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Evaluating resources available to transitioning military service members

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, brother, sister-in-law, and nephew. Without their unconditional support, I would not have been pushed to finish this research. To my dad for his constant advise, flawless editing skills, and expertise on all things military. To my mom for her unwavering moral support and frequent reminders to reward myself, but most of all for her coming to visit and make me meals while I finished my thesis and comprehensive exams. To my brother and sister-in-law for their reminders to "live a little" and take many writing breaks. And to my four-month nephew for nonverbally encouraging me with the promise of getting to see him again once I was through with my thesis.

Above all, this thesis is dedicated to the men and women who have selflessly served our country. It is my hope that I can someday repay those in uniform for what they have given me through their service to this great nation.

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Abstract

Personnel separating from the military following the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, in addition to those forced out as a result of recent Department of Defense downsizing measures, have heightened demand for an effective means to transition personnel into the civilian workforce and educational system. This study investigated the opinions of service members towards the overall transition process. Data collection consisting of primarily quantitative methods followed by qualitative analysis of a final open-ended question was used. Fifty-two service members who had separated in the previous five years and four service members who were in the process of separating completed a survey about their usage of the military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP), military mentorships, civilian career counseling, social networking sites, and veteran job and school fairs. Findings of this study suggested that service members encounter several problematic issues during the transition process, including emotional difficulties encountered as a result of departure from military culture. Responses indicated dissatisfaction with the traditional resources available, particularly with TAP, civilian career counseling, and veteran job and school fairs. In addition, responses indicated the potential for increased program success through the use of mentorship and assistance provided by experienced military personnel, especially those who have successfully transitioned themselves and are familiar with preparing resumes and translating military skills into civilian terminology.

Keywords: Military service members, veterans, military separation, military transition, Transition Assistance Program (TAP), civilian career counseling, mentorship, social networking, veteran job fairs, veteran school fairs

Introduction

Unemployment rates continue to be a popular topic of discussion, but the unemployment rates for United States military veterans are cause for alarm (Curtis, 2012; Seegal, 2012). The unemployment rate for Gulf War-era II veterans remains higher than that of civilians according to the January 2013 report published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Bureau of Labor, 2013). The total unemployment rate for Gulf War-era II veterans is 11.7% compared to 8.3% for civilians. The unemployment rate for female veterans of the Gulf War- era II stands at 17.1%. As the CEO and founder of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Paul Rieckhoff, explains, "Not only are these numbers appalling, the government's research on the veteran community is woefully inadequate. If we're going to make progress on veteran unemployment, we need reliable data to provide effective support from the public, private and nonprofit sectors" (Seegal, 2012, para. 2).

Of equal importance are the alarming rates of suicides among active duty service members and veterans (Walsh, 2013; Williams, 2012). The suicide rates of active duty service members have now surpassed the number of service members who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan (Williams, 2012). A recent Department of Veterans Affairs study found that:

> A military veteran commits suicide every 65 minutes, on average, according to a recent study from the Department of Veterans Affairs. An older, less detailed government analysis reported that about 18 former service members kill themselves each day. But recent, more precise study of veteran suicides from 1999 to 2010 shows that the number is heartbreakingly higher: 22 deaths per day. (Walsh, 2013, para. 2-3)

Such transition issues reveal the need for more extensive research related to service members' separation from the military and transition into the civilian sector.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the resources and support available to service members separating from the military and transitioning into the civilian sector. The Department of Labor estimates 200,000 service members leave the military each year (*Licensure and certification*, 2007). With our government's plans to cut the national security budget in 2013, even more service members will be asked to leave the military. If these cuts take effect "the U.S. Army could see layoffs of up to 24,000 enlisted personnel, including up to 5,000 officers, while the U.S. Marine Corps could shrink by some 20,000" (Hegseth, 2012, para. 2).

As personnel in the military branches transition, it is assumed that most will be in search of jobs in the civilian workforce or will wish to further their education, as a majority will still be of working age. Many individuals serve less than ten years, meaning they will separate from the military prior to age thirty (Segal & Segal, 2004). Those who choose a military career can still depart the service in their late thirties or early forties. These ages are considered too young for traditional retirement by societal standards, which is why many will seek second careers or pursue further education in the civilian world. Such high numbers of service members transitioning into the civilian workforce and schools each year require adequate resources to ease the transition process (Seegal, 2012; Hegseth, 2012). Since former military make up a large part of the workforce, it is crucial that reintegration goes smoothly. After serving their country, service members

deserve access to the most effective resources that will ensure their successful transition into the civilian sector.

There are other consequences beyond unemployment for service members who fail to reintegrate into the civilian sector. Service members are at risk for a number of factors including: drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, homelessness, criminal activity, and more (Pew Social and Demographic Trends, 2011a; Baechtold & De Sawal, 2009; Wolpert, 2000). Over a quarter of combat veterans who used the VA said they had "some" to "extreme" difficulty in "social functioning, productivity, community involvement, and self-care domains" and about a third said they had issues with "divorce, dangerous driving, substance use, and increased anger control problems" (Sayer et al., 2010, p. 589). Why do these statistics matter? Sayer et al. justified the magnitude of help needed for military veterans when they said, "Left untreated, these problems could have deleterious effects not only on the individual but also on his or her family, community, and society as a whole" (p. 594).

As service members are impacted by their transition into the civilian sector, the intent of this research is to understand why they choose to use some resources over others and which aspects they consider most effective. The goal is to better understand what service members need in way of support during their transition. Through accurate identification of service member needs and opinions, better resources and sources of support can be designed to target their specific needs.

Nature of the Study

The present study used a quantitative survey method with two open ended or qualitative questions so participants could rate their perceived effectiveness of transition

resources and support services. Respondents included service members who had separated from the military within the past five years or were in the process of separating and transitioning into the civilian sector. This study asked specific questions to determine whether military service members are receiving adequate support for their transition needs.

Research Question

As discussed previously, the transition process is not easy for all military individuals. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, the question is defined as:

Which resources and sources of support (TAP, mentorships, civilian career counseling, job and school fairs, social networking) are most effective for service members separating from the military and transitioning into the civilian workforce or school?

Which issues are of most concern to transitioning military service members?

Hypotheses

Overall, the hypotheses for this research study are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Service members will choose the military provided Transition Assistance Program (TAP) as the least effective resource and source of support in preparing for their transition out of the military.

Hypothesis 2: Service members will choose mentoring as the most effective resource and source of support when transitioning out of the military.

Hypothesis 3: Service members will most often indicate they struggled with the issue of change in military identity.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope

This study assumes a majority of those transitioning will seek employment due to financial necessity, as they were not yet eligible for retirement. This study also assumes that transitioning service members are aware of existing resources and support services available to military personnel. It is also assumed that service members are interested in improving the resources available for transitioning and would like assistance when separating from the military. While combat veterans are the most likely to have difficulties transitioning into the civilian sector, it is assumed that service members without combat experiences will also experience difficulties.

In terms of limitations, this study is limited in four distinct ways: (1) sample size, (2) time period, (3) type of research, and (4) generalizability. In terms of sample size, the researcher was not able to gather a large enough sample as to be representative. As former military service members are transient in nature, it was difficult securing individuals to participate in the research study. In terms of time period, the research was limited to one academic year. The survey had to be distributed and analyzed in one academic semester, leaving only a few weeks for the survey to be open to respondents. The type of research was also a limitation due to time constraints. The research was limited to a quantitative survey and only two brief qualitative questions, to allow the researcher adequate time to analyze the data. Interviewing service members would have provided the researcher with an excess amount of data to code within a short time frame. And last, the research is limited in terms of its generalizability. The study's findings are not generalizable to all military service members and certainly not to service members

who served in foreign militaries. A convenience sample was conducted which was not representative of military service members as a whole.

The scope of this study extends to U.S. service members who: (1) have been honorably discharged within the previous five years or (2) are preparing to separate. Personnel dishonorably discharged or separated with a less than honorable discharge were excluded as the author believed these groups may have encountered unique problems that impacted their overall transition experience. This study is also limited to individuals who transitioned within the past five years as the author wanted to focus on issues with present-day resources and support services. Veterans of other eras (Korean Conflict, Vietnam Era, and Operation Desert Storm) were not included as their experiences differ from those who have recently served.

Significance of the Study

This study aims to identify which sources are perceived as the most effective for service members when transitioning out of the military and into the civilian sector. It is likely that service members are finding more support outside of traditional military-offered services, which could necessitate the restructuring of the military's transition programs. The need to help service members better integrate into civilian society is real; a recent study of 754 veterans who were using VA services found that more than 95% expressed interest in "services for community reintegration problems" (Sayer et al., 2010, p. 593).

The intent of this study is to provide information about service members' assessments of the resources and sources of support available for their transition to the civilian sector. Much research focuses on the problems service members experience when

transitioning, but little research focuses on whether the provided resources directly

address their problems and needs. This research will explain why service members prefer

some transition resources over others, and which aspects of support are the most

important during the transition process. In past studies, research considered what career

counselors and 'experts' thought would help service members during transition. But this

research determined what service members themselves thought were the most or least

effective transition support and services provided.

Definition of Key Terms

The key terms used in the research questions and hypotheses are defined in Table

1.1.

Table 1.1

Definition of Key Terms

Key Term	Definition	Citation(s)
Military service member	"A member of the uniformed services, as that term is defined in section 101(a)(5) of title 10, United States Code" with uniformed services defined as, "(A) the armed forces, (B) the commissioned corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and (C) the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service" Any individuals who have served in some branch of the United States Armed Forces to include the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, National Guard, Navy, or Reserve unit of any branch.	(Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, 2003)
Veteran	"A veteran is a former member of the Armed Forces of the United States (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard) who served on active duty and was discharged under conditions, which were other than dishonorable."	(The Pennsylvania State University, 2013, para. 2)
Transition	"Any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles." For this study, a transition will include service members separating from the military and entering the civilian workforce or returning to school.	(Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman, 1995, p. 2)
Separation	"A general term which includes dismissal, dropping from the rolls, revocation, of an appointment or commission, termination of an appointment, release from active duty, release from custody and control…, or transfer from active duty to the: IRR, … Reserve, Retired List, Temporary or Permanent Disability	(United States, 1978, p. 8)

	Retired List, or Retired Reserve and similar changes in an active or reserve status."	
Civilian sector	The sector of society made up of "any person not an active member of the armed forces." For this study, the civilian sector will include the civilian workforce or a college/university separate from the military. While the civilian sector is separate from the military, this study may include individuals who have separated from the service but are transitioning into federal jobs.	(Webster's new world college dictionary, 2005, p. 269)
Effectiveness	The action of "producing a definite or desired result." Effectiveness will be determined by how service members rate the available resources and support systems for transition. Effectiveness will be measured by the transitioning service member's level of satisfaction with available transition services and perceived amount of guidance gained from the transition support and services offered.	(Webster's new world college dictionary, 2005, p. 454)
Resources	"Something that lies ready for use or that can be drawn upon for aid or to take care of a need." Resources will be any source, program, or support that a service member uses before or during his or her transition into the civilian workforce or school. The main resources will be the military's Transition Assistance Program, mentorships, social networks, career counseling via civilian career counselors, and veteran job or school fairs.	(Webster's new world college dictionary, 2005, p. 1221)
Transition Assistance Program (TAP)	A program created by the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Transportation, and the Department of Labor to assist individuals separating from the military. The program	(U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2005)

	provides workshops about job searching, resume writing, interviewing, Veterans benefits, and anything else necessary for placement in the civilian sector.	
Mentorship	To mentor is to be "a wise, loyal advisor" and "a teacher or coach." "Mentors provide young adults with career-enhancing functions such as sponsorship, coaching, facilitating exposure and visibility, and offering challenging work or protection, all of which help the younger person to establish a role in the organization, learn the ropes, and prepare for advancement. In the psychosocial sphere, the mentor offers role modeling, counseling, confirmation, and friendship, which help the young adult to develop a sense of professional identity and competence." For the purpose of this study, mentorships will focus on mentoring of any transitioning service member, regardless of age. Special attention will be given to former service members' mentoring of separating service members.	(Webster's new world college dictionary, 2005, p. 900) (Kram & Isabella, 1985, p. 111)
Civilian Career Counseling	"[T]he method by which supervisors or mentors explain the career development process and help the employee identify career goals and career plans." For the purpose of this study, civilian career counseling will be a non-military affiliated counselor assisting a transitioning service member to prepare for the civilian workforce.	(U.S. Coast Guard, n.d., p. 41)
Social networking	The use of "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system."	(Boyd & Ellison, 2007, para. 4)

School and job fairs	Also called career fairs, job fairs are "face-to-face meetings between jobseekers and employers. They offer participants opportunities to learn about and apply for openings, meet with company recruiters, submit resumes, or just gather information about career opportunities." For the purpose of this study, the researcher will consider school and job fairs.	(Houston Area Consortium of Career Centers, 2013, p. 1)

The next section of this paper presents an extensive review of literature beginning with Levinson's (1978) life cycle theory, Bandura's (1986, 1997, 2001) social cognitive theory, Tajfel's (1972, 1974) social identity theory, Katz and Kahn's role theory (1966), and Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory. Each theory is followed by a discussion of relevant military literature that applies to that theory. The remainder of the literature review for this study aims to describe career barriers faced by service members and information about existing resources that are already used in support of military transitions or could be. The existing resources section goes into detail about the military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP), the building and translating of skills, the Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) approach of civilian career counselors, mentoring, networking, and veteran job and school fairs.

Review of the Literature

The review of the literature will begin with a brief overview of the history of

transition services provided to military veterans beginning in World War II. The history

will be followed by a discussion of learning theories as they apply to military separation

and transition and conclude with literature that discusses the current barriers and

resources that exist for service members transitioning into the civilian sector. The

literature was found via searches on academic search engines such as EBSCO, JSTOR,

SAGE Journal Online, and Google Scholar. The keywords used included "military" and

"career/job/occupation transition," "military/veterans" and "employment," "military" and

"civilian career."

History

Following World War I, few benefits were available for individuals getting out of

the service. As a result, Congress created a program to meet the needs of service

members returning from World War I in 1917 (Meryash, 2005). The program called for

vocational rehabilitation, disability compensation, and insurance for veterans and active-

duty service members. The Veterans Bureau, the Bureau of Pensions of the Interior

Department, and the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers oversaw this

program until the Veterans Administration took over in 1930.

Following World War II, President Roosevelt signed the "Servicemen's

Readjustment Act of 1944," which soon was known as the "GI Bill of Rights" (Meryash,

2005). This bill gave tuition, books, and living expenses to veterans for four years of

schooling, either college or a vocational school. Those returning to the workforce were

given twenty dollars a week while trying to find jobs. The GI Bill also provided veterans

with low interest mortgages and loans for farms and businesses. Veterans' hospitals were launched and vocational rehabilitation was provided for those who were disabled. Later acts would extend these benefits to all military service members, regardless of when or where they had served.

Following the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, more legislation was created in an effort to boost the morale of our veterans and offer them greater support as they returned from the war and reintegrated into the American workforce and academic settings. The VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 was signed into law by President Obama on November 11, 2012 in an effort to improve the process for service members transitioning into the civilian workforce (Curtis, 2012). The VOW Act contained four key components: tax incentives for the hiring of veterans, training assistance for veterans of a certain age, a study initiated by the Department of Labor to determine how military experience transfers to civilian jobs, and recommended changes to the Transition Assistance Program. First, the act offers tax incentives to employers who hire veterans who have been unemployed for more than four weeks or who have not had a job for more than six months. Employers who hire veterans with service-related disabilities are awarded higher tax credits. Second, the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) was updated to train unemployed veterans 35 years of age or older who are looking to obtain their associate's degree or a certificate, but are not eligible to receive any other VA educational benefits. Third, the VOW Act called for the Department of Labor to conduct a study to determine how military experience transfers to civilian jobs. However, funding was not provided for the study and a timeframe was not set for completion of the study. Fourth, the VOW Act made changes to the military's Transition Assistance Program,

however changes were minimal. Under this act, it is now mandatory that all separating service members participate in TAP. The act also extended TAP from a three-day workshop to eight days, and focused efforts on incorporating more individualized career counseling.

Learning Theories

This study uses life cycle theory (Levinson, 1978), social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997, 2001), social identity theory (Tajfel, 1972, 1974), role theory (Katz & Kahn, 1966), and transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995) to explain why service members may experience difficulties when separating from the military and transitioning into the civilian sector. Following each theory, the researcher will discuss the literature on military transitions and how it relates to each specific theory. Figure 2.1 depicts the relationship between the theories and concepts of the study.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

In Figure 2.1, which displays the theoretical and conceptual framework of this study, life cycle theory, social cognitive theory, and transition theory are represented as a cycle as all theories underlie military separation and transition. The white boxes surrounding the theories represent the variables studied in this research: the military's Transition Assistance Program, mentorships, networking, veteran job and school fairs, and civilian career counseling.
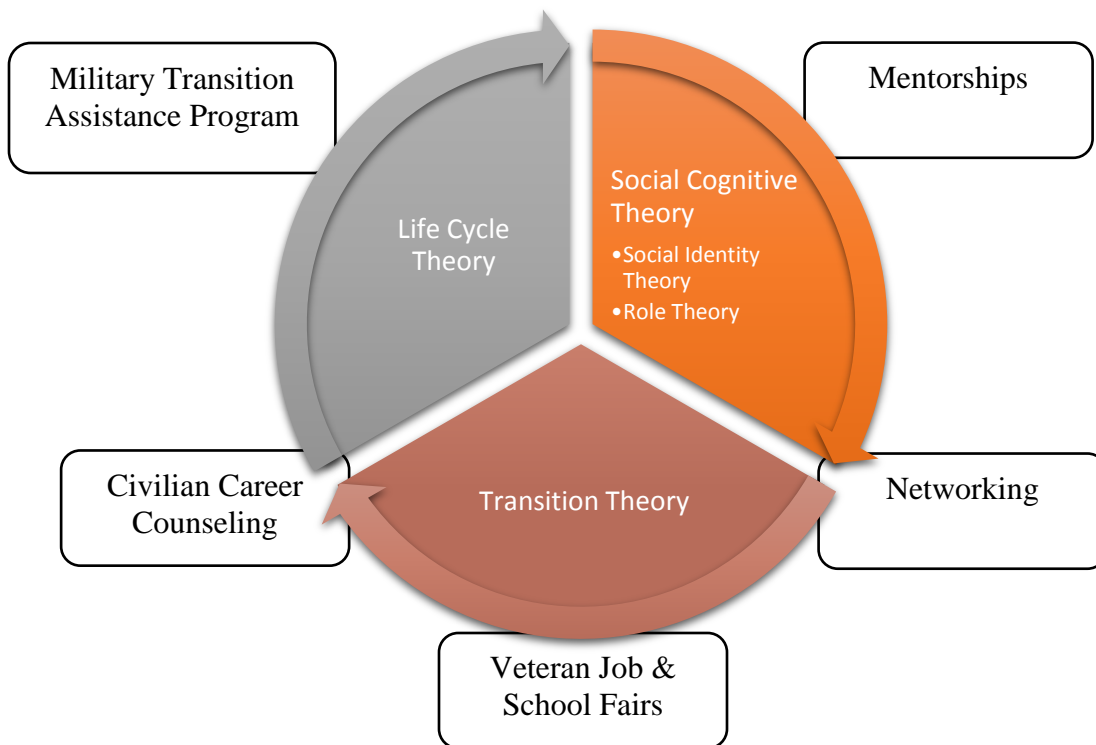
Figure 2.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Life Cycle Theory

Levinson (1978) explained the cycle of a man's life. He believed that men follow a similar journey from life to death and are influenced along the journey. There are four overlapping eras in a man's life. The first is childhood and adolescence between 0 and 22 years of age. The second era is early adulthood between 17 and 45 years of age. The third is middle adulthood between ages 40 and 65 years of age. The fourth and last era is late adulthood beyond age 60. The early and middle adulthood stages are of the most importance to this research as those are the prime periods for employment in a man's life.

Through his examination of the life cycle, Levinson explained that work is an important part of a man's life. Levinson (1978) stated:

A man's work is the primary base for his life in society. Through it he is 'plugged into' an occupational structure and a culture, class, and social matrix. Work is also of great psychological importance; it is a vehicle to the fulfillment or negotiation of central aspects of the self. (p. 9)

A change in a man's job can cause a qualitative change in the "character of his life" (Levinson, 1978, p. 44). Thus, it is important to study service members' transitions from a military career to a civilian career, as it marks a significant part of their life cycles. Levinson (1978) explained:

Occupation has important sources within the self and important consequences for the self. At best, his occupation permits the fulfillment of basic values and life goals. At worst, a man's life over the years is oppressive and corrupting, and contributes to a growing alienation from self, work, and society. (p. 45)

Having effective transition support resources should ensure service members make a successful transition into a civilian career and not have to deal with problematic issues.

Military service member life cycles.

The notion that service members struggle when leaving the military is not new, but only now is research being conducted to determine the extent. A majority of past transition research centered on retiring service members, meaning those who had served for twenty or more years (McNeil & Giffen, 1967; Spiegel & Shultz, 2003; Wolpert, 2000). Research suggests that retiring service members who encounter issues when separating do so because of personality traits and psychiatric issues (Greenberg, 1965). Greenberg coined the term "old soldier syndrome" to describe retiring, non-commissioned officers who develop "the insidious onset and gradual progression of anxiety (frequently somatized), tension, insomnia, and concentration difficulties" (p. 251).

Greenberg (1965) proceeds to discuss the case histories of four "old soldiers" who were preparing to retire, with each case history including examples of extreme behavior that required intense psychiatric evaluations and treatments. While Greenberg was correct in explaining that retiring service members' behavior may change as they are preparing for the transition, he neglected to explain how he came to know the case studies. His discussion of only the most extreme cases falsely leads the reader to think all retiring service members require psychiatric help. He also neglects to discuss service members who only served for short periods of time, but still encounter difficulties when leaving the military. Greenberg implies that those struggling had specific personality traits prior to joining the service. As he explains, "Our impression has been that many of these men are

intensively passive dependent at core. The Army, with its ordered, authoritative structure continues to support the soldier's passive needs down through the years, and often provides a framework for the acceptable expression of aggressive impulses" (p. 252).

Additionally, Greenberg (1965) fails to provide evidence to support his claim that the retiring service members had passive personalities prior to their military service. It is just as likely that the retiring service members developed such traits having served for extended periods of time, in demanding assignments such as combat, and so on. It appears that Greenberg's research focused too much on diagnosing retiring service members rather than uncovering the root problem- that the military has not adequately prepared service members for their transition to civilian life.

