

# THE DIVIDE

telling the story of military service

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## Concept Package

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Hacking Story Frameworks  
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# CONTENTS

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## TOPIC

The problem	3
Goals	4

## USERS

Veterans	5
Non-military	7

# THE PROBLEM

# WHY

Military participation has fallen steadily over time. During WWII, 9% of the American population served in the military. Since 9/11, it has hovered near 0.5%.

Of those that serve, as many as 80% of them come from a family where a parent or sibling is serving/has served.

Those without a personal connection to the military are forced to build an understanding of the institution from pop culture and media references, which are numerous but often unrealistic.

The public loves war stories, but does not care much about the broader stories of service that come from one of the largest, most beloved institutions. Unless a veteran is telling a story that matches the expectations folks have of "damaged hero," they are likely to be ignored.

**Veterans require a better tool to assist them  
in telling their stories**

According to a 2012 Pew Research poll, 84% of post 9/11 veterans and 71% of the public believe **the general public does not have  
a good understanding of military life**

# GOALS

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1. Provide any interested veteran, regardless of technical or other ability, a way to share the stories that matter to him/her.
2. Create an experience that captures the attention of those who normally do not think about military/veteran issues.
3. Provide the tools and context folks without military experience need to understand the stories that come from that space.
4. Foster a concern for the military and veterans that goes beyond surface level, superficial support.
5. Provide suggestions on continuing the conversation, with an emphasis on opportunities for direct conversation between groups.

# VETERANS

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Role in project is primarily as content contributor

This project is a tool to help non-military folk understand what the military experience is like, naturally giving veterans the role of storyteller. Because many groups interested in veteran issues tend to use the group and their stories in superficial, self-serving ways, allowing this group of stakeholders direct control over their story with a tool that allows them to tell it directly without curation is ideal.

Depth of experience is not important

All too often, storytelling around veterans focus on the extremes of the experience, though key to understanding the institution is learning about the more mundane, day-to-day routines. There will be no requirements with regard to time in service, deployment history, discharge status, era, etc. Even someone who served one day before discharge will have interesting things to say about their decision to join and what that day was like.

Looking to reach out to those who already willing to share stories in this context

If every individual from this group of stakeholders were to contribute a story, the final result would be difficult for others to consume. I know based on personal knowledge that there are already plenty of folks who are looking for a good tool to share their stories. Initially, this is the subset of veterans that I will look to target with the project.

# JESSE ARNOLD



**Age** 31

**Gender** Male

**Location** Phoenix, AZ

**Occupation** Undergrad, Business  
Arizona State Univ.

**Service** U.S. Army, 2003-2011  
Signals Intel  
Iraq 04-05, 07-08  
Afg 10-11

## BACKGROUND

- Jesse himself has had no lasting problems as a result of his military service. He lost a friend to suicide eight months ago.
- He's been married once before, but it ended quickly in divorce. He does not have any children.
- Jesse is in his second year of undergrad studying business. His primary goal at the moment is to finish school and pivot to a more typical civilian career.
- Jesse has been successful in school on paper, but struggles to connect. He's had a hard time finding anything comparable to the social network he had in the military.
- He wishes more people around him understood some of the things he experienced, but doesn't have the time or desire to make it a central part of his life. He requires a tool that would allow him to easily communicate without any obligation to do more.

## TAKEAWAYS

Many veterans aren't interested in making storytelling about their experiences their main focus, but may be willing to talk about it nonetheless. A tool that allows them to use it whenever, wherever without any more effort than necessary is ideal.

# NON MILITARY

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Users of project

This group will need a separate entry point into the project where they can consume stories. The design will need to accommodate a relatively limited knowledge of military lingo, routine, and history that may be used liberally within stories.

Focus on specific subset

The folks I'm most interested in reaching are those who came of age at the same time as post-9/11 veterans but did not choose to/could not serve. Of all generations of civilians, they are arguably the most disconnected from the military. Looking to reach folks without connection to military between ages of 18-34.

Tech-savvy

The targeted population tends to be rather connected and tech-savvy. I can assume that all/nearly all have internet connection via phone and/or computer and know how to use these devices fairly well.

Knowledge of military comes from pop culture

Some of the most popular video games and movie franchises concern the military and militarism. This popularity can be used as an entry point to a deeper discussion of the actual experiences flattened and masked by these representations.

Prioritize other issues

Although this age group is an especially engaged group, their distance from the military and the general perception of veterans as privileged means they are likely to prioritize other social issues. Looking for intersection is another strategy that can be used to increase engagement.

# KELLY DUNCAN



**Age** 27

**Gender** Female

**Location** New York, NY

**Occupation** Media editor

## BACKGROUND

- Kelly grew up in NYC, and though she vaguely remembers folks from high school enlisting, she did not know them. She went to college immediately following high school, as did everyone in her family and friend network.
- She is extremely busy, often working more than 40 hours per week depending on the projects on her plate at any given moment.
- She is a film aficionado, having taken a job as an editor at an independent TV studio in order to position herself for something within the film industry.
- As far as she knows, the wars in the Middle East are over. She never considers the military or related issues in daily life.
- She cares deeply about the environment, and tries to live green whenever possible.
- Single, holding off on dating seriously until she establishes herself a bit more.

## TAKEAWAYS

The biggest challenge is going to be getting people like Kelly to the table to begin with. A public intervention interrupting people's normal days, that appears on the surface to be related to media/pop culture military references but then tells a more complex story, seems to be ideal.