veteran support professional both have to relate to the cases of veterans. These cases bring complex sociocultural questions, making it necessary to go beyond generalisability and to speak about positions and roles in their civilian social context. Engaging in qualitative analysis of narratives enables veteran support professionals to comprehend cases and develop a heuristic repertoire of interacting with veteran stories, enabling support professionals to *engage in reasonable but modest speculation*' about the situation of a veteran and how to react to it (Schwandt 1997: 58). Such a heuristic repertoire is necessary for veteran support professionals to comprehend their situation and arrive at an appropriately situated engagement that relates to their case.

Nonetheless, the study underlying this article has an explorative character: While we argue that our explorative analysis does provide us with evidence of veterans' sociocultural challenges, we do not claim that these challenges are typical for all young Danish veterans who returned from Afghanistan. A representative typology of veteran challenges can be developed through sociogenetic comparative analyses of a larger set of cases, in which veteran strategies are compared with each other to arrive at a description of shared – and thereby typical – patterns in which they address their social challenges problems (Nohl 2010).

In the following, we present insights into the transformative learning processes of two veterans, named Billy and Casper. For our presentation, data was translated from Danish to English in order to point out typical challenges in the transition from military life to civilian life. *Billy and Casper* were both deployed as constables to ISAF in Afghanistan 2010–2011. Billy had an infantry function in the mechanised infantry, while Casper had a medic function, including combat patrols. In 2019, at the time of the interviews, both veterans were enrolled in Danish education programmes and encountered social challenges specifically with their civilian student peers.

Our explorative analysis reveals three stages of veteran challenges, namely (1) an initial stage where veterans encounter social challenges in the civilian environment and experience disjuncture, (2) an intermediate stage where veterans learn to resolve disjunctures related to a civilian environment, and (3) a mature stage where veterans have resolved the social challenges they have faced. The following sections focus on the initial and intermediate stage of social challenges.

Initial Social Challenges and Experiences of Disjuncture

Young veterans commonly illustrate the start of their challenges as disjunctures. In the analysed narrations, they consistently described challenges in which they became aware that their military worldview is confronted by different worldviews in a civilian environment. In the following narrative segment, Billy talks about his challenge of dealing with civilians:

'I stopped in the Danish Defence, we came home mid-February, and I stopped in May the same year. That was in '11. And I went directly to HF [Higher Preparational Exam, a two-year long upper secondary school education] and started in August. And it went well enough to begin with. And then I could feel a lot of challenges starting to occur in terms of dealing with civilians. To come from a warzone and then sit on a school bench within half a year. There were many different impressions and such, right? You could suddenly see that you had gotten a different view on the world, and on human beings and such, right?' – *Billy*

In this narrative segment, Billy shifts back and forth on a biographical timeline and relates his veteran experience of dealing with civilians to his experience of being in the warzone. As a veteran, he experiences a gap between his lifeworld that is influenced by his experiences as a soldier, and the lifeworld horizon of the civilian environment, in which he finds himself again. From a TLT perspective, Billy experiences social challenges from a soldier's perspective: He perceives his social environment through his military identity, and when he experiences a social challenge, he meets this challenge by means of his military identity. This military identity provides him with a horizon for new experiences in the civilian environment, which he describes as challenging. These challenges were difficult for Billy to navigate, precisely because he could not approach them in a controlled or rational way: 'You could suddenly see' indicates that he was not relating critically to his

experiences, but that he was indeed reflective, in the sense that he is describing his experience from a third-person perspective: He does not narrate the experience of *seeing* as something that took place in a first-person perspective – which indicates an unreflective involvement – but, rather, in a perspective that makes him the observer of his experience – indicating that he came to an understanding of his awareness through reflection. This reflective perspective enabled Billy to examine the gap between his military lifeworld and his new experiences, which he subsequently addresses. Now, Billy relates reflectively to his disjuncture, making him aware that his lifeworld perspective is being challenged by the civilian environment. The way in which the veteran engages in the experienced disjuncture is the next topic for our analysis.