The following section describes the relation of social cognitive theory to the military. Discussion includes service members' creation of a social identity, explanation of military culture, and last, how role theory and the process of role-exit relate to military separation and transition.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997, 2001) centers on the notion that individuals learn through social interactions with others and the environment. Figure 2.2 summarizes social cognitive theory and the relationship between person, behavior, and environment. As Schunk (2004) explains:

By observing others, people acquire knowledge, rules, skills, strategies, beliefs, and attitudes. Individuals also learn from models the usefulness and appropriateness of behaviors and the consequences of modeled behaviors, and

they act in accordance with beliefs about their capabilities and the expected

outcomes of their actions. (p. 83)

Much of the military culture can be explained via social cognitive theory as young

men and women are indoctrinated into the military through boot camps and officer

candidate schools, and adapt to military culture through intensive observation and

modeling. For instance, recruits are socialized and taught how to behave through

observing and modeling the actions of their drill sergeants. It is through this observation

and modeling that recruits learn how to salute, perform drill, handle weapons, prepare

their uniforms, and so on.
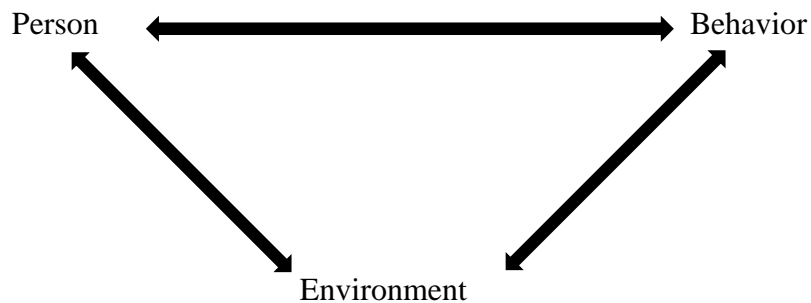
Figure 2.2 Triadic Reciprocality Model of Causality, Bandura (1986) as modified by Bamford

Since service members' social identities develop throughout their military training

and service, the following section will explain the role of social identity as it relates to

military separation.

Social identity theory.

Tajfel (1972) first defined social identity as "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership" (p. 292). Social identity differs from personal identity in that individuals maintain a collective identity with whatever group they consider themselves members. As Hogg (2006) explains:

> A social group is more than two people who share the same social identity. They identify and evaluate themselves in the same way and have the same definition of who they are, what attributes they have, and how they relate to and differ from people who are not in the group…Group membership is a matter of collective self-construal—"we" and "us" versus "them." (p. 115)

Military members adopt social identities during their military service and come to see their fellow comrades as sharing the same beliefs, attributes, and ways of life.

Many studies concerning military to civilian transitions focused on why separating from the military could be difficult and emotional (McNeil & Giffen, 1967; Griffith, 2009; Hall, 2012). Social identity theory can help to explain the struggle service members may have when reintegrating into the civilian sector (McNeil & Giffen, 1967; Tajfel, 1974). Tajfel (1974) explained that a person's membership in a social group influences the image of him or herself. Social identities and categorizations shape a person's place in society. Griffith (2009) adapted Tajfel's definition of social identity to better explain the situation with regard to military personnel. The practices, customs, and rituals inside military units help to form the social identity of the service member. Social categorization takes place when service members begin to define their own identity based

on membership in the military (Griffith, 2009). Social identity can become so strong within service members that "the cultural role becomes more prominent than the individual role" (Wolpert, 2000, p. 109).

Ellemers, Kortekaas, and Ouwerkerk (1999) identified three components that make up a person's social identity: "a cognitive component (a cognitive awareness of one's membership in a social group-self-categorization), an evaluative component (a positive or negative value connotation attached to this group membership-group self-esteem), and an emotional component (a sense of emotional involvement with the group-affective commitment)" (p. 372).

Military culture.

Many believe the military has its own culture (Hall, 2012; Reger, Etherage, Reger, and Gahm, 2008). Hall (2012) explains, "The unique culture of the military is, indeed, a diverse group of people in American society that must be understood as uniquely different from the civilian world" (p. 3). Reger, Etherage, Reger, and Gahm (2011) classify the military as having their own culture because the military embodies all elements of a culture as it has its own "language, a code of manners, norms of behavior, belief systems, dress, and rituals" (p. 22). Military culture is distinct from civilian culture in the following ways: "(a) frequent separations and reunions; (b) regular household relocations; (c) living life under the umbrella of the 'mission must come first' dictum; (d) the need for families to adapt to rigidity, regimentation and conformity; (e) early retirement from a career in comparison to civilian counterparts; (f) rumors of loss during a mission; (g) detachment from the mainstream of nonmilitary life; (h) the security of a system that exists to meet the families' needs; (i) work that usually involves travel and

adventure; (j) the social effects of rank on the family; and (k) the lack of control over pay, promotion, and other benefits" (Hall, 2012, p. 6-7).

Problems with social identity arise when service members leave the military through retirement or separation (McNeil & Giffen, 1967; Wolpert, 2000). Separating from the military can cause a break in the service member's identity, as he or she must enter the social system of the civilian sector (McNeil & Giffen, 1967). A number of researchers classified service members' feelings when separating from the military as grief over the loss of their military identity (McNeil & Giffen, 1967; Griffith, 2009, Wolpert, 2000). Social identity theory posits that "integration would most likely prove cognitively taxing" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 30), which might explain why service members have problems transitioning to a civilian identity while still maintaining their military identity.

Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization explain that prototypes or ideal models in a social organization emphasize likeness within the group and dissimilarities outside the group, helping to segregate groups (Hogg & Terry, 2000). This process especially explains the "us" versus "them" mentality that often exists between the military and civilian sectors. This factor creates a challenge for service members entering a civilian system that had previously been recognized as a closed and opposing social system.

Greenberg (1965) best summarized the identity and self-categorization issues service members experience when he said:

As his career draws to a close, the old soldier is exposed to stresses which may well lead him to question his worth to society and his value to himself. Trained in

the technical disciplines of war, he may, with some currency, have grave

reservations about his civilian marketability. While consciously anticipating

retirement, he may feel that he will find no place for himself on the "outside,"

may fear the forthcoming separation and unconsciously wish to maintain the

dependency relationship implicit in active duty status. Retirement, with all its

privileges, but without the well-defined order of the Army day, seems only a

ghost of his former dynamic and responsible life. (p. 253)

Role theory.

Role confusion or role discontinuity makes up a large part of the transition

process, causing anxiety as the service member leaves the regimented and familiar

system of the military for the unfamiliar civilian system (McNeil & Giffen, 1967;

Wolpert, 2000). If expectations differ in the two organizations, in this case the military

sector and civilian sector, role conflict will occur (Katz & Kahn, 1966). The effects of

role conflict include negative attitude, pessimistic beliefs, and poor performance

(Driscoll, 1981), all of which could further complicate service members' transitions.

More so, service members may experience culture shock as they are transitioning from

the rigid structure of the military (focused on teams) to the more informal structure of the

civilian sector that is focused on individuals. Service members returning to school upon

separation from the military are also likely to experience settings in stark contrast to those

of the military, as Ryan et al. (2011) explains:

Acts of discipline, respect for authority and the chain of command, minimized

individual expression, and unquestioned deference to individuals of higher rank

are just some of the practices held in high regard in the military culture. However,

they are often discouraged and, at times, are the sources of protest in higher

education. (p. 57)

Roles change as service members leave behind their military rank and status and

become civilian citizens. Thoughts of self may change as service members question what

they want to do with their lives after the transition. Concepts of the larger society or

world may also change as individuals experience settings and events very different from

the military world with which they had grown accustomed.

McNeil and Giffen (1967) explain that the "removal of the uniform and its

insignia carries with it a certain loss of identity" (p. 851). Service members may feel as if

they are losing their status, as military rank is not as important in the civilian community

(Wolpert, 2000). The TurboTAP informational website explained, "Upon leaving the

Armed Forces, he or she [the service member] leaves this rank behind—and with it, a

large portion of his or her identity" (Department of Defense, 2011, para. 3). Service

members may also feel as if they are being stripped of the high level of responsibility and

authority they had as leaders, as they may not be given the same opportunities in civilian

careers.

Role-exit theory.

The change between roles can be so significant that a theory has been created to

explain the process: role exit theory. Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh (1977, 1988) was the first

person to introduce this theory, inspired by her personal transition when she left the

convent, becoming what she called an ex-nun. Role exit is defined as, "The process of

disengagement from a role that is central to one's self-identity and the reestablishment of

an identity in a new role that takes into account one's ex-role…" (1988, p. 1). Ebaugh

characterizes role exit as a "basic social process" (p. 1). She explains that understanding role exit is important, as a majority of people will experience role exit in their lives, with many experiencing several significant role exits. Role exit theory has been applied to a wide range of people exiting roles, including professional athletes (Drahota & Eitzen, 1998), transgenders (Ebaugh, 1977, 1988), community college faculty (Harris & Prentice, 2004), at-home moms (Lien, 2001), divorcees (Ebaugh, 1977, 1988), adult women college students (Breese & O'Toole, 1994), priests (Schmidt, 1999), and more.

Ebaugh's explanation of role exit theory (1988) fits closely with the research that indicates service members may have difficulty separating from the military because of identity issues (Greenberg, 1965; McNeil & Giffen, 2007; Wolpert, 2000). As Ebaugh explains, "[W]ith each significant role change the integrity of the self is jeopardized to some degree. When the individual enters new roles and exits from old roles that have been incorporated into the structure of the self, the sense of enduring identity is disturbed" (p. 21-22). Role exit is broken into four main stages: (1) first doubts, (2) seeking and weighing of role alternatives, (3) turning points, and (4) creating the ex-role (Ebaugh, 1988; Gambardella, 2008). The first two stages most relate to what service members encounter when preparing to separate from the military or shortly after having separated.

In the first stage of role-exit, first doubts, service members begin to think about why they are leaving the military. Service members may elect to leave the service for a number of reasons, such as organizational change, historical events, or a redefinition of role. With organizational change, the military has faced significant downsizing in recent years, resulting in thousands being forced to separate. Additionally, others not wanting to

change their occupational specialty due to force realignments have chosen to separate. As for historical events, frequent deployments enduring long, hard days and family separations have led others to depart due to "burn out." Service members may also doubt their military roles due to a redefinition of cultural aspects of military life. For example, service members who entered the military several years ago may have preferred the previous way the military operated as opposed to political correctness now being forced on them. Last, service members may exit the military because they have reached retirement based on rank and number of years of service and can no longer serve.

Along with first doubts, service members may question their separation from the military. According to role exit theory, service members who have served in the military for an extended period of time may struggle the most with their transition because "prolonged identification with a specific role became a side bet over time and resulted in a sense of loss when the individual considered giving up this long-standing aspect of self-identity" (Ebaugh, 1988, p. 95). Exiting the service member role will always be difficult, especially for those who identified themselves in that role for a number of years.

The second stage of role exit theory is the seeking and weighing of role alternatives. During this stage service members begin looking for jobs and find it difficult when searching for alternative jobs and careers in the civilian sector. As Ebaugh (1988) explained, "In most instances, the vast array of role alternatives is limited by the degree of translatability of skills, personal interest, and experience that the individual perceives between his or her present role and an alternative one under consideration" (p. 92). Ebaugh's depiction of these limitations is spot on as service members do struggle with those very limitations. Inexperienced with the resume process, service members have

difficulty translating their military skills into those applicable to civilian jobs. Additionally, it is difficult to find jobs they are interested in, or are qualified for as hiring officials are unfamiliar with the skills and professional attributes they bring to the table.

The following section explains the application of transition theory to separating service members and discusses how they cope with the loss of their military identities as they transition. Discussion also includes implications service members encounter in not having the effective training and support necessary for successful transitioning.

Transition Theory

Transition theory explains how individuals cope with transitions throughout their lives (Schlossberg, 1981; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). Transition is defined as "any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 27). Events may be good or bad, but the individual must consider the event as significant for it to be defined as a transition. Under these characteristics, the process of service members separating from the military and moving into the civilian sector for work or school qualifies as a transition as the event is significant and will result in relationships, routines, and roles likely very different from those in the military sector. There are eight factors that influence the quality of the transition (Schlossberg et al., 1995), they include:

(a) sense of control,

(b) positive or negative view,

(c) trigger,

(d) timing,

(e) permanence,

(f) view toward the new role,

(g) past experience of similar transitions, and

(h) presence of additional stressors (Schlossberg et al., 1995, as adapted by Bamford, 2013).

Most importantly, the type, context, and impact need to be analyzed when studying transitions (Schlossberg, 1981).

First, Schlossberg (1981) defines type of transition as to whether the transition was anticipated or unanticipated and also whether it was a non-event, meaning the event had been anticipated but never happened. Ryan, Carlstrom, Hughey, and Harris (2011) explained that service members may have more negative thinking and thus require more support when their transition into the civilian sector was unanticipated, meaning their separation was not by their own will, but because of military downsizing or discharge. Second, context is defined as involving the setting and the person's relationship to the event, meaning whether the person was directly affected by the event or indirectly affected as in the event happened to a family member or friend (Schlossberg, 1981). Their moving into the civilian sector is an event that has direct effect. Third, impact is defined as to what degree the transition changes the person's normal routine (Schlossberg, 1981).

Schlossberg (1981) emphasized the importance of examining the impact of the transition as it can affect a person's relationships, roles, ideas of self, and one's concept of the larger society or world. It is thought that the larger the transition's impact, the greater the need for coping skills and the amount of time to adapt to the changes (Schlossberg et al., 1995). In agreeing with this explanation, one can see the impact

transition has on the life of a service member and the need for adequate training and support to cope and adjust to this new situation. Relationships are certainly affected by the transition process, especially when moving and losing contact with those with whom they served. Additionally, transition stressors can significantly affect family relationships.

Military life cycle and transition difficulties.

The following section offers a summary of typical career barriers and difficulties service members encounter when separating. This discussion is meant to emphasize the problems service members face when not receiving the help needed to properly transition.

Career barriers.

Service members transitioning into the civilian sector may experience homelessness, mental illness, physical disabilities, substance abuse, troubled relationships, gaps in work history, issues adjusting to school, depression, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Bullock, Braud, Andrews, & Phillips, 2009; Church, 2007). It is important for career counselors to discuss these barriers with military clients, as veterans are more likely to have experienced these negative situations (Bullock et al., 2009). Church (2007) studied disabled veterans to see what characteristics were most associated with work gaps. All of the conditions mentioned above are considered additional stressors (Schlossberg et al., 1995) and can further complicate a service member's transition and increase the need for support.

Suicides.

Throughout history, suicide rates in the military population have been lower than those of the civilian population—until the Global War on Terrorism began (Ruiz, 2012).

Suicide rates among veterans are now at an epidemic level according to the media and others (Briggs, 2013; Sexton, 2013; McLaughlin, 2012). In 2012, a new record was set with 349 service members having taken their lives (Kime, 2013).

Currently, the Department of Defense (DoD) and military branches have implemented over 900 suicide prevention initiatives, however, suicide rates continue to rise. The DoD is now re-evaluating existing programs in an effort to eliminate ineffective programs and bolster those which are working. As service members return from deployments and encounter the challenges associated with reintegrating into their normal lifestyle, as well as transitioning, more research will need to be conducted to determine the relationship between suicides and the reintegration/transition process.

Homelessness.

Following the Global War on Terrorism, veteran homelessness has increased from former periods studied. According to Fargo et al. (2012), veterans are now overrepresented among those homeless. Romey (2012) advises that, "Only 8 percent of the U.S. population can claim veteran status, but veterans represent nearly 20 percent of the homeless population" (para. 1). Veterans are more than two times more likely to be homeless than civilians. Beyond the overrepresentation in the general public, female veterans and younger veterans are at greater risk of being homeless than their civilian counterparts (Gamache, Rosenheck, & Tessler, 2003; Allen, 2012). Veterans 30 years of age and younger are close to four times more likely to be homeless than others their age (Allen, 2012).

Civilian-military gap.

The notion that a gap or divide exists between the civilian and military population has been discussed for some time (Gegax & Thomas, 2005; Hall, 2012; Pew Social and Demographic Trends, 2011a, 2011b), but recent evidence has emerged that indicates the gap is larger now than ever before (Pew Social and Demographic Trends, 2011a). Navy Admiral Mike Mullen expressed a similar concern in his address to the West Point class of 2011 when he said, "I fear that they do not know us, I fear they do not comprehend the full weight of the burden we carry or the price we pay when we return from battle" (Pew Social and Demographic Trends, 2011a, para. 7). The percentage of the United States population serving in the military is the lowest it has been since World War II, with less than one-half of one percent of the population having served on active-duty since the Global War on Terror began (Pew Social and Demographic Trends, 2011a). With so few serving on active-duty, "the connections between military personnel and the broader civilian population appear to be growing more distant" (Pew Social and Demographic Trends, 2011b, para. 1). With fewer connections between the two groups, mutual understanding of one another becomes problematic. Pew Social and Demographic Trends (2011a) found that 77% of veterans believe the public does not understand the problems they face, while 71% of the general public also believe they do not understand veterans' issues. In fact, 61% of civilian employers said they "don't have a complete understanding of the qualifications ex-service members offer" (Lutz, 2007, para. 3).

Comparison to veterans of other eras.

Research indicates that Post-9/11 veterans face more challenging issues than did veterans of past eras (Morin, 2011). A Pew Social Trends survey (Morin, 2011) found

that a "post-9/11 era [veteran] is 15 percentage points less likely than veterans of other eras to have an easy time readjusting to life after the military" (p. 5). Lifestyles and obstacles people face have changed significantly between the generations. Many believe the older the generation, the tougher life was, and the better you were prepared to cope with life's challenges.

Lack of understanding of employers.

The lack of understanding employers have regarding the military plays a significant role in transitioning difficulties. A poll by the Society for Human Resource Management (2010) found that 60% of employers surveyed thought translating military skills to civilian job experience was an issue when hiring employees with military experience (slide 15). Forty-eight percent of respondents thought the "difficulty transitioning from the structure and hierarchy in the military culture to the civilian workplace culture" was an issue (slide 15). Thirty-six percent took issue with the amount of time it takes for the service members to adapt to civilian sector culture. Of those responding, 18% indicated under-qualification for the position was a primary factor in their consideration, demonstrating that service members face dual challenges; one, because they do not have the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities; but two, because civilian employers do not understand what skills and professional attributes they bring to the table.

Conceptual Framework

Significant research has focused on how to help service members transition into the civilian sector of work or education (Bullock et al., 2009; McNeil & Giffen, 1967; Baruch & Quick, 2007; Clemens & Milsom, 2008; Gowan, Craft, & Zimmerman, 2000).

Researching methods to aid those transitioning is significant because, "…how individuals interpret, or appraise, a stressful event, such as a career transition, will depend upon the resources available for managing the consequences of the event" (Gowan et al., 2000, p. 912). "Seeking assistance in times of need represents a major challenge to ex-servicemen socialized into standing on their own two feet" (Higate, 2001, p. 454).

The subsequent sections discuss traditional resources and services available to transitioning service members. Studies and literature that relate to transition support are included. In addition, there is lengthy discussion of the military's Transition Assistance Program, mentorships, civilian career counseling, networking, and veteran school and job fairs.

Transition assistance program.

In 1990, Congress recognized the need to implement a form of transition assistance as the military was downsizing, forcing service members to re-enter the civilian workforce (Title 32: National Defense, 1994; *Licensure and certification*, 2007). The Department of Defense, Department of Labor, and Veterans Affairs jointly created the transition assistance program to be delivered by each branch of the Armed Forces to separating service members (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2005). The program consists of pre-separation counseling, employment counseling, Veterans benefits, and the Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) if necessary. The pre-separation counseling was supposed to be mandatory for those separating and was to be completed ninety days prior to separation. During the counseling, service members are told about assistance services that are available and then must acknowledge on a checklist

that they have been informed of the available services, which services they wish to use, and whether they want to attend a transition assistance workshop.

A number of problems were found to exist with the military's Transition Assistance Programs (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2002). First, the Armed Forces as a whole had low participation numbers for service members using transition assistance. In 2000, only 81% of all separating service members received pre-separation counseling (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2002), an alarmingly low number considering pre-separation counseling was supposed to be a mandatory requirement. Further, only 53 percent of service members opted to attend a transition workshop that year. This percentage is thought to be inaccurate and inflated as it included individuals who were not actually separating from the service (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2002). Understanding why service members are not taking advantage of the military's provided transition assistance services will require more research. Second, assistance programs are not uniform across all branches and locations. One branch or location may receive more or less information and assistance than another. Also, members at smaller or more remote bases tend to receive less transition assistance than members stationed at larger bases likely due to the expertise level of counselors and amount of support available(U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2002). Third, the time frame for use of assistance services is not ideal for many service members as "mission-related work priorities" (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2002) often interfere with seeking assistance services and attending workshops. Many service members are also deployed overseas during the last six months of their service, making it all the more difficult to seek help from these transition assistance services (U.S.

Government Accountability Office, 2002). Another factor to consider is that service members are presented with so much information in such a short period of time (Felder, 2007) that they may not fully comprehend and understand the importance of information provided to them. Fourth, transition assistance services do not meet all their needs as programs focus on employment and education and do not give enough attention to emotional and identity issues unless there are serious problems such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Higate, 2001).

Although transition assistance programs continue to be used by all military services, few studies have examined the effectiveness of these programs. Studies that have tried to examine the effectiveness of transition assistance programs are outdated, having been conducted in the 1990s, and do not correlate with many of the issues present-day transitioning service members now encounter.

Murtie (1996) examined a few studies to determine whether data provided demonstrated whether the Army Transition Program was effective and should be continued. Murtie said that those who took advantage of a majority of services offered by the Army Transition Program were less likely to receive money for unemployment. He acknowledged that the studies did not account for employment or economic status of the individuals or larger society before the study, and also failed to acknowledge the selection bias that may have entered into the studies. It may have been that those individuals who willingly chose to attend more transition activities and take advantage of services were more apt to succeed to begin with than those individuals who chose not to participate. Additionally, these studies neglected to provide evidence that the transition assistance program was directly associated with unemployment.

Mentoring.

Mentoring within the workforce has been studied widely, across multiple organizations (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000; Steinberg & Foley, 1999; Chandler, Kram, & Yip, 2011), with extensive research focusing on mentoring nurses (Bloom & Loriz, 2012), teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Spezzini & Austin, 2011), adolescents (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken, 2011; Garringer, 2010), and medical students (Kalen, Ponzer, Silen, 2012; Dobie, Smith, Robins, 2010). For the purpose of this research study, the focus will be on mentorships within the military. Steinberg and Foley (1999) examined mentoring within the Army and found that close to 75% of respondents were at the time mentoring someone, while nearly 85% of the senior non-commissioned officers and officers reported they had mentors during their career. Since it is known that mentoring translates into successful job performance within the military, it seems logical that mentoring by those who have experienced the transition process successfully would be of benefit to those soon to undergo it. Future research should focus on the impact of having a mentor with a strong military background over a mentor who has only civilian sector experience. Research should also focus on whether it is more effective to have formal or informal mentoring during the transition as suggested by Chandler, Kram, and Yip (2011).

Little research exists on the effects of mentoring when service members transition into schools to further their education following their separation. Of existing research, Ryan et al. (2011) found that, "Commonalities and shared experiences from an advisor-veteran could contribute to the growth process of the student and a healthy advisor-student relationship…" (p. 61). This statement supports Schlossberg's theory of transition

that says collective coping is "essential" when a person is undergoing a major transition (1995, p. 72). DiRamio, Ackerman, and Mitchell (2008) suggested that former service members could act as "transition coaches" to help student veterans adjust to the college atmosphere and provide information on classes and degrees enabling the achievement of career goals. They found it especially important that student veterans returning from combat had mentors who had also experienced combat. Faculty and staff at colleges and universities are also less likely to have served themselves than during previous eras, further stressing the importance that schools work with military representatives and organizations to offer student veterans outlets and the ability to associate with individuals with whom they can relate.

