

Military Veterans Human Capital in Agriculture

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Purpose

This project explores how military human capital, which includes abilities, skills, judgment, training, and education is transferred to a new career in agriculture. The purpose is to identify critical Human Capital indicators among members veterans who farm. Findings indicated **themes including skills that are well conditioned for a career in agriculture.**

Methods

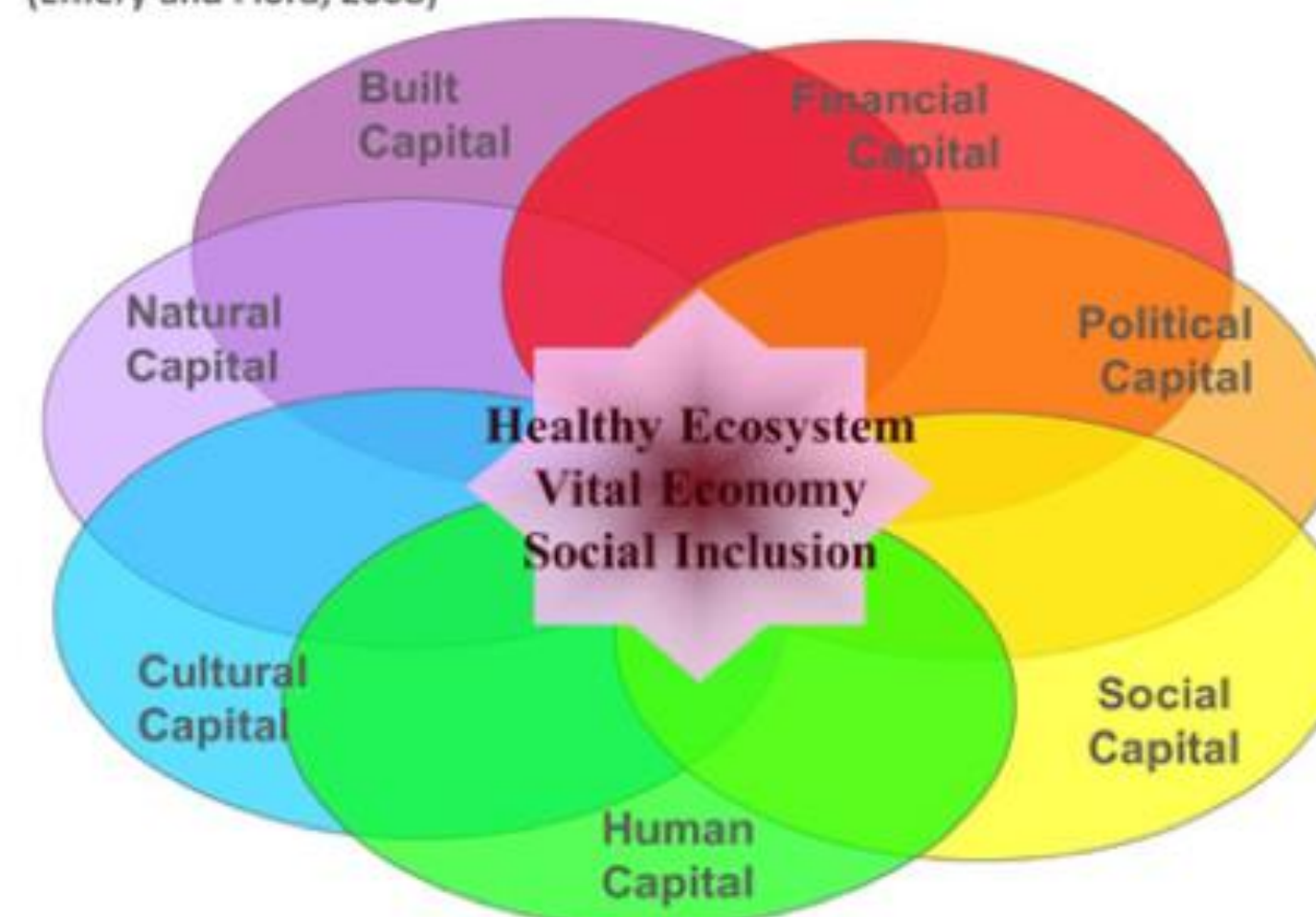
This appreciative qualitative pilot study was conducted using a **bounded case-study** as described in (Creswell, 2013). An agriculture program serving only US Army members and veterans in NC provided our sample. Literature Review and semi-structured interview methods were used. The objective was to show positive attributes that a military veteran can translate to an agricultural career. This research used human capital information gathered from existing academic literature to construct a document of general information on how military veterans in agriculture can assess their situated skills learned during military training, along with other assets acquired through their military service. It surveyed multiple data sources including relevant human capital articles, books, and an agricultural education program that all pertained to military personnel and agriculture. It then conducted semi-structured interviews (n=2). The findings were synthesized into main ideas.

Program Summary

The Soldier To Agriculture Program started as part of a DoD initiative to reduce rising unemployment numbers among transitioning service members. Established in 2017, Soldier to Ag has served over 100 transitioning soldiers and veterans alike with many success stories from them after completion. Soldier to Ag focuses on the individual's plans to enter Agriculture and helps them get there through a variety of educational opportunities.

Framework

The Community Capitals Framework (Emery and Flora, 2008)



Background and Significance

As military veterans discharge, attention has shifted from particular interventions that focus merely on physical or mental health to a more holistic transition back to society (Farrigan, 2013). This often embraces a transition into a new career. For a growing number of veterans, their career involves agriculture (Brown, 2011). With this in mind, this review permits a more appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney 2001). It assessed multiple skills and attributes of military veterans as they relate to an agricultural profession. Exploring the Community Capital Framework with an emphasis on human capital, (Green & Haines, 2012) this study demonstrates how veterans can use their military skills to be empowered as they gain self-autonomy in and out of agriculture.

Findings

Findings from this research show four critical themes: (1) positive military assets; (2) military skills; (3) transferability of learned skills into an agricultural setting; and (4) positive improvement on mental health of participants. The concept of "service to our country" through the cultivation of food was evident throughout all the other themes. Results show mental health of veterans are improved when they are allowed to use their learned human capital skills without medication and other interventions.

Military Assets that Translate to Agriculture

- Trained in Leadership and Perseverance
- Able to adjust to changing conditions
- Experienced in adverse conditions
- Pays attention to detail
- Experienced in record keeping, mechanics, Electrical troubleshooting, safety, and teaching
- Physically fit
- Access to health coverage
- Access to educational funding
- Networking skills and resources
- Learning in situ