The narrative segment illustrates that the veteran had a certain way of dealing with experiences which he had to adapt in the civilian environment, requiring him to take a new role: Adaption is required with respect to ways of activity that are required in an environment. In his narration, the veteran changes from an active agent to a passive subject: *'To come from a warzone and then sit on a school bench within half a year'* indicates that the soldier role in a warzone environment required the soldier to be an active agent – namely in activities such as patrols and combat which are intense, bodily activities where a soldier imposes his agenda onto others in order to control an environment. The narration contrasts the soldier role in a warzone with the expression *'[to] sit on a school bench'*. To sit on a school bench means that the veteran is restrained from bodily activity. The civilian environment requires the veteran to adapt into a new role, where activity is not directed by him, but by a teacher who imposes his agenda on the students. To sit on a school bench describes a situation where the veteran is bodily passive, and where this passiveness is shaped by the authority of schooling, imposing a set of norms onto the individuals that participate in it. This implicit juxtaposition indicates a difference between the veteran norm and the norm imposed by institutional schooling which exercises authority in significantly different ways.

The second narration, from an interview with veteran Casper, also presents initial social challenges and experiences of disjuncture. In this case, the experience of disjuncture revolves around the start of his education at Business School:

'Everyone sort of comes with different attitudes and different approaches to life, that suddenly clash, uh ... and that-that, there are at least some types I had a hard time with, to sort of find myself at ease around, because they perhaps had a much more laid-back attitude, or yeah, how would you say, a little more "take it easy, everything's going to be alright, I don't really know what is going to happen, or there's no plan with this, but now I'm here, and now I enjoy it", and that in itself is fine. But I have a hard time with that, and so I have a hard time being together with people like that. So that was a bit of a shock to suddenly come from a place where everyone, what could you say, has the same approach to things, to all of a sudden there are vastly different approaches to things.' – Casper

Casper is challenged by a civilian environment that comes with a diversity of 'different attitudes and different approaches to life'. This diversity is challenging because he is used to a military environment where everyone 'has the same approach to things'. His illustration that there are 'at least some types I had a hard time with' indicates that he was not challenged by the civilian environment as such, but by individuals who have a certain attitude which he perceives as a specific type of individuals in the civilian environment. The veteran then illustrates the properties of this type of individuals: One property is that this type of civilian presents a 'laid-back attitude'. For Casper, this attitude stands in opposition to an attitude in the military environment which focuses on 'having a plan and knowing what is going to happen'. This 'laid-back attitude' of certain individuals in the civilian environment is given a negative connotation, and the subsequent statement 'that in itself is fine enough' illustrates that the veteran tolerates this attitude, but simultaneously distances himself from it, thus drawing a clear line between his veteran attitude and the described civilian attitude.

The two narratives point towards common patterns in the initial stage where veterans meet social challenges in the civilian environment and experience disjuncture: Firstly, veterans become aware of the differences between attitudes in the military environment and the civilian environment, due to different horizons in the veterans' lifeworld and in the civilians' lifeworld. This awareness results in the experience of disjuncture. Secondly, the experience of this disjuncture does not happen unreflectively, but, rather, in a reflective perspective in which veterans recollect their experiences. Consequently, veterans come to an understanding of their own awareness through reflection, illustrating how veterans do not approach social navigation by means of aggression control, but through a reflection on experiences of disjuncture. The patterns identified by means of TLT highlight the productivity that this theoretical framework provides for the analysis of veteran narratives and for the illustration of veterans' typical social challenges. Grounded in our theoretical

framework, an analysis of veteran narratives illustrates the disjunctures that veterans face, and the experiences to which these typical disjunctures are related.