Mentors for student veterans may also help to reduce the potential for drops outs. There has been recent controversy about the dropout rate for veterans primarily due to a lack of information. A March 2012 report by the Colorado Workforce discussing high levels of veterans dropping out of college was cited in news stories (Wood, 2012; Briggs, 2012). The report and subsequent news stories claimed one in five military veterans attends college, but that the drop-out rate for them is extremely high compared to that of civilians (Colorado Workforce, 2012; Wood, 2012; Briggs, 2012). The report went on to say 88% of veterans drop out in their first year of college and the graduation rate for former service members is 3% compared to the 30% graduation rate for civilian students (Colorado Workforce, 2012).

Since then, veteran organizations have refuted the claims, especially Student Veterans of America (Sander, 2012; Student Veterans of America, 2012). The controversy over veteran dropout rates serves to highlight the need for widespread

tracking of veterans' collegiate success. Currently, few colleges and universities track the academic success of student veterans.

Civilian career counselors.

Recent studies suggest how civilian career counselors can ease the transition for separating military service members. Bullock et al. (2009) and Clemens and Milsom (2008) discuss a cognitive information processing (CIP) approach to aid career counselors when working with military service members transferring into civilian careers. Bullock et al. (2009) surveyed veterans about their interests, personality, perceived employment barriers, and negative career thinking to try to understand the situation from service members' points of view. Clemens and Milsom (2008) outlined specific steps counselors should follow when assisting transitioning service members. Both articles highlighted the need to reduce negative career thinking among service members. Veterans were found to have a level of career thinking comparable to civilians, but more negative factors were associated with their career thinking (Bullock et al., 2009). Understanding aspects of the military, reinforcing decision making skills, and creating action plans are considered the most important tasks career counselors must undertake in helping service members (Bullock et al., 2009; Clemens & Milsom, 2008). Clemens and Milsom (2008) used the Communication, Analysis, Synthesis, Valuing, and Execution cycle (CASVE) to help transitioning service members make career decisions. The CASVE cycle is outlined in figure 2.3.

1	•Communication
	•Service members need to identify any gaps or problems they may experience during the career search.
2	•Analysis
	•Service members should analyze themselves and work on improving their self and occupational knowledge.
3	•Synthesis
	•Service members should expand their list of work and training choices and decide on a set number of alternative choices
4	•Valuing
	•Service members should evaluate their career options and alternatives and rank in order their career choices.
5	•Execution
	•Service members should work with their counselors to develop an action plan to solve the gap they identified in step 1 and begin pursuing their first career choice.

Figure 2.3 CASVE Cycle as Discussed by Clemens & Milsom (2008) and adapted by Bamford

Additionally, the use of military terms and jargon can also encourage participation in career counseling sessions, as service members are most familiar with military language. Bullock et al. (2009) recommended calling the sessions a "life transition course" rather than counseling as service members may need help adjusting their ways of thinking about the transition. Calling it a "life transition course" makes the transition seem as if it is an accomplishable routine, whereas the term counseling may have a negative connotation as counseling in the military is synonymous to being punished for an infraction. Throughout the process, counselors should strive to ensure that service members remain optimistic during the transition process.

Building upon skills.

Anderson (2008) suggested service members should focus on learning and building upon skills that are necessary for job placement due to unfamiliarity with the civilian hiring process. Since many have little or no prior civilian workforce experience, career counselors and others should help with the processes of writing resumes, cover letters and preparing for interviews.

Translating military skills is another important aspect when transitioning (Smith, 2008; Clemens & Milsom, 2008; Szelwach, Steinkogler, Badger, & Muttukumaru, 2011). According to a recent Military.com survey, 61% of employers say they "don't have a complete understanding of the qualifications ex-service members offer" and more than 75 percent of transitioning service members indicated "an inability to effectively translate their military skills to civilian terms" (Szelwach et al., 2011, p. 91). Career counselors should be qualified to translate military training and experience into skills and abilities needed in the business world (Smith, 2008). For example, those who served in the infantry may not be able to easily translate expertise in leadership, training, security, and weaponry into parallel civilian job requirements. Research has found that service members with job skills that translated easily into civilian terminology were less likely to endure "negative consequences of the transition" (Gowan et al., 2000, p. 919). Service members having skills more difficult to translate should be encouraged to get assistance from advisors and counselors who have expertise in translating military occupational specialties skills into parallel civilian terminology.

Specifically veterans need to explore ways in which to highlight their skills and abilities throughout the resume and interview process. Barry (n.d.) explains:

Employers are searching for valuable qualities that veterans innately possess, yet

are not promoting during the interview process. Leadership, coordinating

missions and troop movements, planning, organizing, and commitment to the

mission are all skills that a veteran should be conveying to an employer by

relaying their experiences in the military. Veterans often do not promote

themselves, being accustomed to advertising the group and mission above one's

self. However, while in an interview the veteran must stand out from other

candidates and listing expertise gained while in the military, one of the most

diverse and largest organizations in the country, can accomplish this. (para. 6)

Networking.

It is generally known that individuals who network have more positive outlooks

when transitioning into a civilian career and are happier overall with the outcome than

those who do not (Baruch & Quick, 2007). However, as Clemens and Milsom (2008)

explained, service members may have fewer professional and social networks available to

them in the civilian sector due to the frequent moves associated with military careers.

Transitioning service members likely do not have "strong civilian community roots or

role identifications" (Wolpert, 2000, p. 109), so not only may they lack social contacts in

the civilian community, but they also may not understand how the civilian community

works. As another study explained, "If a client has been excluded from the job-

information network by virtue of recent military service…every effort should be made to

help him cultivate new social contacts for the purpose of gaining entry into the job-

information network" (Jones & Azrin, 1973, p. 352). Ebaugh (1977) emphasized the need

for individuals to build bridges before exiting their current role or job. As a result, service

members should allow ample time to make contact with former military personnel now in the civilian sector, which will help to build bridges before they actually separate.

Church (2007) recommended rehabilitation counselors help disabled veterans to build social supports. She found that veterans with spinal cord injuries who were the most successful and productive were those who had higher levels of social support. In a society where job placement is more likely when applicants have personal relationships with individuals within or connected to the hiring company (Jones & Azrin, 1973), it is important for service members to begin networking in advance with those most closely aligned with their needs. During the transition process, career counselors should encourage service members to network with employed contacts (Jones & Azrin, 1973), especially former service members who have experienced the transition process.

In addition to using social networks to aid in career transition, DiRamio et al. (2008) suggested schools create networks for service members desiring further education. Student veteran organizations should take on a mentoring and networking role to assist fellow veterans in adjusting to their new surroundings. Student veteran groups can also provide the camaraderie missing after separation. In addition, schools could benefit from student veteran groups assisting faculty and staff in relating to student veterans and being better prepared to address their needs (DiRamio et al., 2008).

Social network sites.

Military service members are now using social networking sites to stay connected with comrades, advocate for military causes, search for jobs, and more (Gore, 2012; Irani, 2010). In fact, new social networking sites have been created solely for service members. Sites like Together We Served and the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

(IAVA) have created social networks only available to service members. In many cases, members must be approved before they are allowed to join the site. For instance, in order to join IAVA's social network, Community of Veterans, service members must submit documentation verifying they served in Iraq or Afghanistan.

School and job fairs.

Job and school fairs have grown in popularity, with an increasing number of them targeted towards students (Roehling & Cavanaugh, 2000; Payne & Sumter, 2005), prisoners (Oswald, 2005; Caswell, 1998), and most recently, fairs specifically targeted towards veterans (Briggs, 2013; Drummond, 2012). Little research exists that tracks the effectiveness of those fairs specifically targeted towards military members. Research needs to be conducted to determine the success rates of veterans attending these job fairs. In addition, feedback collected from service members would be beneficial to future attendees, prospective employers, and those putting on the fairs. Payne and Sumter (2005) surveyed college students following their attendance of a career fair to determine their satisfaction, impressions, and suggestions for future improvements. Similar studies should be conducted with service members, as there is a lot of dissatisfaction with military-targeted job fairs (Drummond, 2012). For instance, one veteran summarized his experience, "It feels like a meat-market, I can't help but feel like some of these companies just want the publicity" (Matthew Pizzo, as cited in Drummond, 2012).

Roehling and Cavanaugh (2000) surveyed students about specific aspects of employer practices at jobs fairs. In this study, students rated expectations of employers, something that might be beneficial when examining military-targeted job and school fairs. A common complaint of those attending military fairs is their non-encompassing

nature. Attendees often do not know what to expect as some fairs center on jobs targeted towards lower enlisted personnel while others may cater to senior enlisted and officers.

In fact, more generalized research has indicated that job fairs may not be effective at all. In a survey of human resource executives (as cited in Mason-Driffen, 2009), job fairs were ranked as the least effective job-search method. Job fairs received a rank of 1.6 on a scale of 5, with 1 being the least effective. As explained, "Job fairs are particularly ineffective in recessions. They are heavily attended by job seekers and lightly attended by employers. Many of the employers that do attend are seeking very low-level workers, volunteers or unpaid sales representatives/franchisees…" (para. 3-4).

Previous chapters have outlined difficulties encountered by those transitioning as well as literature related to existing support services and programs. The following chapter will explain the methodology and formulation of the researcher's study in detail.

Methodology

Research Formulation

This research study was formulated through the researcher's patriotism and support for the military and her desire to see that service members are provided the opportunity to effectively and seamlessly transition into the civilian sector following honorable service to their country. The researcher conducted an extensive review of literature that enabled the creation of her survey instrument. As previously mentioned, the researcher had family members and friends who had previously transitioned from the military or were in the process, so much of her work was guided by their experiences. After initial site approval by James Madison University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher decided to conduct the survey portion of her research at three separate sites in order to: (1) broaden the scope of her study and (2) gather a more diverse mix of respondents. Surveys were completed from the following populations: the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America's Community of Veterans page, student veterans at a large community college in Virginia, and colleagues and connections of an instructor at the Army Command and General Staff, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Description of the Research Design

This study used a survey research design to assess transitioning service members' views towards the effectiveness of existing transition support resources, including the military's transition assistance program (TAP), mentoring, civilian career counseling, social networking, and job or school fairs. Determining service members' opinions about the effectiveness of resources will allow for restructuring of existing resources or creation of new resources to adequately meet the needs of the service members who transition into

the civilian sector each year. The use of a survey allowed the researcher to gather responses anonymously from a large group of people at the same time (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). The primary use of closed-ended questions allowed for the ease in scoring and coding of responses (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). It also ensured that respondents took a clear position in their views towards support resources as compared to open-ended interview questions that would allow respondents to waver in their opinions or assessment. The inclusion of an open-ended question as the last item on the survey allowed service members to discuss any issues related to their transitions that were not previously addressed. This final question allowed respondents to briefly share their own transition experiences on a more personal level than previous Likert-type questions allowed (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012).

Description of the Sample

The final sample included service members that had separated from any branch of the military within the last five years or who were in the process of transitioning, provided that they had already used transition resources in preparation for their upcoming separation. The age of respondents varied as service members separate at different points during their military service. There were respondents in their twenties having separated after less than ten years of service and those in their late thirties, forties, and fifties that had separated or were separating from the military after having completed a career of 20 or more years. The respondents included more male service members than female service members, as expected, as females currently only make up about 14% of the active duty population (The White House Project, 2009). The sample included officers, warrant

officers, and enlisted personnel as the researcher was interested in responses at all grade levels.

First, the survey was distributed to the Community of Veterans members of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA). IAVA agreed to allow the researcher to conduct her survey within a segment of their organization. The veteran's organization maintains the Community of Veterans (COV), which is a community reserved for confirmed veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. In order to join the COV, veterans must submit documentation proving they served in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, or Operation New Dawn. IAVA created the COV as the first social network for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, and today it is the largest such network. The COV has over 25,000 confirmed members and generously agreed to post the survey for its members.

Second, the survey was emailed to student veterans at Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC), a large community college with several campuses in Virginia. The Veteran Specialist at LFCC acted as the site coordinator and emailed the survey to all student veterans enrolled at the college. The site coordinator sent a follow-up email two weeks after the initial email as a reminder to the students.

Third, the survey was distributed by an instructor at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. CGSC is a graduate level school primarily for Army officers, although over a hundred officers from the other branches attend each year. Each branch of service also provides instructional staff to the college. The instructor was a retired military officer and through his own military service and instruction of thousands of service members over a fifteen year assignment at CGSC

maintained a very large list of military contacts. Having access to a large group of

veterans of all branches, the instructor agreed to pass the survey along to service

members who had recently transitioned or were preparing to transition. From there, the

survey snowballed and initial recipients of the email willingly chose to forward the

survey to other military service members.

Description of the Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instrument was an online survey powered by Qualtrics survey

software and sponsored by James Madison University. Qualtrics maintains high levels of

data security to protect participants' responses (Qualtrics, 2012). Qualtrics adheres to the

same security standards that the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

(HIPAA) requires for medical records (Qualtrics, 2012). The Qualtrics account for this

research was secured with a username and password only accessible to the researcher and

her research advisor.

The survey instrument consisted of 58 questions, although respondents answered

fewer than 34 questions due to numerous skip logic sequences embedded in the survey.

The survey was segmented into two main sections for the two targeted groups of

respondents: (1) service members who had already separated and (2) service members

who were preparing to separate, although data from the two groups were not compared or

analyzed against one another. The questions were segmented to allow for easier reading

for the respondents, to eliminate the usage of multiple verb tenses in each question. All,

but the final question, were designed as Likert-type items. A copy of the questions is

provided in Appendix B. Skip logic was used so respondents would advance to questions

based on their previous responses as a way to eliminate the display of questions that did

not apply. For example, service members who had not used a specific service were not asked to answer detailed questions about the service, but taken to the next set of questions. Respondents were required to provide an answer to each question on the page before advancing to the next page of questions as a forced response layout.

To ensure the survey was valid, the researcher had numerous colleagues and her advisor review the survey question by question. The survey was pilot tested to determine whether skip logic was formatted appropriately and to determine the average length of time it took to complete the survey. Four subject matter experts (SMEs) assessed the survey, as well. The SMEs all had military experience and were familiar with the process for transitioning from military service into the civilian sector. Three of the SMEs had previously separated from the military, with two of them having extensive knowledge of the process having worked closely to assist other service members with their transition. The final SME was still serving in the military but was able to provide insight into the process of service members transitioning into colleges or universities as he serves as the Commanding Officer of an Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) unit which works closely with the local veteran population and was, himself, preparing to retire from the military. All SMEs provided feedback on how to better word questions and further improve the survey. All survey data collected from SMEs were destroyed after incorporating their feedback into the survey design and prior to the activation of the survey.

The survey was initially planned to be open two weeks, but an initial low response rate required an extension of the open period. The survey was open for a period of 7 weeks, beginning with the survey's activation on January 14, 2013 and ending on

March 4, 2013. The survey was deactivated on March 4 after the researcher determined she had 56 fully completed and eligible surveys to analyze.

A web/email cover letter that met the guidelines for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was included with the survey. The cover letter outlined the procedures, risks, and benefits of participating in this study and informed participants of their rights to withdraw. Participants acknowledged their consent once they clicked on the link that took them to the Qualtrics survey site. While individual responses were obtained during data collection, only aggregate data using averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole were presented for the protection of the participants. All information gathered from this study that could identify participants was kept confidential. Survey data was secured with a Qualtrics username and password known only to the researcher and her advisor and research materials were stored on the researcher's password protected computer which was also secured when not in use.

Description of the Data Analysis

As this study relied on surveys for data collection, the researcher summarized the responses and drew conclusions as a way of analyzing the data. First, sample size was reported, including the number of respondents who were ineligible and forced to exit the survey, the number who abandoned the survey at some point after starting, and the number who completed the survey in its entirety. Then the researcher reported the percentage of respondents that chose a response for each question. To illustrate the findings, the researcher created pie charts, frequency distributions, and bar charts depending on the variables being measured. As most of the questions were Likert-type

and considered ordinal measures, the researcher reported the mode rather than the mean as the measure of central tendency.

The qualitative responses were reviewed by the researcher for patterns and then categorized using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). According to Boyatzis, "A theme is a pattern found in the information that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (p. 4). Thematic analysis includes three stages: "Stage I, deciding on sampling and design issues; Stage II, developing themes and a code; and Stage III, validating and using the code" (p. 29). After careful review of the responses, the researcher created a list of possible themes. She then reviewed the responses again to narrow down her list of themes and create subthemes. Next, the researcher coded the responses into the 10 main themes and subthemes she had finalized. The 10 main themes were: (1) no response, (2) no transition issues, (3) transition, (4) TAP, (5) family and friends, (6) jobs, (7) mental and physical health, (8) VA services, (9) networking, and (10) finances. Table 3.1 shows the themes and subthemes.

For Stage III of the thematic analysis, the researcher categorized the respondents' comments from the final question into relevant themes and subthemes. In order to validate her code and themes, she asked two individuals to review the comments and categorize them according to the themes the researcher had devised. This method allowed for high interrater (Boyatzis, 1998) or synchronic reliability (Kirk & Miller, 1986), as multiple people were assessing the themes and responses. The researcher elected to do this to ensure there was no bias in her categorization and theming of the responses. The

categorizations from the interraters were compared to the researcher's own categorization

chart and edits were made after discussion.

Table 3.1

Qualitative Themes

No Response	No Issues	Transition	TAP	Family & Friends
		-General dissatisfaction -Improved timeline -Support for relocation -Civilian sector's unfamiliarity with military -Compensation & salary for transition -Stigma/stereotypes	-General dissatisfaction -Standardize across branches -Improve facilitators -Tailor -More training on civilian job process -Mandate attendance of more session	-Stress/impact on family -Relocation issues -Positive transition support

Jobs	Mental & Physical Health	VA	Networking	Finances
-Job fairs not all encompassing -Difficulty translating skills -Finding right fit -Finding jobs in other locations -Understanding civilian sector -Slow hiring	-Coping skills for combat, PTSD, etc. -Family distress -Need to better reintegrate combat & wounded veterans	-Issues with VA	-Need to network -Connect with former service members as mentors -Connect with civilians to explain civilian structure	-Need to prepare financially

Description and Justification of the Statistical Techniques

The researcher chose to use frequency distributions, pie charts, and bar graphs, because the data was nominal and ordinal, other than the final open-ended qualitative question. The aim of this study was to understand the opinions of the service members in the sample and their assessments of the available transition resources, not to generalize the population of service members as a whole. Many of the other types of statistical analysis are used for quantitative variables when trying to generalize to a population from a random sample. The strength of the methods used in this research was that the methods are valid for survey research using nominal and ordinal data. A weakness is that it can be difficult to determine differences in frequencies for this type of data.

There is considerable debate over the validity of reporting means with Likert-type scales and classifying them as interval scales (Knapp, 1990; Jamieson, 2004). As Jamieson (2004) explains:

> Methodological and statistical texts are clear that for ordinal data one should employ the median or mode as the 'measure of central tendency' because the arithmetical manipulations required to calculate the mean (and standard deviation) are inappropriate for ordinal data, where the numbers generally represent verbal statements. In addition, ordinal data may be described using frequencies/percentages of response in each category. (p. 1217)

The researcher chose to classify her measures as ordinal and report modes because Likert-type scales are categorized as ordinal measures (Jamieson, 2004; Blaikie, 2003; Clegg, 1998). Likert-type scales measure the attitudes of respondents and the researcher used 5 and 7-point scales in her survey. The researcher had no way of knowing how one

respondent's agreement level compared to another's agreement level. For example, the researcher could not be certain that Respondent A's distance between strongly agreeing and agreeing was the same distance as Respondent B's distance between categories on the scale. Due to the ambiguity with interpretation of the categories on the scale, the researcher elected to treat the Likert-type scales as ordinal data.

Threats to Internal Validity

Of the four main threats to internal validity for surveys, instrumentation and instrument decay were the most likely to affect this study. The threat to instrumentation was minimized by having four service members that had transitioned into the civilian sector act as subject matter experts to assess whether the survey questions measured the definitions and aspects of the research question. Instrument decay should only be a problem if respondents were rushed when completing the survey through Qualtrics. No time limit was set on the survey, so respondents had as much time as possible to complete the questions. Mortality was not an issue as this was a cross-sectional survey study, not a longitudinal survey study. Also, any incomplete surveys were not included in analysis. Nor was location an issue as the online location of the survey allowed respondents to complete the survey in the location of their choice.

Qualtrics helped to eliminate researcher bias as respondents took the same survey with the same questions, eliminating the capability of the researcher to only ask leading questions to some respondents. Also, peers and subject matter experts examined the questions to check for any sort of bias. Many of the questions were in first-person and allowed the respondent to rank his or her own feelings as a way to limit bias or leading questions.

The researcher was not able to make generalization from this research to other cases because of the limitation of the sample not being representative. While this study cannot make large generalizations to the diverse population of service members, it can suggest which areas of transition support can be improved to help transitioning service members. The findings of this research can also be used to suggest future research, for example, the need for closer examination and evaluation of specific aspects of the military's transition assistance program and other resources. Survey research that examines the opinions of respondents and asks them to assess effectiveness of programs or products often becomes the foundation for later research.

The following section will discuss the researcher's interpretation of the survey data. Major findings will be discussed along with figures and tables to display the data.

Results

   This research presented three hypotheses concerning service members' evaluation of support services available to them as they separated from the military and transitioned into the civilian workforce or school setting:

- Hypothesis 1: Service members will choose the military provided Transition Assistance Program (TAP) as the least effective resource and source of support in preparing for their transition out of the military.

- Hypothesis 2: Service members will choose mentoring as the most effective resource and source of support when transitioning out of the military.

- Hypothesis 3: Service members will most often indicate they struggled with the issue of change in military identity.

   The survey was accessed 90 times. Fifty-six surveys were fully completed and eligible as the respondents had separated from the military within the last five years or were preparing to separate. Twenty-two surveys were ineligible either because the respondents had not served in the military, had not separated in the previous five years, or were not preparing to separate. Ten surveys were incomplete, which were disregarded and not included in the sample. Two surveys were in progress at the time of the survey closing, resulting in incomplete surveys, which were also disregarded.