Veteran Approaches to Resolving Disjunctures

Our analysis shows that veterans actively engage with experiences of disjuncture, and that this engagement is limited by three perspectives prevalent in veteran narratives and in the current discourse on social support for veterans: (1) An understanding that the civilian environment is defined by authorities who establish social norms, disabling a perspective in which social norms can be co-established by the participants of an environment. (2) The veterans' perception that a diversity of attitudes and social norms constitutes an unstructured environment. (3) The currently predominant perspective that veterans should control their behaviour in the civilian environment, rather than empowering them to reflectively engage in cultural adaptation. The following narration illustrates how a veteran is challenged by having to resolve a disjuncture in the civilian environment:

'Well, things are structured, and there is just one way, more or less, to do things. There aren't all the people in the world over here with different opinions and everything, it just gets done when it's said, more or less. Of course, there is always some kind of, uh, trust in us, and to receive input from others, right? But, uh, to get into in such a class, for instance, in a school, right? There are many who may think that they're right all the time. And then everybody starts discussing everything at once ... It's something like that, where you miss that someone just makes a decision in the end. There shouldn't be anything about things being poorly structured and stuff like that.' – *Billy*

This narrative segment focuses on structures in which Billy deals with social challenges. From a veterans' perspective, participants in a social situation should adhere to the social norm that a 'collective orientation' (cf. Bohnsack, Pfaff, & Weller 2010: 128–132) should be established to achieve a task. Veterans learn this norm for task achievement when they develop their military identity, and they typically continue following this social norm when they return to a civilian environment. For veterans, this social norm is fundamentally different to social norms for task achievement in the civilian environment. Veterans are used to an authoritative participant, 'someone' who takes charge of task achievement. From Billy's veteran perspective, individuals in the school context relate to task achievement in three ways: They can be (1) an authoritative participant who enforces a social norm to achieve a task, (2) a trusted participant who recognises the input of other individuals, or (3) an untrusted participant who opposes input in the process of task achievement. Seen from our theoretical framework, the recognition of input from another taken-for-granted perspective creates trust (Jarvis 2006: 93), influencing the relationship between authoritative and non-authoritative participants. Billy's experience in task achievement in a civilian environment is that 'everybody starts discussing' which illustrates that he perceives discussion as a limitation for task achievement. In the narrative segment, Billy uses the personal pronoun 'us', illustrating that he generally perceives veterans – who carry a 'different view on the world' – to be members of the group of trusted participants for task achievement.

From a veteran perspective, the military social norm provides 'structure' for task achievement, whereas its civilian counterpart only provides 'poor structure'. Implicitly, the veteran does not reflect upon the fact that discussion and exchange of different opinions may lead to an emergent structure that may be well-suited for task achievement. Here, the veteran perspective on the situation at school is limited by his military lifeworld perspective, in which he does not consider a civilian lifeworld perspective. Thus, the veteran perspective limits his own agency in the situation, simultaneously illustrating that the veteran tries to maintain his military identity in opposition to civilian identities. The next narrative segment illustrates the meaning of structure from a veteran perspective:

'I remember these tutors, it was sort of mindless in the beginning, you know, there wasn't ... It was the first thing that struck me, there was no real plan during the first week, it was just kind of "get to know each other, hang out a bit, then at some point we go over here". There was no structure to it. I could feel I had a hard time with that. And when it was finally said "we meet at twelve o'clock" or at some other time, well, then people came strolling as they saw fit. In the military, if you're told that you meet at twelve o'clock, then you show up five minutes prior to that, and then you stand ready. That would piss me off. That I should waste my time because others couldn't figure out how to show up on time.' – *Casper*

This narrative segment on structure can be understood through the value judgments used in the narration on Casper's study start experience. He describes the study start as a place where (1) 'there was no structure to it', (2) 'there was no real plan', and (3) 'it was sort of mindless.' The narration focuses on the study start as an environment which is supposed to follow a plan – implicitly, we once more find the distinction between a structured environment and an unstructured environment. A 'real plan' would provide structure with respect to a task, whereas the study start environment was insufficiently planned and unrelated to a task. From the veterans' perspective, a planned environment also comes with a range of activities, in which other activities do not belong. Activities that do not belong to a planned environment are 'get to know each other, hang out a bit, then at some point we go over here.' In other words, the study start did not sufficiently relate to an objective and lacked a clearly defined task set by an authoritative participant.