Demographics

   Of the 78 respondents who completed surveys, regardless of whether or not they were eligible, the majority of respondents, 34% (n=29), were between the ages of 46 and 52 years old. Figure 4.1 shows the breakdown of all respondents' ages.
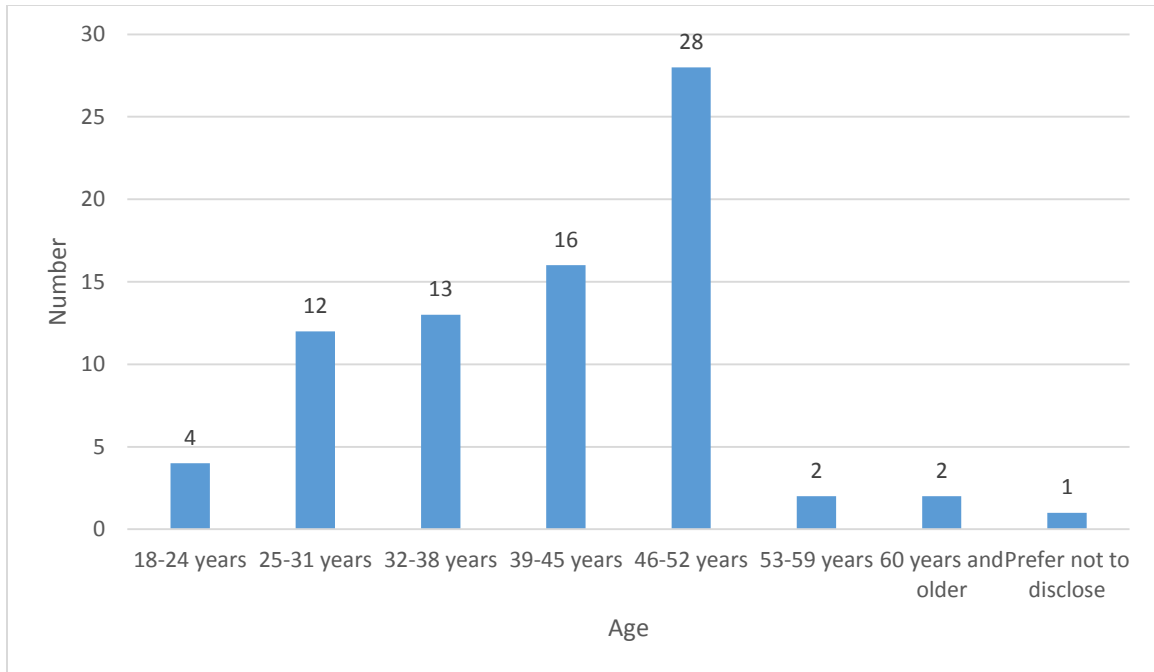
Figure 4.1 Age of All Respondents

Of the 78 respondents, 79.49% (n=62) were male, 19.23% (n=15) were female, and one respondent chose not to disclose, as shown in figure 4.2.
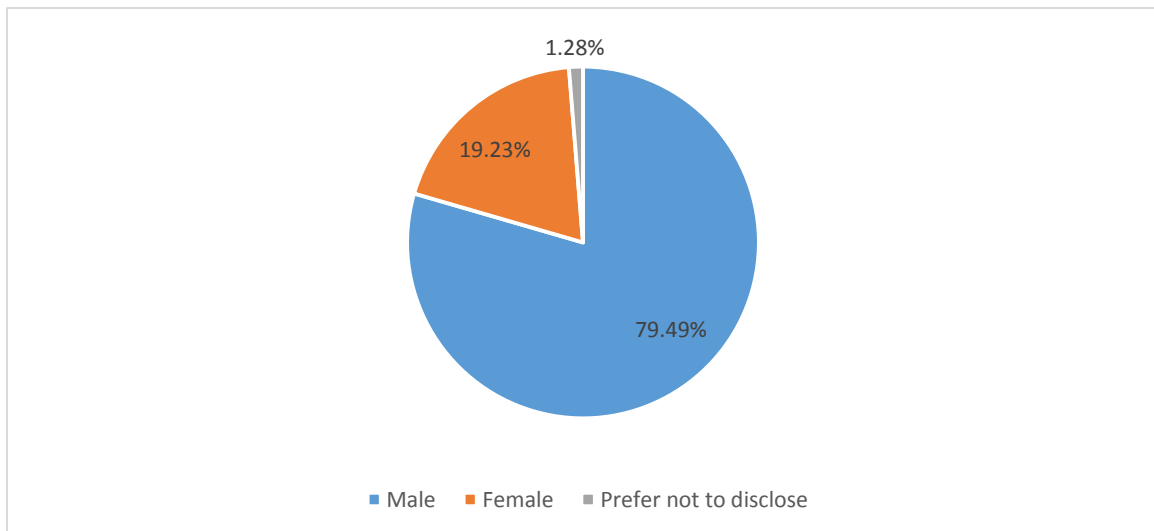
Figure 4.2 Sex of All Respondents

Most of the respondents had completed some college or had achieved a degree, with the highest percentage, 36% (n=28), having completed a master's degree and 4% (n=1) having completed a doctoral or professional degree. Figure 4.3 displays the education levels for all of the respondents.
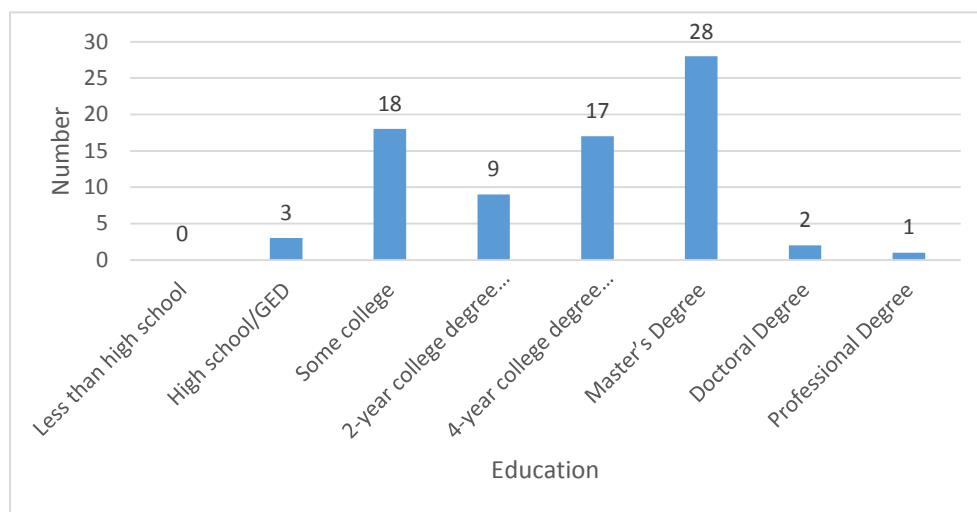
Figure 4.3 Education of All Respondents

All but one of the 78 respondents had served in the military. Figure 4.4 displays the number of respondents who had served in each military branch. The majority had served in the Army (n=25) or Marine Corps (n=26). All branches except for the Reserve component of the Navy were represented by at least one respondent. The researcher believes members of the Army and Marine Corps may have been more likely to participate in the survey because members of these branches recently suffered significant cuts in combat arms occupational specialties which are also some of the most difficult specialties to match to positions in the civilian workforce (Hegseth, 2012).
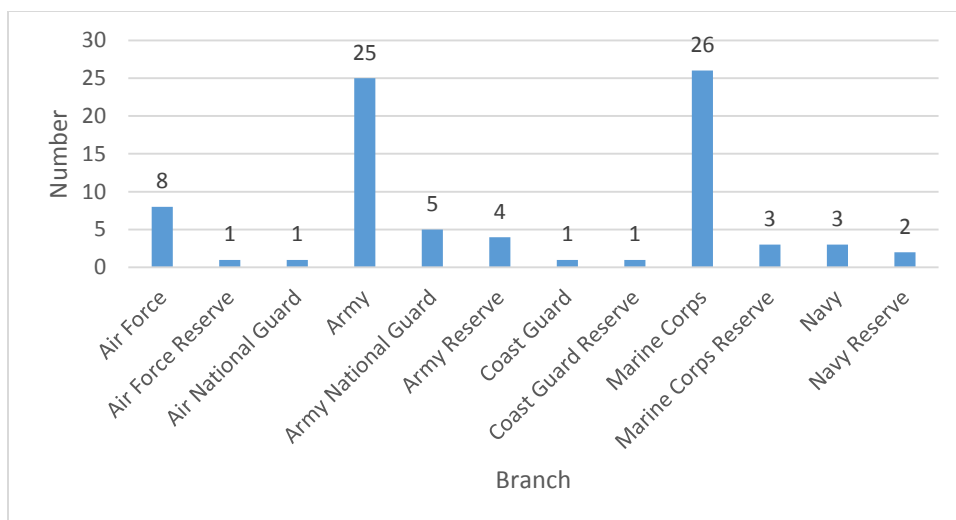
Figure 4.4 Branches of Service of All Respondents

Final Sample

Fifty-two respondents indicated they had separated from the U.S. military with an honorable discharge within the last five years and 25 respondents indicated they had not. Of the 25 individuals who had not yet separated, 20 said they had not begun the process of separating, while only five had begun the process. While reviewing responses from the five individuals, one respondent indicated in a comment that he had been out of the military since the 1970s. The researcher eliminated his responses so as to not skew her data.

Fifty-six respondents met all qualifications and made up the final population sample the researcher was targeting. As explained earlier, 52 had recently separated and 4 were in the process of separating. The majority of the 56 respondents, 62.48% (n=36), were 39 years old or older. Figure 4.5 depicts the ages of the respondents.
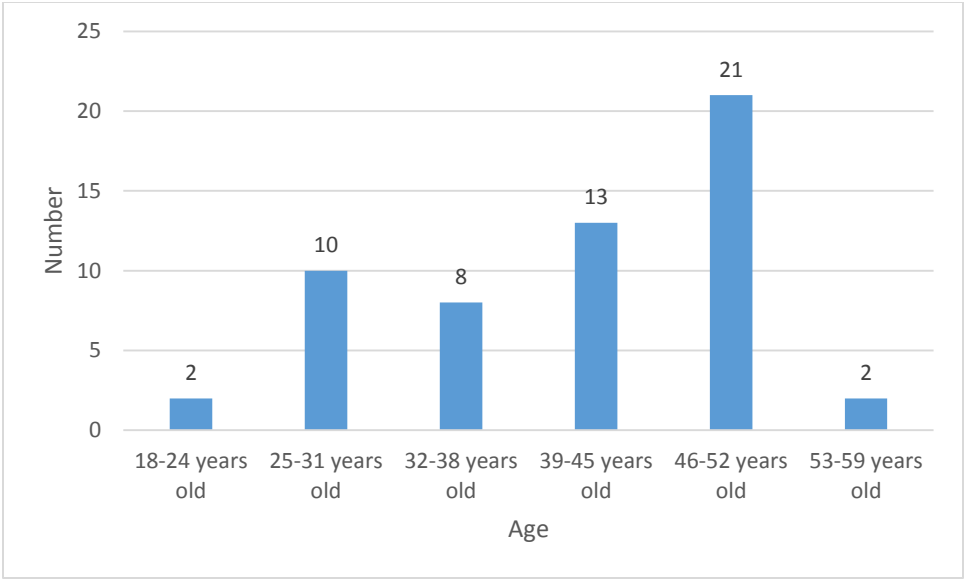
Figure 4.5 Age of Eligible Respondents

Of the respondents, 82.14% (n=46) were male while 17.89% (n=10) were female. These numbers were slightly higher than available data that indicates females make up 14% of the military (The White House Project, 2009). Figure 4.6 shows the proportion of male and female respondents.
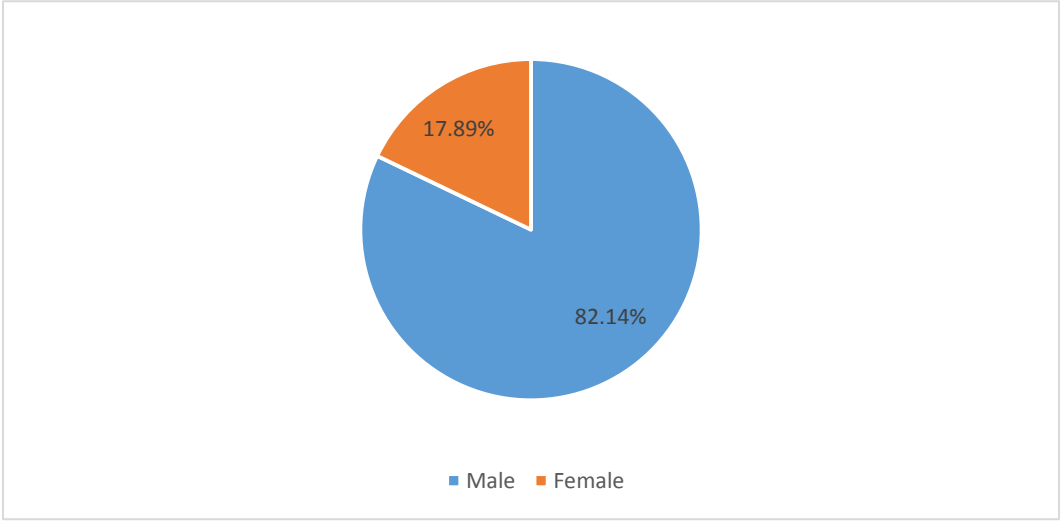
Figure 4.6 Sex of Eligible Respondents

The majority of respondents had served in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, or Operation New Dawn, with many having served in more than one of those theaters. Only six of the respondents had not served in Iraq or Afghanistan. Figure 4.7 shows the number of respondents who had served in each operation.
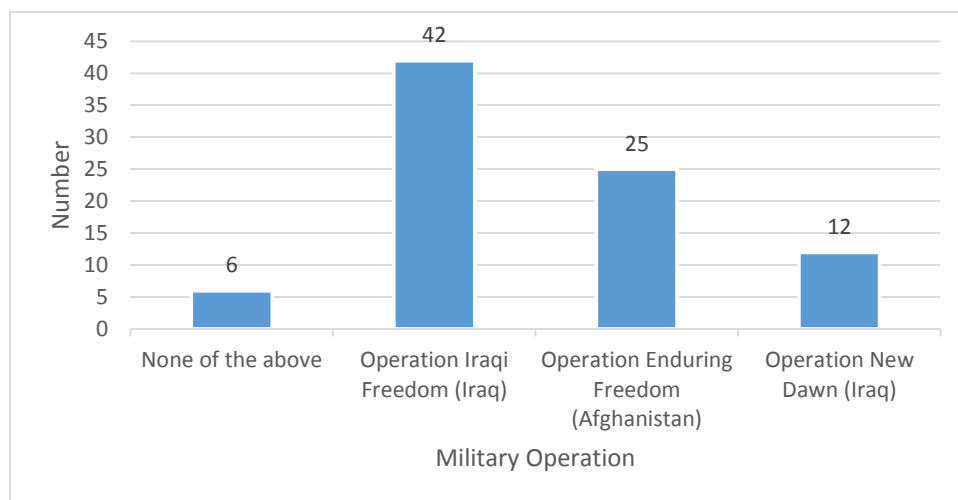
Figure 4.7 Eligible Respondents' Service in Military Operations

All in the sample had a high school degree or equivalent, as seen in figure 4.8. The majority, 37.5% (n=21), had a master's degree, followed by 25% (n=14) with a four year college degree, 19.64% (n=11) with some college, 10.71% (n=6) with a two year college degree, 3.57% (n=2) with a high school degree or its equivalent, 3.57% (n=2) with a doctoral degree, and 0% (n=0) with a professional degree.
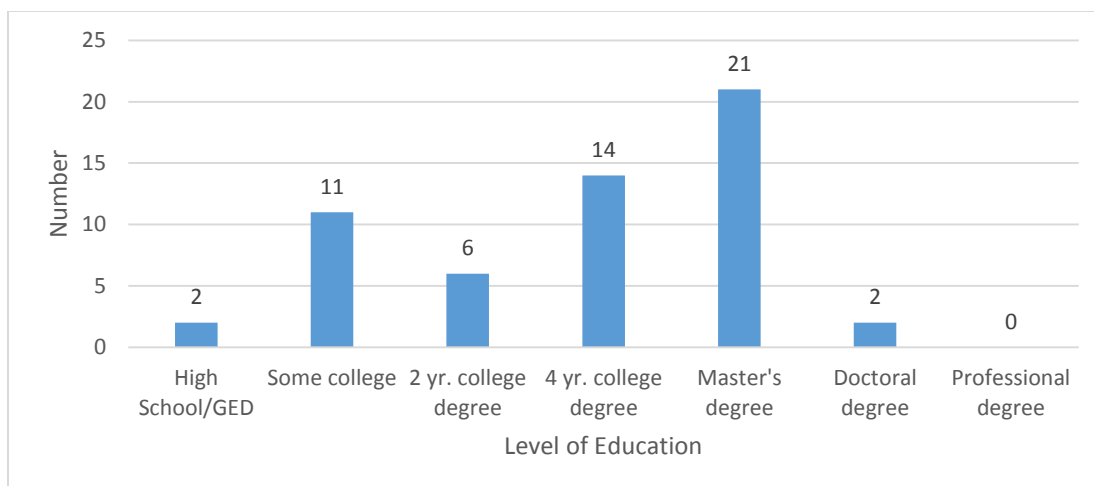
Figure 4.8 Education of Eligible Respondents

     Of the 56 respondents, all branches and their components were represented except for the Navy and Coast Guard and their reserve components, as seen in figure 4.9. The Marine Corps was most represented at 33.79% (n=19), followed by the Army at 30.36% (n=17), the Air Force at 14.29% (n=8), the Army National Guard at 7.14% (n=4), the Army Reserve at 5.36% (n=3), the Marine Corps Reserve at 5.36% (n=3), and the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve at 1.79% each (n=1). In terms of rank, 51.79% (n=29) of the respondents were Enlisted service members, 41.07% (n=23) were Officers, and 7.14% (n=4) were Warrant Officers, as shown in figure 4.10. Figure 4.11 displays the length of military service of the eligible respondents. More than half the respondents, 57.14% (n=29), had served more than 20 years.
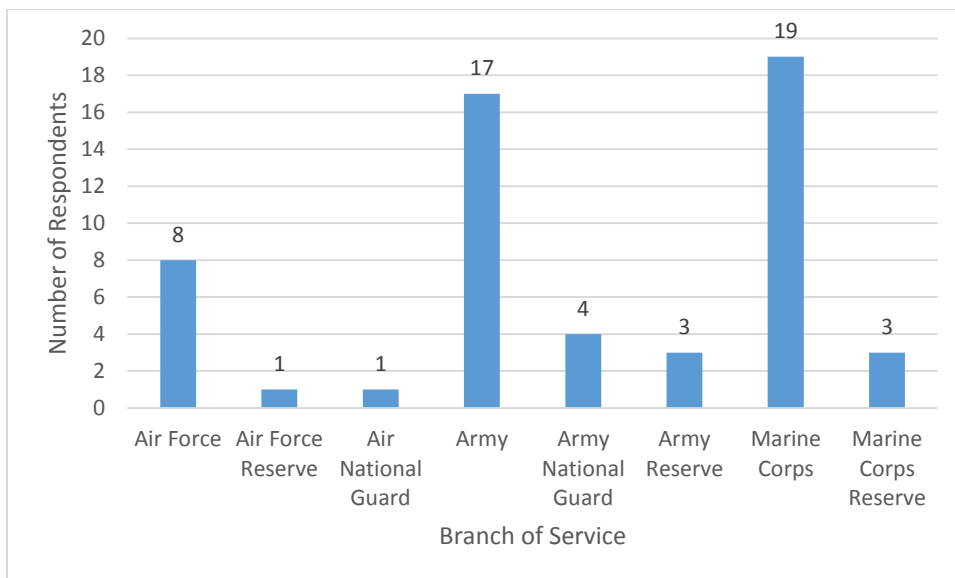
Figure 4.9 Number of Eligible Respondents Serving in Each Branch
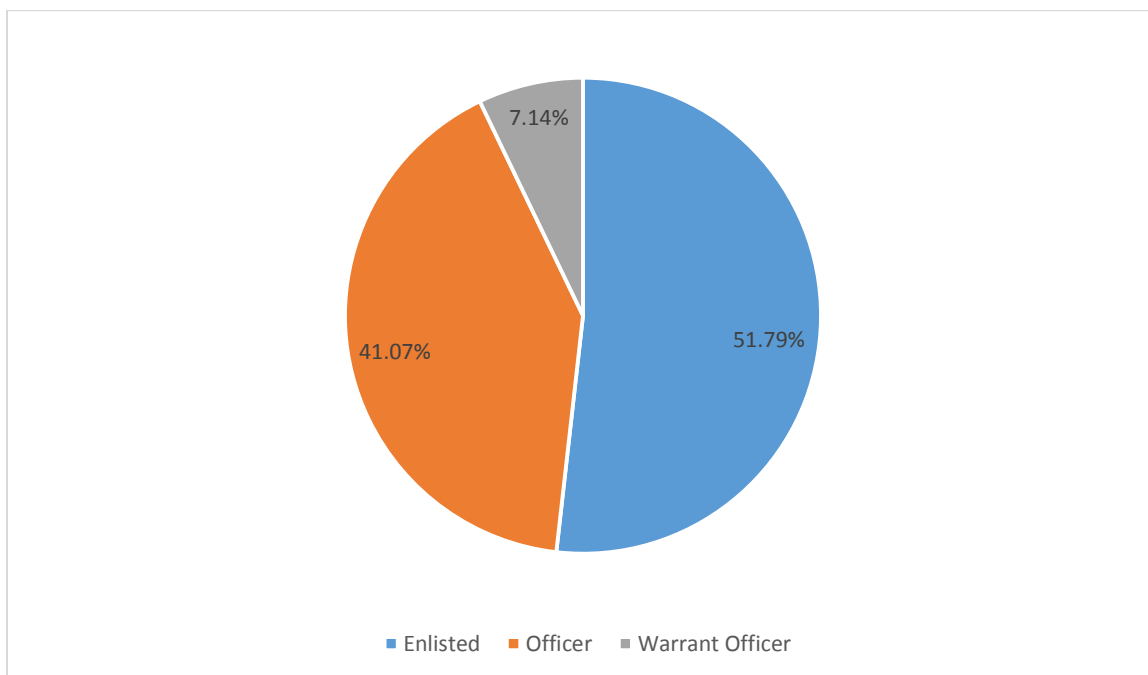
Figure 4.10 Rank of Eligible Respondents
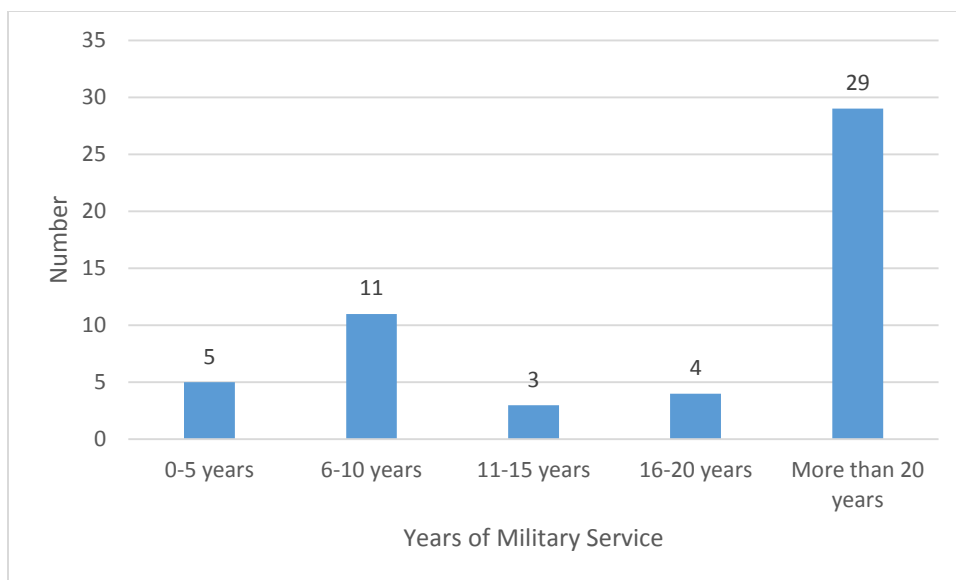
Figure 4.11 Length of Eligible Respondents' Military Service