The description of time in this segment is highly illustrative of the veterans' norm for task achievement: The declaration 'at some other time' stands in contrast to 'when it was finally said we meet at twelve o'clock'. For veterans, the norm for task achievement has a temporal structure in which collaboration to achieve a task consists of (1) collective movement, (2) standing ready, and (3) effective use of time. 'Standing ready' leads up to an action, and this action requires a collective orientation, like when Casper expects participants to be on time to ensure effective use of time. From a veteran perspective, participants again take on three typical roles: (1) An authoritative role, (2) a non-authoritative that is not in conflict with military social norms, and (3) a non-authoritative role that presents a conflict. In the narrative, tutors who are representatives of the institution, are expected to provide a 'real plan'. From a veteran support perspective, our analysis indicates that veterans will benefit from initiatives that address diversity and different attitudes with respect to task achievement. In the study start environment, the social norm for task achievement is addressed through activities in which students 'get to know each other' and 'hang out', which is in conflict with the military social norm of veterans who are challenged by activities that lack collective orientation, or where collective orientation is not instituted through authority, but through an unstructured collaborative process. This suggests that veterans find their own agency to be reliant on authorities that provide participants with a collective orientation, and where they would not have to rely on their own agency to structure the process.

Another topic that can be analysed in veteran narratives is the aggression control used in BMHM. From a sociocultural framework, veteran narratives point towards a range of disjunctures where veterans struggled to adapt. This adaptational challenge comes with emotional consequences which this cognitive-behavioural framework essentially describes as aggression and temperament. However, the idea that aggression control can contain veteran problems is lacking, because the problems remain unrelated to the veterans' social situation. To give an example, one veteran illustrates how he uses the allowed absence to study from home, saying: 'I had a really hard time going to school and associating with those I went to class with' (Billy). This veteran manages to finish his HF degree, but does so without culturally adapting to his class. He states: 'I can always think back on my deployment or other episodes in the Danish Defence and think I've tried a lot worse than this. And I did just fine. So, there's no reason to whine. I just have to get on with it, right?'. This statement illustrates that his military identity makes him determined to endure challenging situations such as social exclusion. However, this endurance limits veterans' reintegration beyond the challenges that veterans already face. Ultimately, this example highlights one drastic limitation of the BMHM framework because its focus on aggression control and the prevention of undesirable behaviour has secondary effects: It does cause social exclusion and does not empower veterans to develop an agency for cultural adaptation to the civilian environment in which they will continue to live.

Recommendations for Social Support of Veterans

Based on our analysis of veteran narratives and the exemplary narrative segments presented in the previous section, we want to make a range of social support recommendations. Some of our analytical findings bear a substantial similarity to findings from UK and US studies, suggesting that we are looking at similar requirements for social support. However, these findings relate to different national contexts, and the recommendations below have been tailored to match the national Danish context in which veterans receive social support. The following three recommendations are aimed at professionals who work within veteran support, both in the Danish Defence and in the public welfare sector:

1. *Recognise young Danish veterans as a group that faces specific challenges:* Our analysis provided evidence that young Danish veterans constitute a group with social challenges that are somewhat different to those of older veterans. Young veterans are particularly vulnerable to challenges related to cultural adaptation. We emphasise this point for three reasons: (a) Research outside Denmark has

established that cultural adaptation challenges of veterans are not well understood (Cooper et al. 2016), and that the young veterans are particularly vulnerable (Bergman, Burdett & Greenberg 2014); (b) at the current, early stage of Danish research on veterans' social challenges, there is one case on young Danish veterans' social challenges and, similarly to our own work, this case indicates a convergence of research towards a sociocultural framework (Sørensen 2015), a tendency that is also visible in research from the UK and the US. Denmark may indeed have similar challenges, but we lack research in our own national context; (c) one finding that reflects the importance of national context was the emphasis on educational environments that veterans clearly highlighted. Young veterans in Denmark are highly likely to re-enter institutional education, which is a significant difference when compared to older veterans. We suggest that young Danish veterans need distinctive support when they re-enter institutional education, and that social support initiatives focus on challenges that emerge when the young veterans have to meet the expectations from the Danish education system.