Responses were more distributed in terms of what service members did after separation or were planning to do (figure 4.12). About 30% (n=17) searched or were searching for a civilian job, another 30% (n=17) said they began or would begin work as they had already found a job, 16% (n=9) searched for a job and applied to school or were in the process, 14% (n=8) indicated some other response, 5% (n=3) applied to school or would be applying to school, and a little over 3% (n=2) said they retired or would be retiring and were not in search of another job or planning to attend school. "Other" responses included being self-employed/starting own company, returning to a previous job, serving temporarily in the Reserves, and taking medical leave.
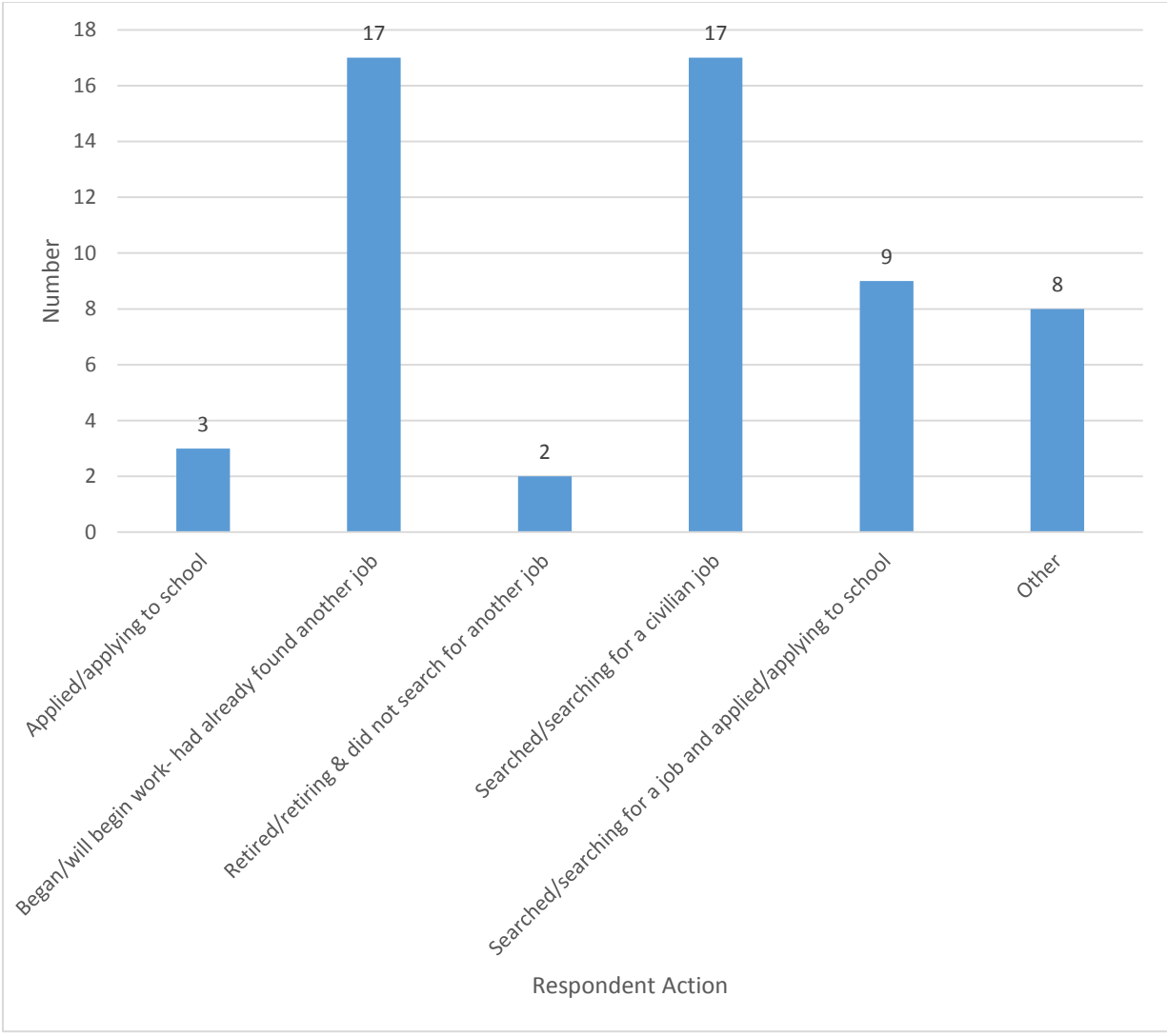
Figure 4.12 Eligible Respondents' Actions Following Military Separation

Questions 12 and 37 asked about the emotional stress involved in the transition process. As seen in figure 4.13 approximately 84% (n=47) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that transitioning out of the military and into the civilian workforce or school setting is or was emotionally stressful. In fact, less than 6% (n=3) disagreed or strongly disagreed and 10.71% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.
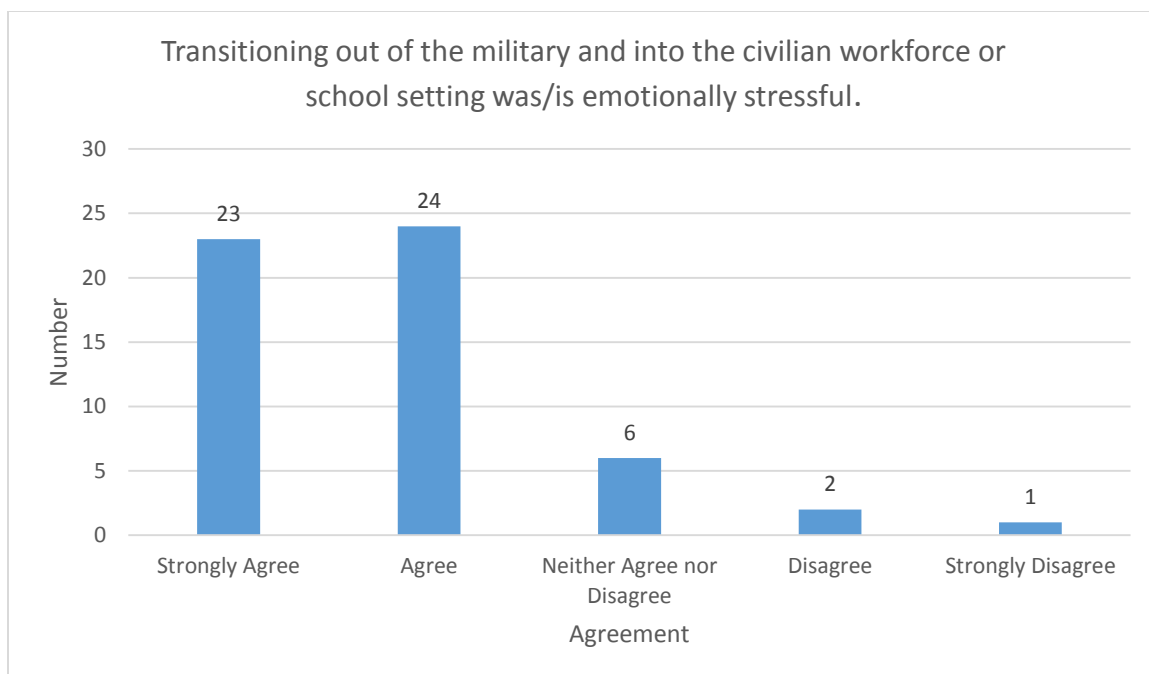
Figure 4.13 Responses to Emotional Stress of Transition

Next respondents were asked to indicate which areas posed the greatest difficulty during their transition (figure 4.14). Only 3 of the 56 respondents indicated they had no difficulties related to their transition. The majority of the respondents indicated more than one issue with which they had difficulty. The top four issues with which respondents had difficulties were: change in structure (71.43%), change in camaraderie (71.43%), change in responsibility (66.07%), and change in military identity (55.36%). Five respondents indicated they had struggled with other issues, entering responses which included family and relationship issues, alcohol problems, medical issues, issues in translating skills, and poor leadership.
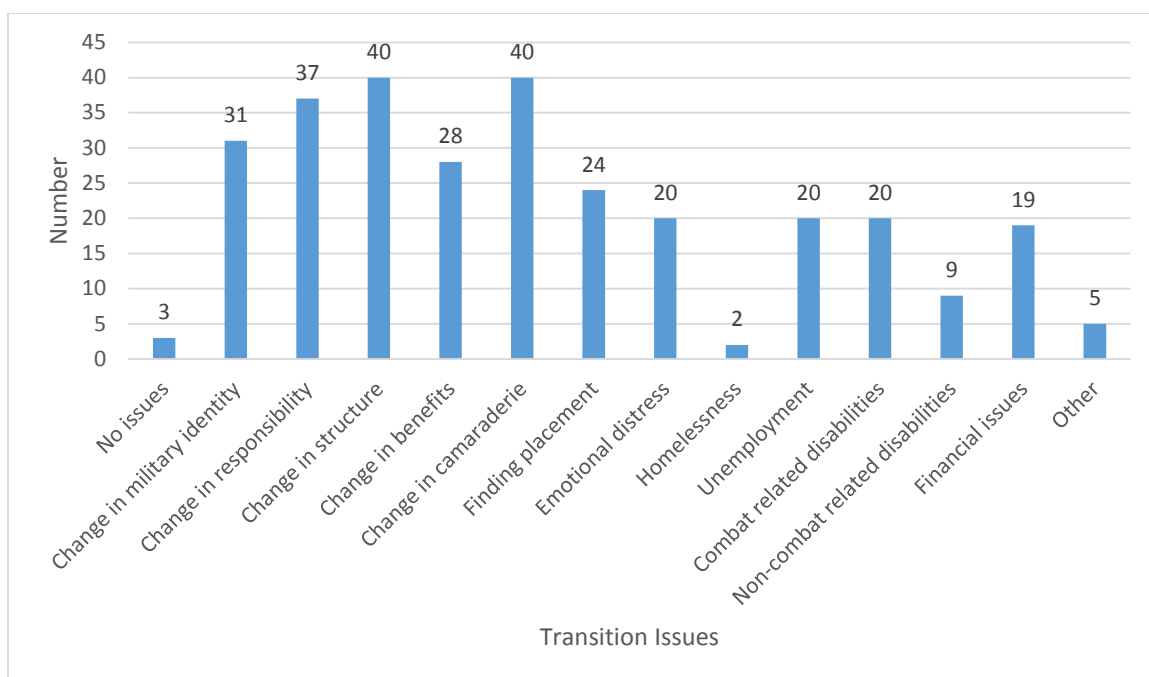
Figure 4.14 Respondents' Identified Transition Issues

Qualitative Analysis of Survey Data

The final question of the survey asked respondents to discuss any issues related to their transitions that had not been previously discussed in the survey. The open-ended question was intended to allow respondents to briefly comment and share final thoughts about their own experiences. All but 16 respondents chose to offer comments on the final question, which included comments where respondents indicated "none" or entered a space or random keystroke to proceed to the end of the survey. As previously explained, the researcher categorized the responses into 10 main themes. Categorizations of all responses to the question can be found in Appendix E.

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) theme received the most comments (n=24), followed by the jobs theme (n=19), general transition theme (n=13), no response

(n=12), health: mental, emotional, and physical (n=12), VA issues (n=5), networking (n=3), finances (n=1), and no transition issues (n=1). Overall, comments provided were negative in nature, describing common difficulties and issues service members had encountered during their transition. The most negative comments centered on TAP, with many comments expressing overall dissatisfaction with the program and additionally offering ways in which to improve TAP. It is the researcher's belief that respondents provided more negative comments about transition services as a way of offering constructive feedback that could be used to improve the transition process. Relevant quotes will be included for each transition service as a way of demonstrating the more detailed opinions of respondents towards the types of transition assistance.

Quantitative Analysis of Transition Support Services

The following sections provide an analysis of responses for questions concerning the five support services: TAP, mentorships, civilian career counselors, social networking, and veteran job and school fairs.

Transition Assistance Program.

Answers varied when respondents were asked to rate whether the military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP) was able to provide them with the information needed to successfully transition into the civilian sector, as shown in figure 4.15. Forty-eight respondents had used TAP services and eight had not participated in their branch's TAP. Of the 48 who had participated, 4 strongly agreed, 15 agreed, 12 neither agreed nor disagreed, 8 disagreed, and 9 strongly disagreed that TAP was able to provide them with the information needed to successfully transition into the civilian sector.

The military's TAP provided me with the information I needed to successfully transition into the civilian sector.
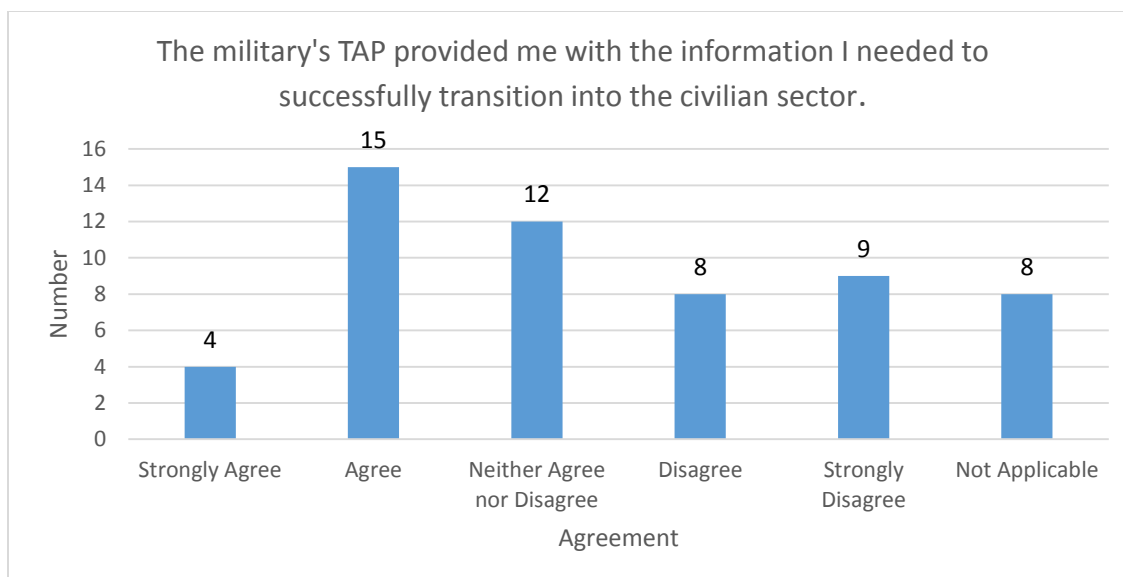
Figure 4.15 Responses to Success of TAP

Questions 15 and 47 provided additional information concerning respondents' satisfaction with specific areas of TAP. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the following six areas of TAP: (a) explaining benefits and eligibility information upon separation, (b) applying military knowledge, skills, and experience to the civilian sector, (c) preparing cover letters or resumes, (d) explaining the civilian structured hiring process, (e) providing job leads, and (f) helping with my emotional struggles. The researcher examined the modes for each area to determine how satisfied the majority of the respondents were, as shown in figure 4.16. Across all areas provided by TAP, the greatest number of respondents said they were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with TAP's ability to provide job leads. In regard to being the most satisfied, explaining benefits and eligibility information upon separation had the highest mode of satisfaction, meaning the majority of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with TAP's ability in that area.
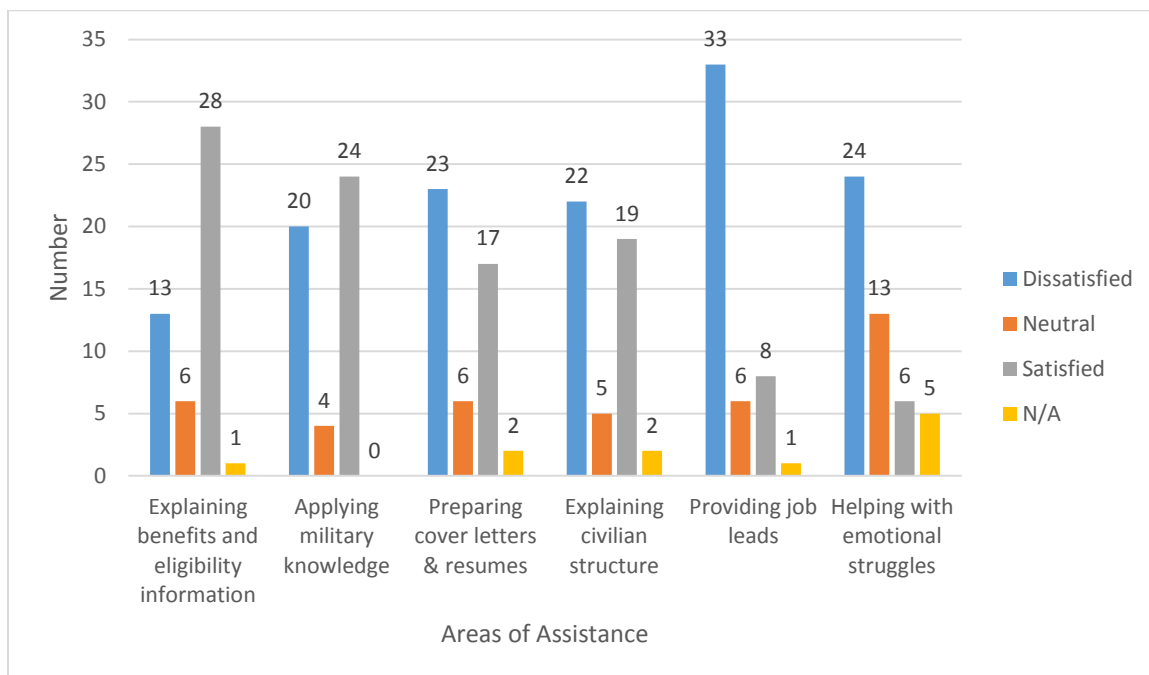
Figure 4.16 Respondents' Satisfaction with Areas of TAP

Next, all respondents were asked whether they would recommend transitioning service members use additional TAP activities, workshops, and programs beyond mandatory requirements, regardless of whether or not they had used TAP themselves. As shown in figure 4.17, the majority of the respondents, 69.64% (n=39), agreed or strongly agreed that service members should use additional TAP services. This perhaps indicates that TAP has greater potential for effectiveness if those additionally provided activities are used.

I would recommend that transitioning service members use additional TAP activities, workshops, and programs beyond what is mandatory.
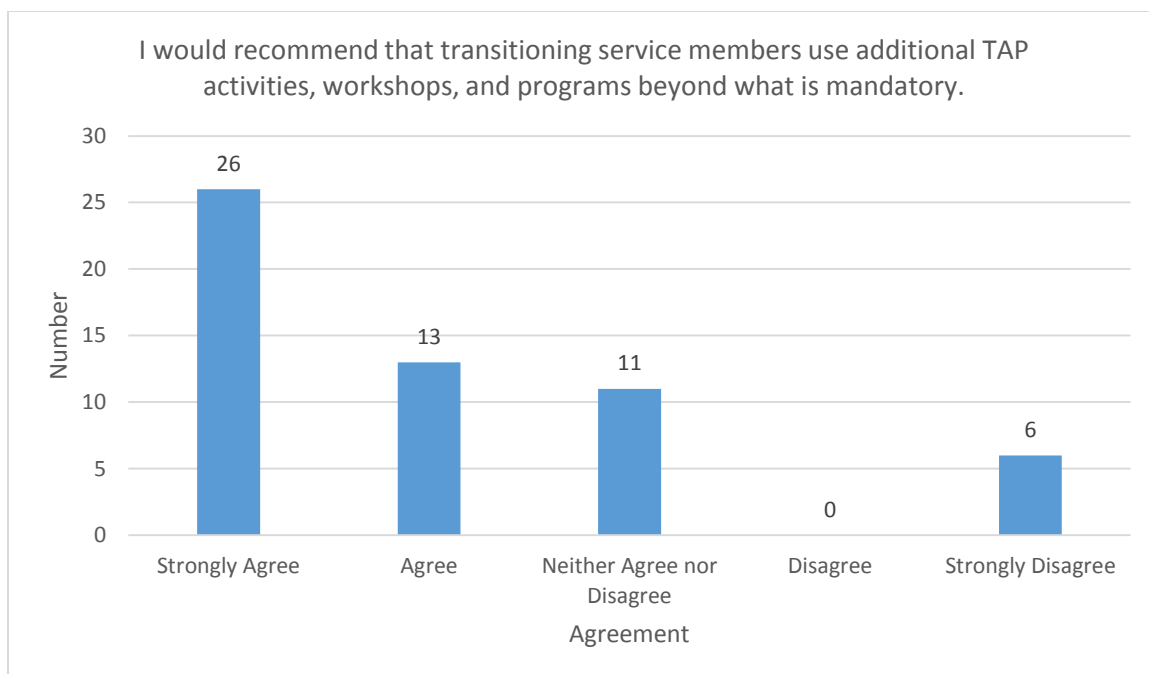
Figure 4.17 Respondents' Opinion towards Additional Use of TAP

Of the 8 respondents who did not participate in TAP, most explanations included not knowing about TAP, TAP not being offered, being deployed and planning to use it upon return, not having the time during discharge, or not using it because he/she transitioned from active duty to Guard. Although the majority of all eligible respondents indicated they would recommend further use of TAP, the 8 respondents who had not used TAP themselves were neutral to positive in their responses, as seen in figure 4.18. Fifty percent (n=4) agreed or strongly agreed while the other 50% (n=4) neither agreed nor disagreed.
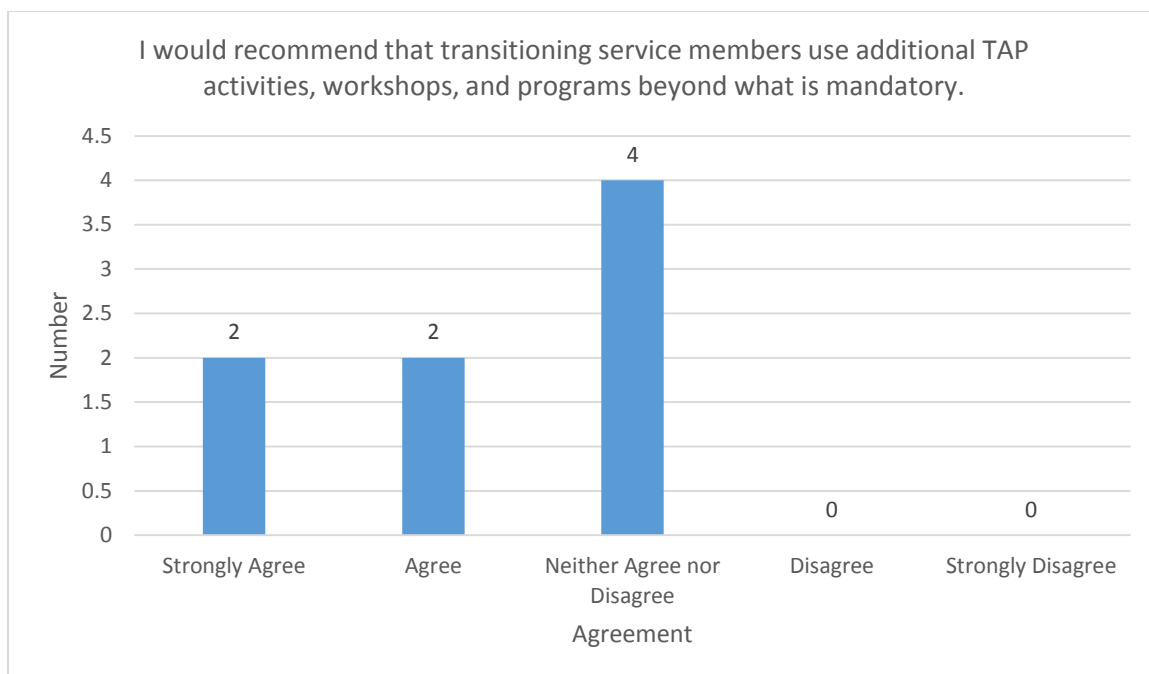
Figure 4.18 Respondents Who Did Not Use TAP's Opinions towards Additional Use of TAP

When all respondents were asked what changes they would suggest be made to TAP (figure 4.19) many respondents selected more than one option. The top three responses were to: (1) tailor the assistance to years served, rank, and/or military occupational specialty (MOS) with 69.64% (n=39); (2) create more one-on-one sessions with 66.07% (n=37); and (3) involve former service members who have successfully transitioned with 60.71% (n=34).
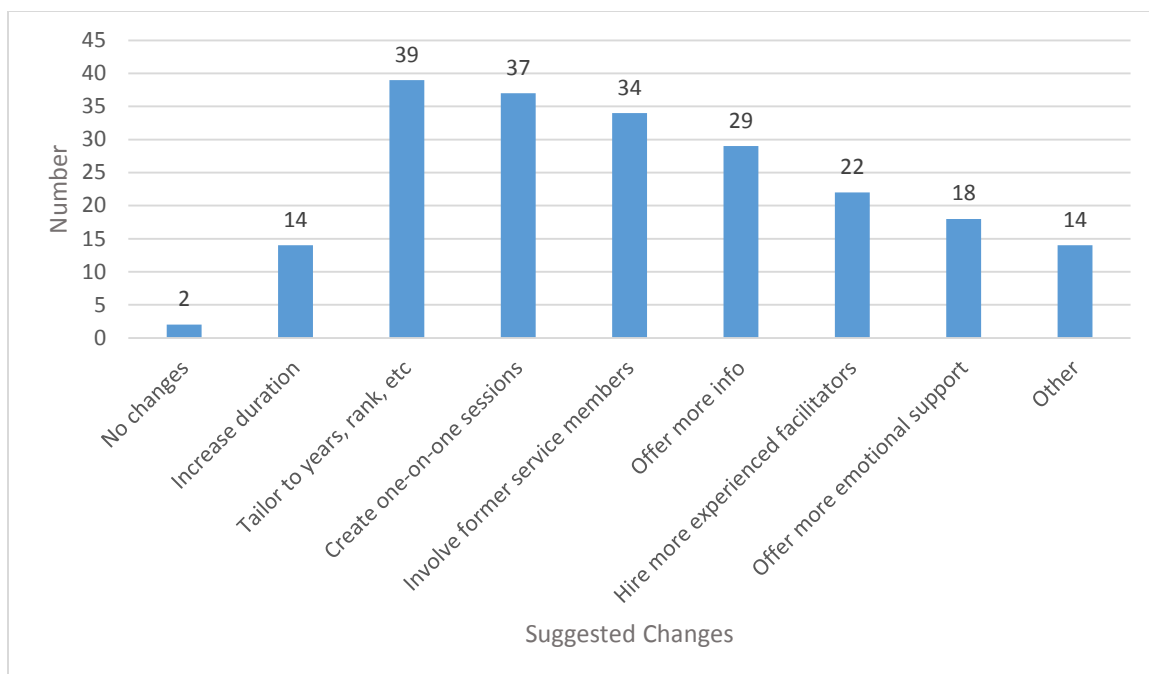
Figure 4.19 Eligible Respondents' Suggested Changes to TAP

Qualitative responses.

Several responses provided by respondents in the final question mentioned TAP. The majority of the responses indicated dissatisfaction with the program or suggested changes that should be made to TAP to provide more effective assistance to military service members. Below are the responses that were classified as relating to TAP:

- "The program [TAP] has improved. However, active members who are not transitioning may view those servicemembers going to TAP (especially enslisted) [SIC] as "boondogglers". #1 break that stereotype. #2 former members who successfully transitioned would be a great resource for 'real-world' information. No offense, but government employed presenters lack a rounded civilian skill set."

- "Unit Commanders as a whole [should be] allowing a departing service member the time to attend all transitioning evens [SIC]. Too many go to a TAP and that's it."

- "The TAP/TAMP program should be revamped entirely ! !"

- "A better TAP and break out sessions on many other issues should be attended by all, not just involuntary [SIC]."

- "At the same time it all felt very inpersonal [SIC] including TAP's. The programs are very broad and need to split into smaller more specific groups."

- "The biggest issue I saw with my transition is that the majoirty [SIC] of TAP programs are geared towards the lower enlisted levels of service. There was minimal to no specialized support for the careerist and tailoring the skills learned overa [SIC] 20+ year military career into successful transition."

- "When we leave the service we don't know what we don't know. TAP needs to inform members what to expect and how best to transition. Not all advice fits all, but some is better than none. Breaking the sessions down by rank/grade and education at TAP would be beneficial."

- "The DOD has mandated TAP. Each branch of service is now offering four 'pathways' (Employment, College/University, Voc/Tech and Entrepreneurship/Franchising. Initial feedback has been mostly positive from junior personnel. However, officer, retirees and those receiving less than honorable discharges receive the identical training…"

- "I transitioned from my unit in Italy and I think the program was un-successful for the group. I didn't really get much out of it. I think the lead of the class should

have more experience. If you haven't done it yourself, you [SIC] can you teach it?"

- "Just last weekend I went through a lot of old 'stuff' and threw out a bunch of my TAP stuff. TAP gave me a lot of STUFF, but didn't necessarily train me. Would like to see more training (how to find a job, how to interview, how to organize and plan) and fewer handouts in the future."

- "The counselors could be a bit more update [SIC] as to what is needed in the workforce, this would prevent wasting valuable time."

- "[G]uidance and support for mid-sr level combat arms personnel. Entrepreneur education."

Military mentorships.

Questions 20 and 45 asked service members whether they had contacted a peer service member or superior for assistance during the transition process. As seen in figure 4.20, the responses were nearly split, 51.79% (n=29) had contacted a former service member and 48.21% (n=27) had not.
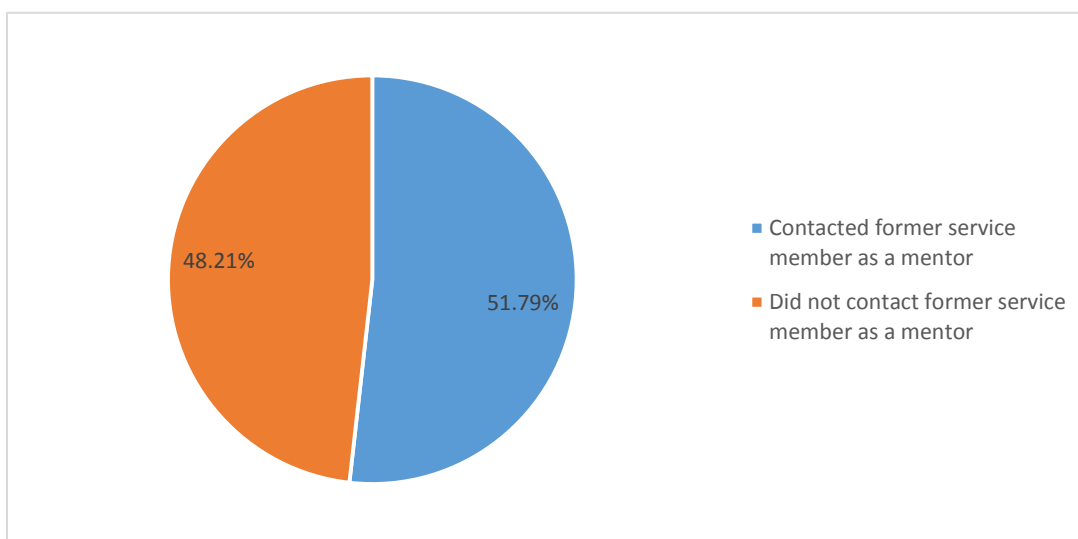
Figure 4.20 Respondents' Use of Military Mentor

Of the 29 who had contacted former service members, 89.66% (n=26) agreed or strongly agreed that having a mentor helped with their transition (figure 4.21). Again, the researcher compared the modes to determine which areas of the mentorships service members were most satisfied, as shown in figure 4.22. Across all areas of assistance, more respondents were satisfied than dissatisfied. The area of assistance with the highest satisfaction mode was applying military knowledge, skills, and experience to the civilian sector (mode=22), followed closely by explaining the civilian structured hiring process (mode=20). Determining which area of mentorships the respondents were least satisfied with was more difficult due to the overall satisfaction levels. It could be said that the respondents were least satisfied with military mentors' ability to help with emotional difficulties as that area of assistance had a lower satisfaction level as well as high numbers of not applicable and neutral responses. Overall, the majority of respondents were supportive of having military members act as mentors when transitioning. In fact, more than 80% (n=46) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend future service members have military members act as mentors, as seen in figure 4.23.

Having a mentor helped with my transition into the civilian sector.
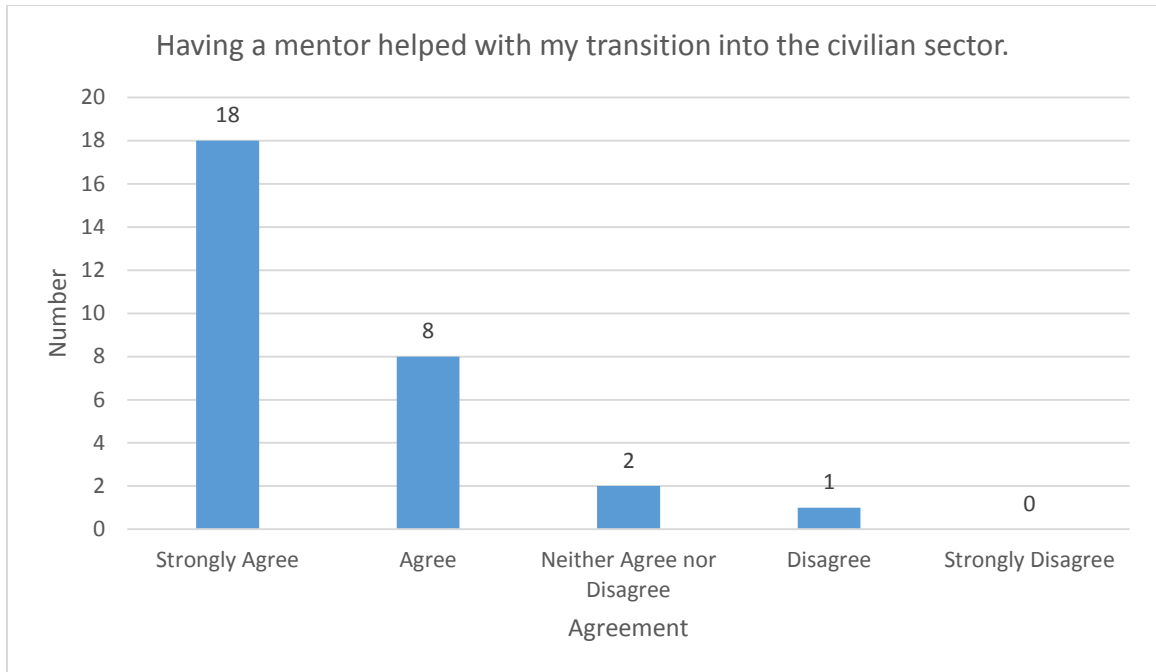
Figure 4.21 Eligible Respondents' Opinions about Assistance of Mentor
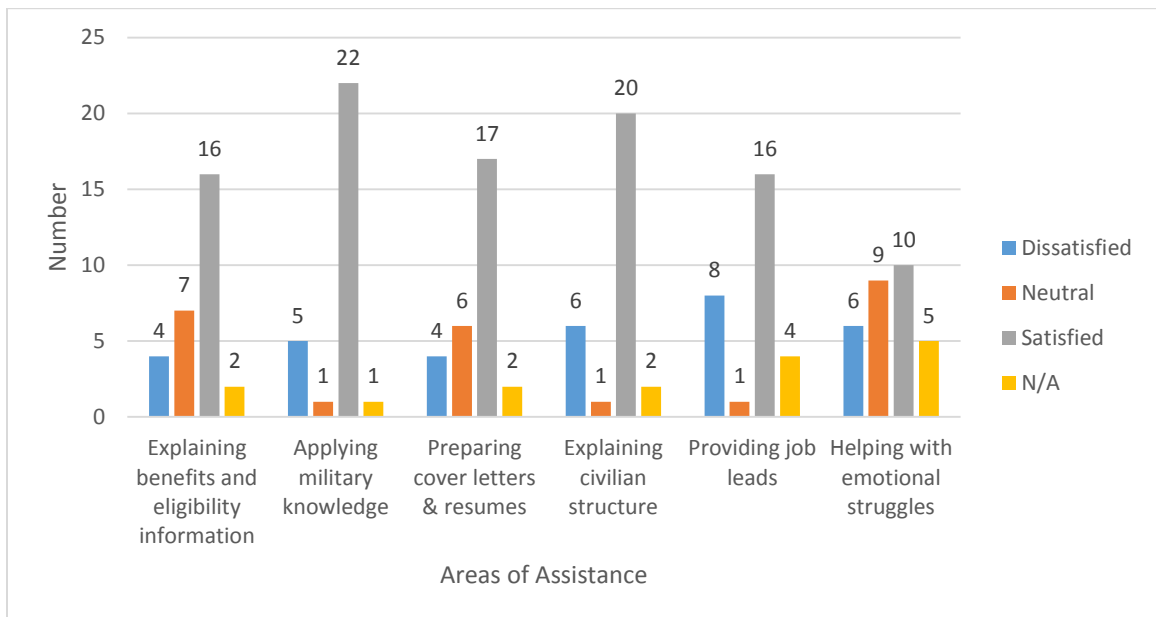
Figure 4.22 Eligible Respondents' Satisfaction with Assistance Provided by Military Mentor

I would recommend that future transitioning service members have a military member act as a mentor.
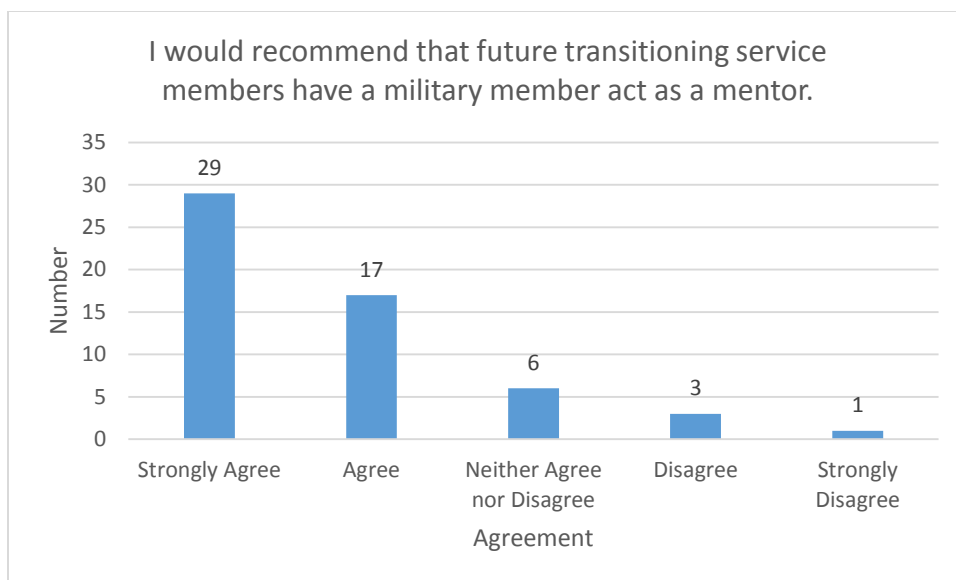
Figure 4.23 Eligible Respondents' Recommendations for Use of Military Mentor

Qualitative responses.

Although mentoring was the most effective resource according to the respondents, few individuals commented on mentoring in their response to the final question. The researcher believes few respondents commented on mentoring as they were satisfied with the process as a resource; most of the responses to the final question concerned dissatisfaction with resources and services, so it is not surprising that mentoring was excluded from most comments. Of the few comments regarding mentoring, one respondent supported the use of military service members serving as mentors when he or she said, "[F]ormer members who successfully transitioned would be a great resource for 'real-world' information." Another respondent advocated for, "The use of area business people to help us understand interviews, resumes, and hiring processes in most companies." A third service member alluded to the need for former service members to be more involved in transition assistance as he or she said, "I think the lead of the class

should have more experience. If you haven't done it yourself, you [SIC] can you teach

it?"

Civilian career counselors.

Civilian career counseling was the resource least utilized by respondents in the

survey, as depicted in figure 4.24. Only 30.36% (n=17) of the 56 respondents had

contacted a civilian career counselor for their transition.
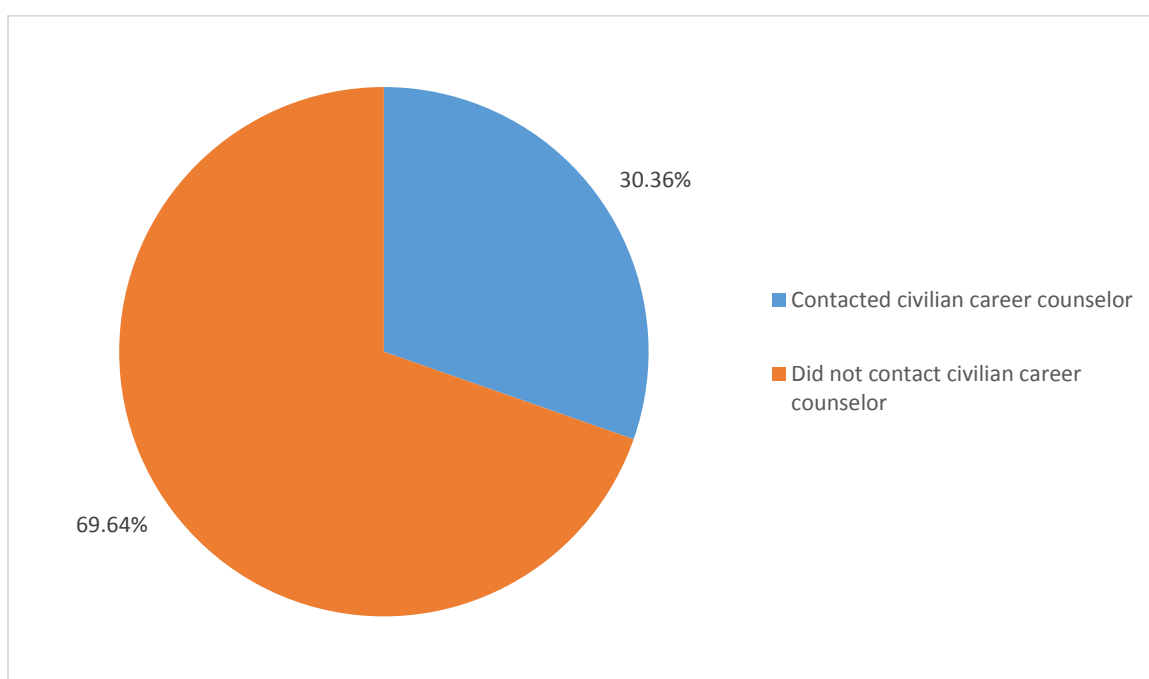
Figure 4.24 Respondents' Use of Civilian Career Counselors

The researcher again analyzed the modes from questions 25 and 50 to determine

with which areas of assistance provided by civilian career counselors the 17 service

members were most satisfied. As fewer respondents had used civilian career counseling,

the researcher polarized the responses into three categories, as seen in figure 4.25:

dissatisfied, neutral, and satisfied. The respondents were least satisfied with civilian

career counselors' ability to explain benefits and provide job leads, with both areas having the highest modes, a mode of 10. No single area stood out as being the area with which most respondents were satisfied, as the modes indicated higher dissatisfaction than satisfaction for the majority of the areas. The modes of satisfaction and dissatisfaction were equal for explaining civilian structure, indicating respondents were equally split on their satisfaction levels.
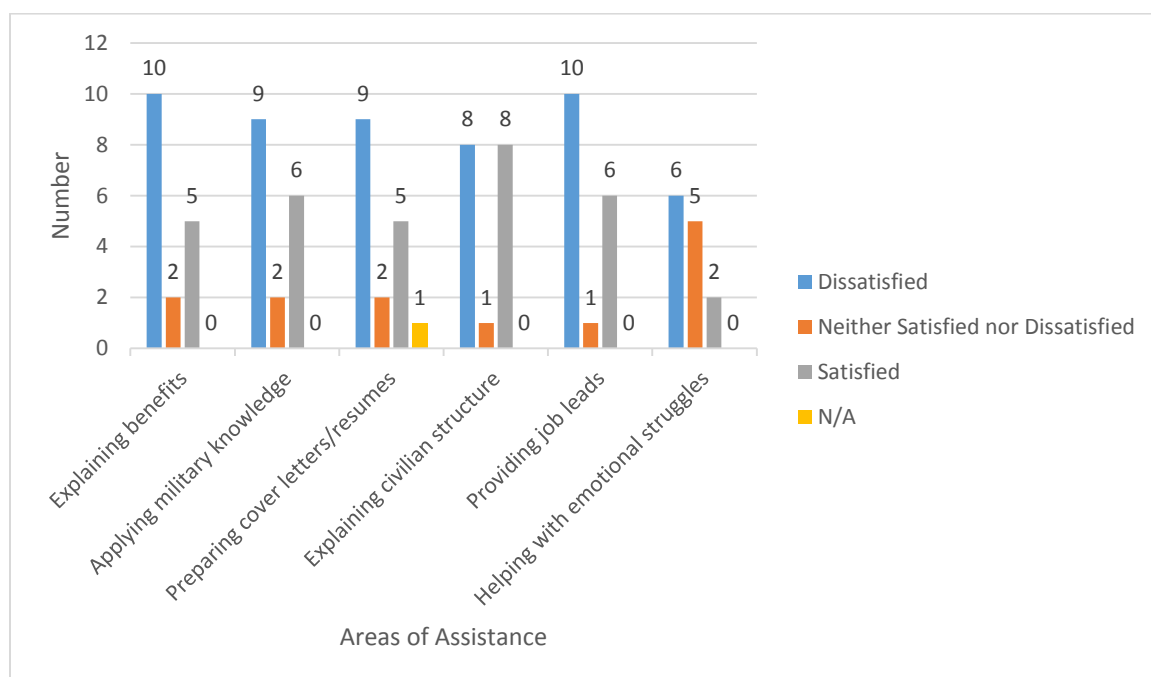
Figure 4.25 Respondents' Satisfaction with Assistance Provided by Career Counselors

Qualitative responses.