2. *Consider the benefits of a sociocultural framework for the social support of veterans:* Sociocultural frameworks are particularly relevant to understand socialisation and cultural adaptation because they allow us to identify implicit social norms in interaction. This enables approaches in the sociocultural framework to illustrate options for social support, beyond the scope of the cognitive-behavioural BMHM framework. One option is to focus on the transition of veterans as they adopt a civilian identity, and provide a strategy that accommodates challenges in veteran identity. Such a strategy does not focus on behavioural control and the replacement of social norms, but frames veteran identity as the subject of development. In this strategy, military norms co-exist with civilian norms, and the veterans can find a scaffolded environment that empowers them to participate in environments that are shaped by civilian norms. These elements of a strategy for veteran support acknowledge that (a) veterans may perceive the social norms of the civilian environment as insufficiently structured, and that (b) veterans may themselves complicate the reintegration through the use of military analogies to address their challenges. Together, the two elements emphasise that a social support strategy needs to expand the ability of veterans to recognise, learn, and master civilian social norms, grounded in a strategy that expands their agency in the civilian environment. A strategy that expands their agency takes an important step beyond a notion of 'social navigation as aggression control', in which veterans are requested to suppress their emotions.
3. *Increase awareness of challenges in education environments:* Our analysis clearly highlights how young Danish veterans encounter social challenges in educational environments. We have to consider that the veteran group we focus on may have been enlisted at the young age of eighteen, before the completion of their secondary education, and may gain veteran status in less than two years when they commonly leave the Danish Defence. In Denmark, it is very common for young veterans to re-enter institutional education as it is a typical aspiration for young Danes to utilise our free education system and improve their employment options. When our young veterans enter Danish institutional education, they are particularly challenged by the way in which authority is exercised since teachers have a significantly different approach to tasks than their previous military commanders. Consequently, veterans must familiarise themselves with the social norms in the Danish educational environment, requiring them to exercise agency as non-authoritative participants. International research (Lim et al. 2018) and policy (Griffin & Gilbert 2012) treat veterans who enter education as a specific group with social challenges. Our effort is to highlight the possibilities for veteran support both in the Danish Defence policy and for research on Danish veterans.

Conclusion

Veteran social support in Denmark is currently informed by the Battlemind-Homemind framework. Our analysis revealed that this framework is grounded in a stimulus-response model of social interaction. It conceptualises the social environment as a field of stimulants to which veterans respond, and in which veterans should exercise aggression control to meet the social norms of a civilian environment. However, this framework does not include sociocultural characteristics of social interaction – it relies on terms such as adrenaline, reflection, emotional regulation, and suppression of behaviour. We argued that this is a considerable limitation of the framework because it does not acknowledge the interactive processes of socialisation and cultural adaptation. Consequently, we explored an alternative, sociocultural framework.

The sociocultural framework that we presented is grounded in transformative learning theory and enabled us to present a strategy for scaffolding veteran transition and cultural adaptation. Through this framework,

we identified the initial challenges of veterans and subsequently presented an analysis which illustrates how veterans deal with the challenges they encounter. In our analysis, we specifically identified cultural adaptation challenges in educational environments. Here, one important topic related to the social norms for authority that shape the culture of the educational environment, and which veterans perceive as very different from the military social norm.

We provided social support recommendations based on our analysis and showcased findings from our explorative analysis by means of narrative segments. Our recommendations for veteran support task professionals with the responsibility to reflect on contexts of veteran life and build an heuristic repertoire that enables them to work with veterans and the complex sociocultural situations that they find themselves in. Our findings highlight that the Danish Defence and veteran support professionals should (1) recognise young Danish veterans as a group facing distinctive challenges, (2) consider sociocultural frameworks for social support, and (3) contribute to public awareness of the challenges that young Danish veterans face. Our recommendations outline the possibilities for social support which draw on a sociocultural framework in order to describe differences between military and civilian environments. While we are confident that our explorative study provides evidence of veteran challenges, we are aware that the scope of our narrative analysis is limited, and we hope that this exploration will encourage further research into the social dimension of veteran challenges. Ultimately, the perspectives presented in this article take into account that veteran transition from military to civilian life brings social challenges, and that reintegration efforts for veterans can be scaffolded further through a sociocultural framework that enables social support.

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Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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