No responses to the final question directly mentioned civilian career counselors, although several comments mentioned the need to better understand the civilian structure and hiring process. It is the researcher's belief that civilian career counselors should be the best suited for explaining civilian structure to separating and transitioning service

members and helping to translate military skills to civilian terms, so such responses are summarized below:

- "Most of the job related expirence [SIC] I had from the military was hard to be translated to the civilian workforce."

- "Part of the difficulty during transition, particularly after serving long enough to reach retirement eligibility, stems from translating a wide range of experiences into an applicable industry/positional narrative."

- "[A]n indepth [SIC] understanding of the chain of command in a civilian context would have been very helpful. Although it all makes sense now, at the time I had no concept of the relative responsibility/authority of a supervisor, vs. a manager, vs. a director, vs. a VP, and the difference 'senior'when [SIC] to those terms made, in comparison to military billets."

- "There should be more discussion on the difference between military and civilian work environment."

Social networking.

Figure 4.26 displays the usage of social networking sites among the respondents. Twenty-four respondents, or 42.86%, had used social networking to connect with an individual or organization that could assist them in their job or school search, compared to 32 respondents or 57.14% who had not used social networking sites.
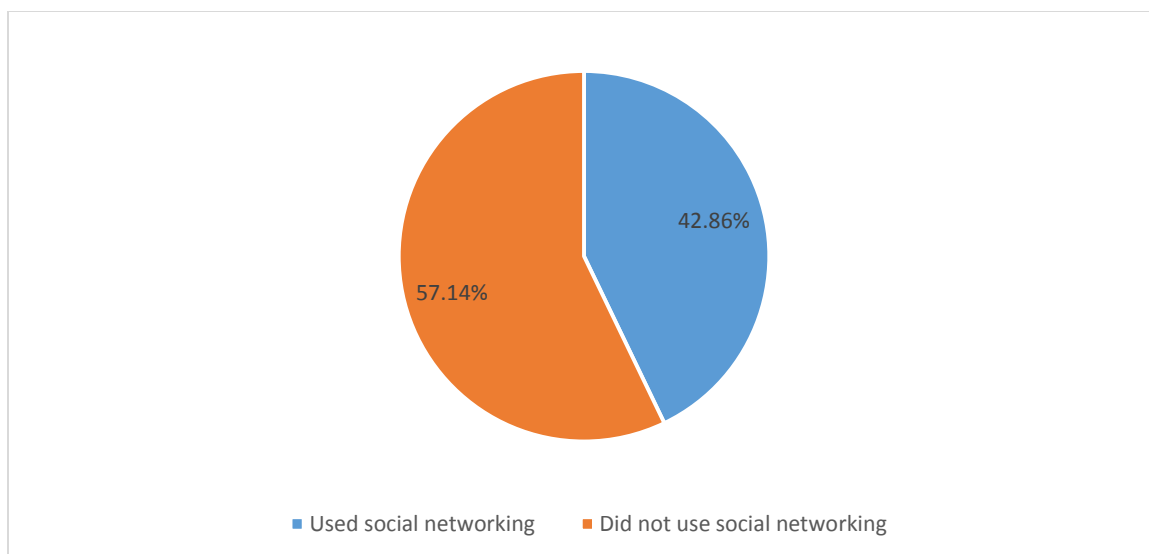
Figure 4.26 Respondents Use of Social Networking

Figure 4.27 shows the number of respondents who used each social networking site. A majority of the 24 respondents (n=15) used LinkedIn to network, followed by 9 respondents who used Facebook, 8 respondents who used some other form of social networking, and 3 respondents who used TogetherWeServed. When the 8 respondents were asked to explain what other sites they had used, they listed: IAVA [Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America], email, Texas Work Force Commission (military side), MCAA [Marine Corps Aviation Association], Vet Success, State Resources, Monster, USAJobs, MEA [Marine Executive Association], and MOAA [Military Officers Association of America].
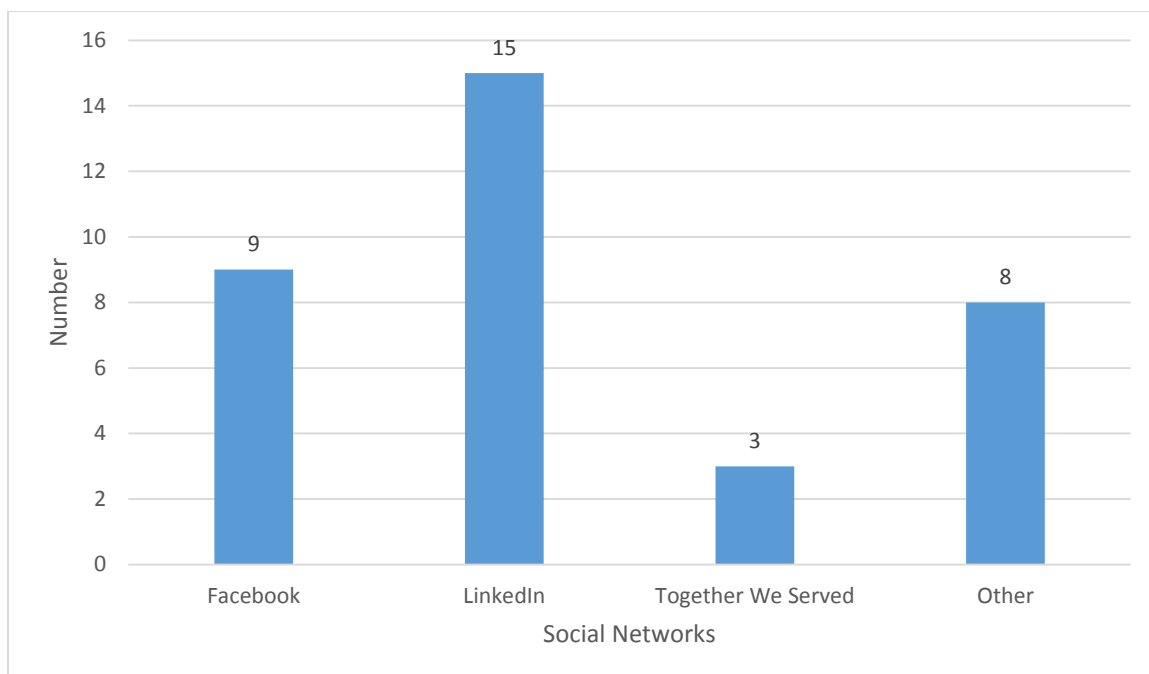
Figure 4.27 Respondents' Use of Social Networks

Figure 4.28 displays respondents' satisfaction with different areas of assistance provided by social networks. Based on the modes, respondents who had used social networks were most satisfied with social networking's ability to provide job leads, (mode=18). The area of assistance with which respondents were least satisfied with social networks is less obvious. Also, it is important to note that quite a few respondents selected not applicable for all categories except providing job leads. The researcher interpreted this as meaning most respondents used social networking in searching for job leads, but fewer respondents viewed social networks as able to assist them in explaining benefits, applying military knowledge to the civilian sector, preparing cover letters or resumes, explaining the civilian structured hiring process, and helping with emotional difficulties. Additional research should be conducted to determine how successfully transitioned service members have used social networks to their benefit.
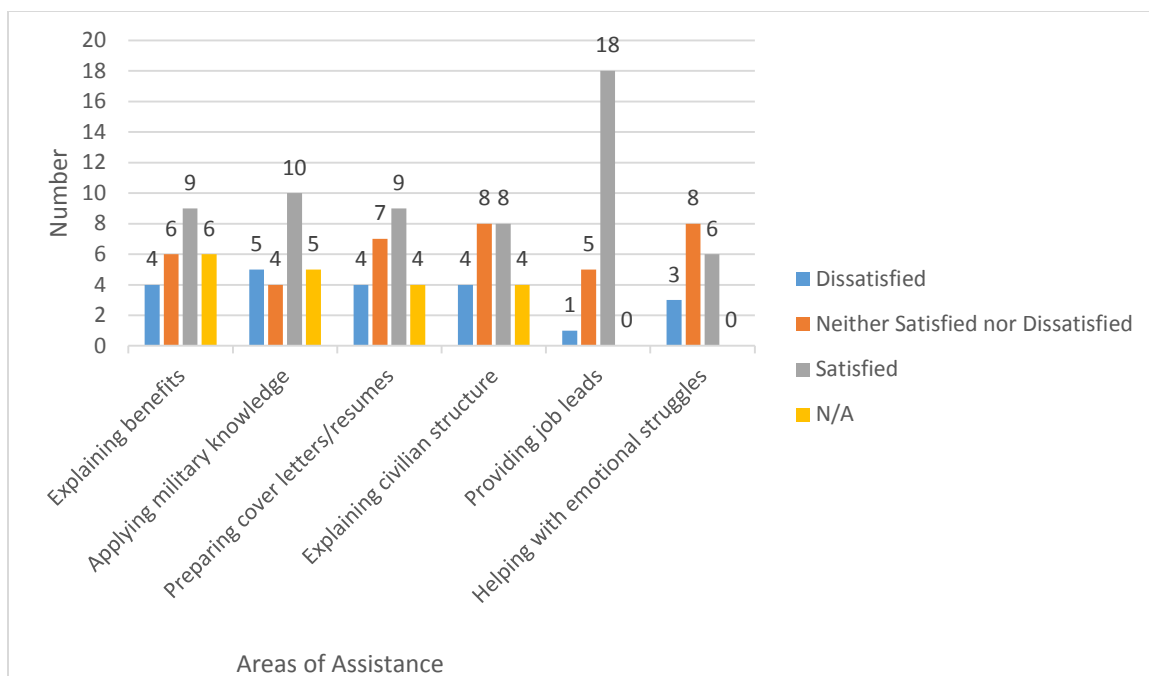
Figure 4.28 Respondents' Satisfaction with Assistance Provided by Social Networks

Qualitative responses.

Only one of the fifty-six respondents explicitly mentioned networking on the final

question. The respondent said, "Networking is critical for an effective transition."

Research indicates the crucial need for service members to network when leaving the

military as they tend to have weaker networks due to frequent moves and few

connections with the civilian sector (Clemens & Milsom, 2008; Wolpert, 2000; Jones &

Azrin, 1973). Service members should be reminded to not only network with other

service members who have transitioned, but also with civilians in career areas in which

they are interested and seeking placement.

Veteran job and school fairs.

Figure 4.29 depicts the number of respondents who had attended job or school fairs targeted towards military veterans. A little over half, 51.78% (n=29), had attended a veteran job or school fair while the remaining 48.21% (n=27) had not.
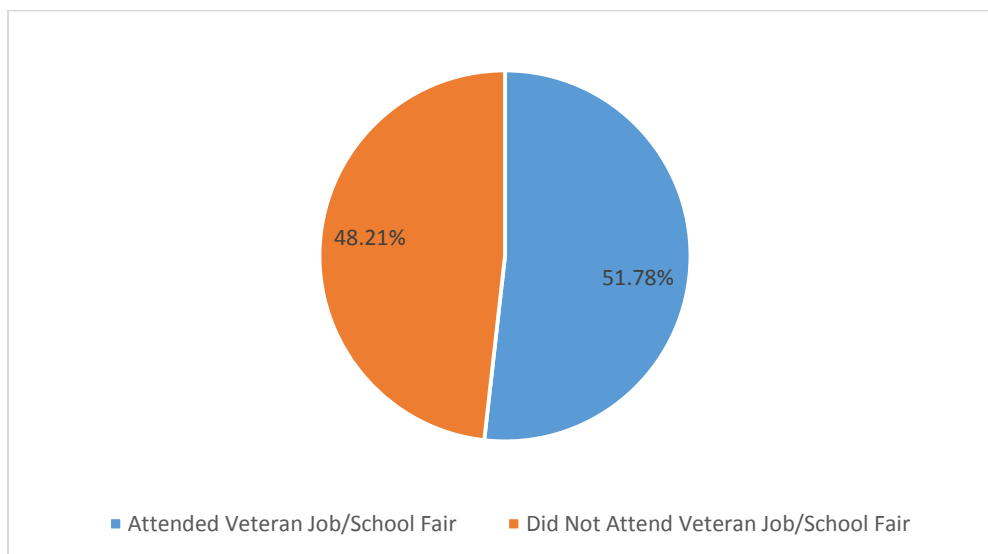
Figure 4.29 Respondents' Attendance of Veteran Job/School Fairs

Of the 29 individuals who attended job or school fairs, the majority were not satisfied with the job and school opportunities provided, as seen in figure 4.30. Almost 45% (n=13) of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were satisfied with the opportunities at the fair, while almost 38% (n=10) agreed or strongly agreed, and about 17% (n=5) neither agreed nor disagreed.
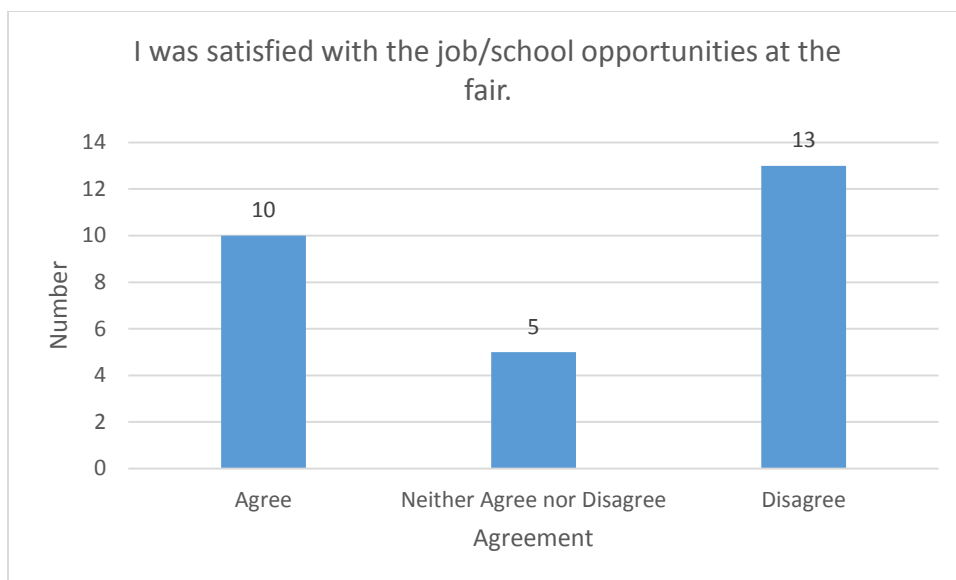
Figure 4.30 Respondents' Satisfaction with Job/School Opportunities at Fairs

Qualitative responses.

Respondents were critical of veteran job and school fairs in the final question of the survey. Five respondents discussed job fairs in their final response and none of the comments were favorable towards the fairs. Many of the comments tended to focus on job fairs not being all-encompassing and being geared too much for either enlisted or officers. Comments also discussed problems with civilians' perceptions of enlisted and officers' abilities. Responses included:

- "…job fairs are [expletive]."
- "Most job fairs I attended only included lower to middle level jobs, many solely focused on overseas contingency locations. Few if any jobs at the fair included middle to upper level opportunity."
- "…job fairs either want officers or guys just for cheap security."

- "…it is very frustrating that a lot of the information and programs seek to focus on seperating/retiring [SIC] officers having formal civilian educations and being steered towards white collar jobs and separating/retiring enlisted personnel lacking civilian education and being steered towards blue collar jobs."

- "Job fairs that had good info on jobs in the geographic areas that the transitioning service member was going to would be great."

Overall satisfaction.

The final questions of the survey asked respondents about their overall satisfaction with the support systems and programs available to service members transitioning into the civilian sector. The researcher polarized the responses into three categories: agree, neither agree nor disagree, and disagree. As shown in figure 4.31, the largest percentage, 48.21% (n=27), disagreed or strongly disagreed that overall they were satisfied with the support systems and programs available to transitioning service members.
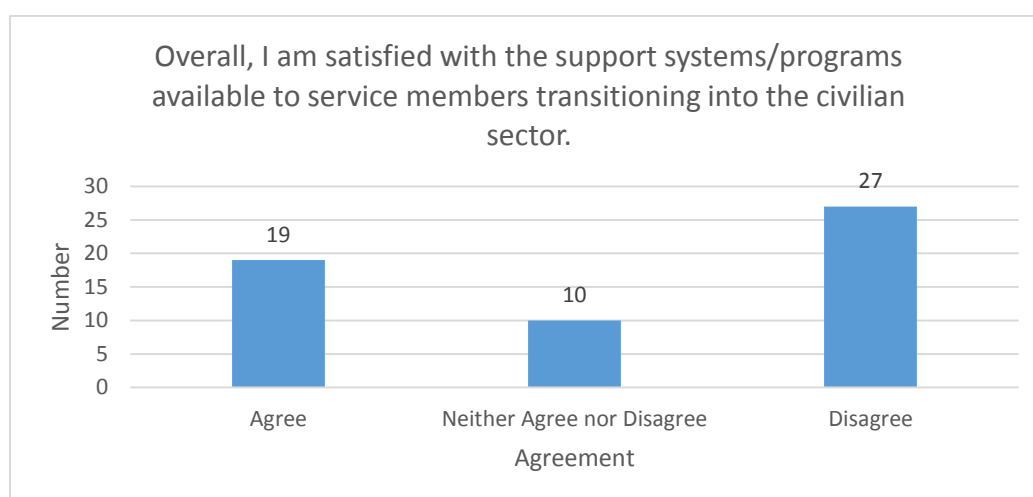
Figure 4.31 Respondents' Overall Satisfaction with Support Systems and Programs

The last closed-ended question asked respondents to rank in order which support systems offered the most effective guidance when transitioning, with 1 being the most effective and 7 being the least effective. Figure 4.32 shows how respondents rated the support systems. As respondents were asked to rank the systems on a scale of 1 to 7, calculation of the mean values of the support systems allowed for easier analysis. The mean values were compared since the ranking allowed for the variables to be calculated as continuous, with equal distance between each number on the scale.

Lower means indicated more effective support systems while higher means indicated lesser effective support systems. Former military members or senior military personnel were found to offer the most effective guidance with a mean score of 2.16. Civilian career counselors were found to offer the least effective guidance with a mean score of 5.46. Figure 4.33 ranks support systems in order according to mean scores displayed in the chevron, with more effective systems towards the top and the least effective towards the bottom.
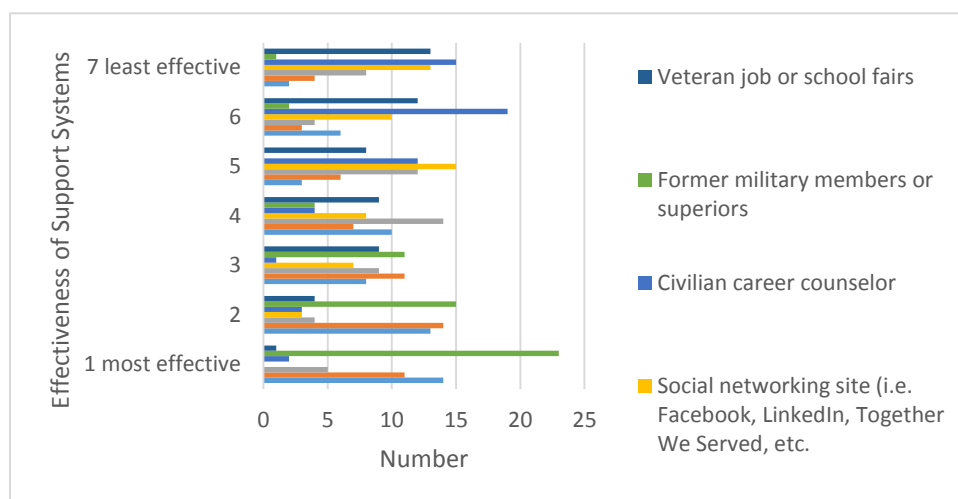
Figure 4.32 Respondents' Overall Ranking of Support Systems

- 2.16 • #1 Most Effective: Former military members or superiors
- 3.02 • #2 Most Effective: Civilian friends
- 3.14 • #3 Most Effective: Family
- 4.21 • #4: Most Effective: Military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP)
- 4.91 • #5 Most Effective: Veteran job or school fairs
- 5.09 • #6 Most Effective: Social networking sites
- 5.46 • Least Effective: Civilian career counselors
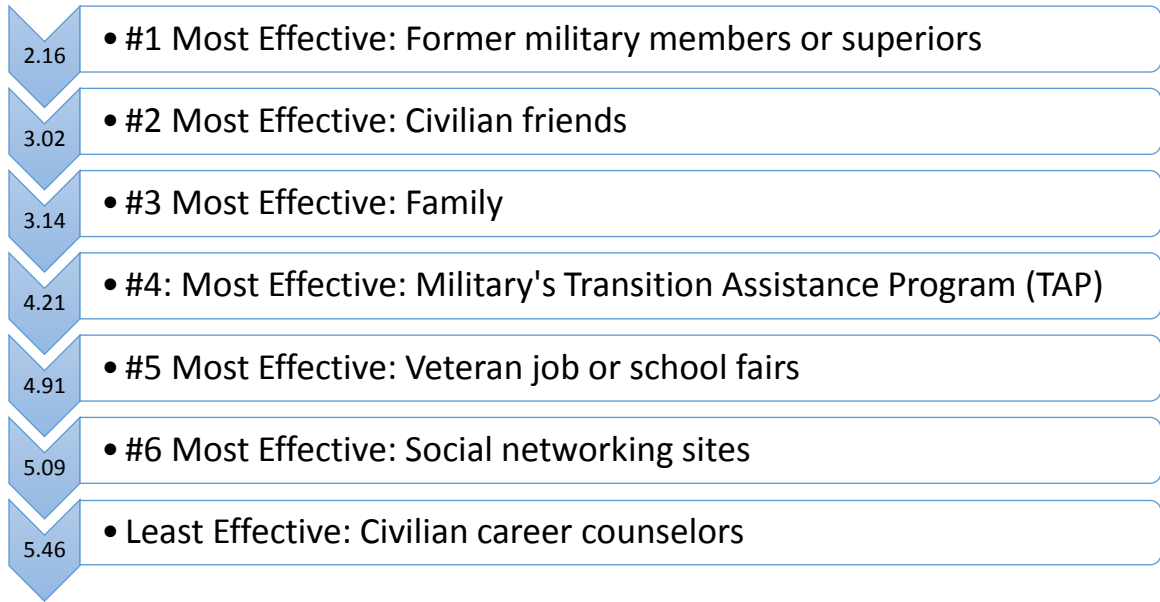
Figure 4.33 Depiction of Respondents' Overall Ranking of Support Systems

Conclusion and Recommendations

Discussion

This study investigated the opinions of service members towards available transition support services and resources as they separated from the military and entered the civilian workforce or education setting. Often in today's media there are discussions on the support and services provided to military personnel transitioning, but very little discussion or mention of research concerning the effectiveness of the transition process from the service members' perspectives is provided. When service members are facing greater difficulties than veterans of other eras, more focus needs to be placed on assessing whether existing resources are *actually* meeting their needs. In the past, the transition process was viewed as a technical issue, one that could easily be bridged through training and workshops, but today's veterans are encountering more complex and adaptive issues-issues that cannot be remedied through training alone.

Interpretation of Findings

To restate, the researcher investigated the following question and sub-question: Which resources and sources of support (TAP, mentorships, civilian career counseling, job and school fairs, social networking) are most effective for service members separating from the military and transitioning into the civilian workforce or school?

Which issues are of most concern to transitioning military service members?

The hypotheses were:

Hypothesis 1: Service members will choose the military provided Transition

Assistance Program (TAP) as the least effective resource and source of support in

preparing for their transition out of the military.

Hypothesis 2: Service members will choose mentoring as the most effective

resource and source of support when transitioning out of the military.

Hypothesis 3: Service members will most often indicate they struggled with the

issue of change in military identity.

Hypothesis 1 was partially supported from the survey findings. Although service

members indicated civilian career counseling as the least effective transition resource,

TAP still scored lower than it should have. TAP is a military sanctioned program

designed specifically to ease the separation and transition process for military service

members and the fact that it did not score highest in terms of providing effective help

indicates there are problems with the program. In fact, respondents ranked two informal

sources of support, family and civilian friends, above TAP, which might surprise TAP

and military officials.

Hypothesis 2 was fully supported based on survey data. Respondents not only

scored military mentoring well across most areas of assistance, but also scored it as the

most effective source of support in comparison to six other transition services and

sources of support.

Hypothesis 3 was not completely supported. The researcher believed respondents

would indicate they had the most difficulties with the change in their military identity.

Although change in military identity did rank in the top four areas of difficulty

respondents encountered, changes in structure and changes in camaraderie received the most votes.

Limitations and Strengths

This study was limited in terms of its generalizability to the larger military population. Not all branches of service were proportionately represented in the study. Respondents were predominately Marine and Army service members, therefore future studies should target larger samples of transitioning service members across all branches.

Another limitation was a small number of young respondents. The researcher had difficulty reaching service members between the ages of 18 and 25 who had recently transitioned. While she was able to capture responses from younger service members who had returned to school, organizational contacts did not provide many responses from young service members who had transitioned into the workforce. As compared with veterans of previous eras, younger service members are less likely to join veterans' organizations such as Veterans of Foreign Wars or the American Legion (Pruitt, 2012; Farrow, 2011).

Recommendations for Future Studies

The data gathered from this study should serve as a starting point for further study and research. It is recommended that in-depth studies be conducted to better understand and document the difficulties experienced by transitioning military service members. Documented findings can then be passed to organizations and agencies providing transition services and support in order to make improvements to the various transition programs. Service members in this study were very eager to participate and willingly provided comments on the final qualitative question. In fact, many respondents

completely filled their allotted space and several others indicated they desired additional space for comments. It is the researcher's belief that transitioning service members want their opinions and comments to be heard so that transition programs can be better tailored to meet their needs. Future studies should include more qualitative protocol, so the full opinions of service members can be better captured.

Additional emphasis needs to be placed on developing all aspects of mentoring in the transition process. Respondents in this study indicated they were satisfied with their use of mentors and ranked military mentors as the most effective resource available to them. Future research should examine the possible benefits of expanded mentorship training and programs. The military should study the impact of including mentoring as a part of the Transition Assistance Program. As informal mentoring already exist within the military, researchers should assess how the formalization of a transitioning mentorship program would benefit separating service members.

Future research should also closely examine the actual effectiveness of the military's TAP. While respondents were hesitant to rank TAP as the most effective transition resource, many of their survey responses and comments indicated they thought TAP had the potential to be much more effective. The military might consider conducting focus groups to better ascertain how they could tailor TAP to meet the needs of transitioning service members.

Implications for Practice

This study has a number of implications for practice. Practitioners should focus on the translation of military skills, creation of a veteran portal, improvement of veteran job and school fairs, and creation of a widespread veteran mentoring program. The

following paragraphs discuss how each will ease the transition process for service members.

Translation of skills.

Human resource (HR) practitioners need to revamp their hiring processes and procedures to gain awareness and better understand the knowledge, skills, and abilities that service members bring to the table. The KSAs of service members are not being fully realized, and will not be until there is an effort to translate these skills on a broader basis. The Department of Defense and Department of Labor should coordinate an effort to translate the skillsets of every Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). The translated skillsets should also include those intangible skills service members possess such as leadership, planning and organizing, coordinating mission requirements, troop movement deployment skills, maintaining commitment and dedication to duties, taking initiative, and displaying strong work ethic. The Department of Veterans Affairs has a VA for Vets Military Skills Translator, but as mentioned earlier, does not include enough of the intangible skills individuals gain throughout their military service.

Creation of veteran portal.

A single web portal should be created for veterans similar to the USAJobs (Federal job posting) website where employers post specific jobs by location with detailed job descriptions and duties, to include making on the spot applications. Veterans are presently inundated with hundreds of websites to visit when searching for jobs and information. A central veterans' job website would be a valuable tool for transitioning service members. A few respondents indicated the need to search for jobs in other

locations, so the development of such a veterans' site would allow individuals to search for jobs in specific regions or cities.

Improvement of veteran fairs.

Job and school fairs targeted towards service members need to offer a broader spectrum of opportunities and positions. The fairs tend to center on entry and low-level positions, without providing information regarding the targeted individual. Fairs should be tailored to specific job force entry requirements recognizing that transitioning service member comprise all levels of expertise- entry, mid and senior level. Fairs should be aligned to the grade and abilities of all transitioning personnel. Additional information on education programs beyond colleges and universities needs to be provided. Little emphasis on trades, certifications, and small business opportunities are provided.

Improvement of TAP.

A majority of respondents said they would recommend other service members attend TAP programs beyond what is mandatory, indicating service members gained some support from the offerings. Although the attendance of TAP is already mandatory across all branches, more should be done in terms of enforcing attendance. The stigma of attending TAP versus accomplishing mission requirements needs to be eliminated. Service members need to fully understand the benefits to be gained from the transition program.

Programs would also benefit from TAP instructors and counselors who are more knowledgeable and have greater experience. TAP should consider involving more veterans who have successfully transitioned. There are thousands of veterans who would be willing to offer their knowledge and experiences, facilitate TAP workshops, and

answer questions. Veterans who have transitioned should also be surveyed regularly to gather their opinions and recommendations about TAP. Military departments could establish a contact data base of personnel transitioning and conduct periodic surveys to gather information during and at points following transition which would be helpful in making program improvements.

Creation of widespread mentorship program.

The military should consider establishing a volunteer mentorship program, similar in nature to other mentorship programs like Big Brothers Big Sisters. Volunteer mentors would help transitioning service members prepare resumes and cover letters, practice for interviews, and assist with networking. The mentorship program could also partner with local American Legion and Veterans of Foreign War posts. This arrangement would not only benefit transitioning service members, but would help the veterans' organizations that are struggling to attract new members, especially young service members.

Conclusion

We must continually be aware of the sacrifices and selflessness of the men and women that made this great nation possible. Most of us have not worn the uniform, and few have any connection to the military. Let us always remember we owe a debt of gratitude to all that have served for the liberties we take for granted.

Every one of us must renew our commitment to keeping the promise and doing our part to assist those who have and will continue to do so much for our country. George Washington once said that the willingness of citizens to volunteer for military service would depend, in great part, upon the ways in which veterans of past wars were treated. That truth remains. This country is dependent upon the young men and women who take

on the burden of protecting our freedoms; it is our responsibility to take care of their

needs as they separate from the military.

Appendix A

Survey Cover Letter

"Web"/"Email" Cover Letter (used in anonymous research)

Identification of Investigator & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Marissa Bamford, a graduate student from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to investigate the support services available to service members as they separate from the military and transition into a civilian workplace or school setting. This study will contribute to the researcher's completion of her thesis to obtain a master's degree. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Research Procedures

This study consists of an online survey that will be administered to individual participants through Qualtrics. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to your attitudes towards military transitional support services.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require 20 minutes of your time.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study. However, should some questions cause feelings of discomfort, contact information is provided at the conclusion of the survey for the Veterans Crisis Line which is managed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Benefits

By participating in this study, there are no direct benefits for you as a participant; however, findings from this study will serve to improve existing forms of transition support and possibly create new forms of assistance.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented at James Madison University during a thesis defense with four James Madison University professors present. While individual responses are anonymously obtained and recorded online through the Qualtrics software, data is kept in the strictest confidence. No identifiable information will be collected from the participants and no

identifiable responses will be presented in the final form of this study. All data will be stored in a secure location in a locked file cabinet in Memorial Hall accessible only to the Learning, Technology, and Leadership Education department chairperson. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. Following the completion of this study on or before August 13, 2013, all records will be destroyed. Final aggregate results will be made available to participants upon request.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. However, once your responses have been submitted and anonymously recorded, you will not be able to withdraw from the study.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Marissa Bamford

Adult Education/Human Resource Development

James Madison University

bamformk@gmail.com

Dr. Jane Thall

Learning, Technology, and Leadership Education

James Madison University

Telephone: (540) 568-5531

thalljb@jmu.edu

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. David Cockley

Chair, Institutional Review Board

James Madison University

(540) 568-2834

cocklede@jmu.edu

Giving of Consent

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about this study. I have read this consent and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age. By clicking on the link below and completing and submitting this anonymous survey, I am consenting to participate in this research.

http://jmu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_ebNx9zZO7ueqOG1

_Marissa K. Bamford_____   _____

Name of Researcher (Printed)   Date

Appendix B

Survey

1.1 The intent of this survey is to find out which resources United States military service members are most likely to use when separating from the military and transitioning into the civilian sector. Service members are the users of the transition support programs so it is important to understand whether service members believe the existing resources are effective. The target audience includes service members who have separated from the military within the last three years or are preparing for separation within the next year. This study will assess the effectiveness of the current resources available to service members, including: the Department of Defense's official Transition Assistance Program (TAP) mentorships social networks online like Facebook, Linkedin, Together We Served, etc. career counseling led by civilian career counselors veteran job or school fairs Statistical software will be used to analyze which resources service members prefer and which they deem the most effective.

1.2 I am:

      17 years old or younger

      18-24 years old

      25-31 years old

      32-38 years old

      39-45 years old

      46-52 years old

      53-59 years old

      60 years old or older

      Prefer not to disclose

If 17 years old or younger Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

1.3 I am:

      Male

      Female

      Prefer not to disclose

1.4 I have served in the United States military.

      Yes

      No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

1.5 The branch I separated from or will separate from is the:

      Air Force

      Air Force Reserve

      Air National Guard

Army
Army Reserve
Coast Guard
Coast Guard Reserve
Marine Corps
Marine Corps Reserve
Navy
Navy Reserve
Army National Guard

1.6 I have separated from the United States military with an honorable discharge within the last five years.
Yes
No
If No Is Selected, Then Skip To I have not yet separated, but have be...If Yes Is Selected, Then Skip To I have served in: (Check all that ap...

1.7 I have not yet separated, but have begun the process of separating from the United States military.
Yes
No
If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

1.8 I have served in: (Check all that apply.)
None of the above
Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq)
Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan)
Operation New Dawn (Iraq)

2.1 I separated as a/n:
Enlisted service member
Officer
Warrant Officer

2.2 After my military career, I:
Searched for a civilian job
Applied to school
Searched for a job and applied to school
Retired and did not search for another job
Other. Please specify: _____
Began work- I had already found another job

2.3 The following questions will ask about the emotional struggles or challenges involved in the transition from military service to civilian life.

2.4 Transitioning out of the military and into the civilian workforce or school setting was emotionally stressful.

> Strongly Agree
> Agree
> Neither Agree nor Disagree
> Disagree
> Strongly Disagree

2.5 I struggled with the following issues when I transitioned into the civilian sector (Check all that apply):

> I had no transition issues
> Change in military identity
> Change in responsibility
> Change in structure
> Change in benefits
> Change in camaraderie
> Finding placement (job or school)
> Emotional distress
> Homelessness
> Unemployment
> Combat-related disabilities
> Financial issues
> Other. Please specify: _____
> Non-combat related disabilities

2.6 The following questions will assess your views towards the military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

2.7 The military's TAP provided me with the information I needed to successfully transition into the civilian sector.(Select Not Applicable if you did not participate in your branch's Transition Assistance Program)

> Strongly Agree
> Agree
> Neither Agree nor Disagree
> Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Not Applicable

If Not Applicable Is Selected, Then Skip To Briefly explain why you did not parti...

2.8 I would rate my satisfaction with the following areas of the military's TAP as:

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Applicable
Explaining benefits and eligibility information upon separation								
Applying military knowledge, skills, and experience to the civilian sector								
Preparing cover letters or resumes								
Explaining the civilian structured hiring process								
Providing job leads								
Helping with my emotional struggles								

2.9 I would recommend that transitioning service members use additional TAP activities, workshops, and programs beyond what is mandatory.

> Strongly Agree
> Agree
> Neither Agree nor Disagree
> Disagree
> Strongly Disagree
> Not applicable

If Strongly Agree Is Selected, Then Skip To I would suggest the following changes...If Agree Is Selected, Then Skip To I would suggest the following changes...If Neither Agree nor Disagree Is Selected, Then Skip To I would suggest the following changes...If Disagree Is Selected, Then Skip To I would suggest the following changes...If Strongly Disagree Is Selected, Then Skip To I would suggest the following changes...If Not applicable Is Selected, Then Skip To I would suggest the following changes...

2.10 Briefly explain why you did not participate in your branch's TAP.

2.11 Although I did not participate in my branch's TAP, I would recommend that other transitioning service members participate.

> Strongly Agree
> Agree
> Neither Agree nor Disagree
> Disagree
> Strongly Disagree

2.12 I would suggest the following changes be made to the military's TAP:

> No changes are needed.
> Increase the duration.
> Tailor the assistance to years served, rank, and/or military occupational specialty (MOS).
> Create more one-on-one sessions
> Involve former service members who have successfully transitioned.
> Offer more information about preparing for civilian structure, expectations, etc.
> Hire more experienced facilitators.
> Offer more emotional support.
> Other. Please specify: _____

2.13 The following questions will ask about your use of a mentor when transitioning into the civilian sector.

2.14 I contacted a former service member or superior for assistance transitioning into the civilian sector.

     Yes

     No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To I would recommend that future transit...

2.15 The following questions will ask more about your use of a mentor when you transitioned into the civilian sector. A mentor may be a former service member or superior who offered you transition advice, helped with your resume, provided you with job leads, assisted you with job or school recommendation requests, etc.

2.16 Having a mentor helped with my transition into the civilian sector.

     Strongly Agree

     Agree

     Neither Agree nor Disagree

     Disagree

     Strongly Disagree

2.17 I would rate my satisfaction with the following areas of assistance provided by my mentor as:

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Applicable
Explaining benefits and eligibility information upon separation								
Applying military knowledge, skills, and experience to the civilian sector								
Preparing cover letters or resumes								
Explaining the civilian structured hiring process								
Providing job leads								
Helping with my emotional struggles								

2.18 I would recommend that future transitioning service members have a military member as a mentor.

       Strongly Agree
       Agree
       Neither Agree nor Disagree
       Disagree
       Strongly Disagree

2.19 The following questions will ask about your use of a civilian career counselor when transitioning into the civilian sector.

2.20 I contacted a civilian career counselor when I transitioned into the civilian workforce.

    Yes

    No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To I used social networking to connect w...

2.21 I would rate my satisfaction with the following areas of assistance provided by the civilian career counselor as:

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Applicable
Explaining benefits and eligibility informatio n upon separation								
Applying military knowledge , skills, and experience to the civilian sector								
Preparing cover letters or resumes								
Explaining the civilian structured hiring process								
Providing job leads								
Helping with my emotional struggles								

2.22 The following questions will ask about your use of social networking sites (i.e. Facebook, Linkedin, Together We Served, etc.) during your transition into the civilian sector.

2.23 I used social networking to connect with an individual or organization that could assist me in my job or school search.

     Yes

     No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To The following questions will ask abou...

2.24 I used the following sites to connect with individuals or organizations when I transitioned into the civilian sector.

Facebook
Linkedin
Together We Served
Other. Please specify: _____

2.25 I would rate my satisfaction with the following areas of assistance provided by social networking sites during my transition into the civilian sector as:

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Applicable
Explaining benefits and eligibility information upon separation								
Applying military knowledge, skills, and experience to the civilian sector								
Preparing cover letters or resumes								
Explaining the civilian structured hiring process								
Providing job leads								
Helping with my emotional struggles								

2.26 The following questions will ask about your use of veteran job or school fairs when you transitioned.A veteran job fair or school/college fair is specifically targeted to separating or former service members seeking job and school placements.

2.27 I attended a veteran job/school fair.
      Yes
      No
If No Is Selected, Then Skip To The final questions will ask about yo...

2.28 I was satisfied with the job/school opportunities at the fair:
      Strongly Agree
      Agree
      Neither Agree nor Disagree
      Disagree
      Strongly Disagree

2.29 The final questions will ask about your general views towards existing sources of support when transitioning.

2.30 Overall, I am satisfied with the support systems/programs available to service members transitioning into the civilian sector.
      Strongly Agree
      Agree
      Neither Agree nor Disagree
      Disagree
      Strongly Disagree

2.31 Rank in order (click and drag) which support system offered you the most effective guidance when transitioning into the civilian sector, with 1 being the most effective and 8 being the least effective.
      _____ Civilian friends
      _____ Family
      _____ Military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP)
      _____ Social networking site (i.e. Facebook, Linkedin, Together We Served, etc.
      _____ Civilian career counselor
      _____ Former military members or superiors
      _____ Veteran job or school fairs

2.32 Please use the space below to discuss any issues related to your transition that have not been previously addressed in this survey.
3.1 I will separate as a/n:
      Enlisted service member

Officer

3.2 After my military career, I will be:

Searching for a civilian job

Applying to school

Searching for a job and applying to school

Retiring and not searching for another job.

Other. Please specify: _____

Beginning work- I have already found a job.

3.3 The following questions will ask about the emotional struggles or challenges involved in the transition from military service to civilian life.

3.4 Transitioning out of the military and into the civilian workforce or school setting is emotionally stressful.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

3.5 I am struggling with the following issues as I transition into the civilian sector (Check all that apply):

I have no transition issues

Loss of military identity

Loss of responsibility

Change in structure

Change in benefits

Loss of camaraderie

Finding placement (job or school)

Emotional distress

Homelessness

Unemployment

Combat-related disabilities

Financial issues

Other. Please specify: _____

3.6 The following questions will assess your views towards the military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP) using a five point scale ranging from strongly dissatisfied to strongly satisfied.

3.7 The military's TAP has provided me with the information I need to successfully transition into the civilian sector.(Select Not Applicable if you have not participated in your branch's Transition Assistance Program)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Not Applicable

If Not Applicable Is Selected, Then Skip To Briefly explain why you have not part...

3.8 I would rate my satisfaction with the following areas of the military's TAP as:

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Applicable
Explaining benefits and eligibility information upon separation								
Applying military knowledge, skills, and experience to the civilian sector								
Preparing cover letters or resumes								
Explaining the civilian structured hiring process								
Providing job leads								
Helping with my emotional struggles								

3.9 I would recommend that transitioning service members use additional TAP activities, workshops, and programs beyond what is mandatory.

> Strongly Agree
> Agree
> Neither Agree nor Disagree
> Disagree
> Strongly Disagree
> Not applicable

If Strongly Agree Is Selected, Then Skip To I would suggest the following changes...If Agree Is Selected, Then Skip To I would suggest the following changes...If Neither Agree nor Disagree Is Selected, Then Skip To I would suggest the following changes...If Disagree Is Selected, Then Skip To I would suggest the following changes...If Strongly Disagree Is Selected, Then Skip To I would suggest the following changes...If Not applicable Is Selected, Then Skip To I would suggest the following changes...

3.10 Briefly explain why you have not participated in your branch's TAP.

3.11 Although I have not participated in my branch's TAP, I would recommend that other transitioning service members participate.

> Strongly Agree
> Agree
> Neither Agree nor Disagree
> Disagree
> Strongly Disagree

3.12 I would suggest the following changes be made to the military's TAP:

> No changes are needed.
> Increase the duration.
> Tailor the assistance to years served, rank, and/or military occupational specialty (MOS).
> Create more one-on-one sessions
> Involve former service members who have successfully transitioned.
> Offer more information about preparing for civilian structure, expectations, etc.
> Hire more experienced facilitators.
> Offer more emotional support.
> Other. Please specify: _____

3.13 The following questions will ask about your use of a mentor when transitioning into the civilian sector.

3.14 I have contacted a former service member or superior for assistance transitioning into the civilian sector.

     Yes

     No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To I would recommend that future transit...

3.15 The following questions will ask more about your use of a mentor for transitioning into the civilian sector.A mentor may be a former service member or superior who offered you transition advice, helped with your resume, provided you with job leads, assisted you with job or school recommendation requests, etc.

3.16 Having a mentor has helped with my transitioning into the civilian sector.

     Strongly Agree

     Agree

     Neither Agree nor Disagree

     Disagree

     Strongly Disagree

3.17 I would rate my satisfaction with the following areas of assistance provided by my mentor as:

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Applicable
Explaining benefits and eligibility informatio n upon separation								
Applying military knowledge , skills, and experience to the civilian sector								
Preparing cover letters or resumes								
Explaining the civilian structured hiring process								
Providing job leads								
Helping with my emotional struggles								

3.18 I would recommend that future transitioning service members have a military member as a mentor.

        Strongly Agree
        Agree
        Neither Agree nor Disagree
        Disagree
        Strongly Disagree

3.19 The following questions will ask about your use of a civilian career counselor when transitioning into the civilian sector.

3.20 I have contacted a civilian career counselor about my transition into the civilian workforce.

     Yes

     No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To The following questions will ask abou...

3.21 I would rate my satisfaction with the following areas of assistance provided by the civilian career counselor as:

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Applicable
Explaining benefits and eligibility information upon separation								
Applying military knowledge, skills, and experience to the civilian sector								
Preparing cover letters or resumes								
Explaining the civilian structured hiring process								
Providing job leads								
Helping with my emotional struggles								

3.22 The following questions will ask about your use of social networking sites (i.e. Facebook, Linkedin, Together We Served, etc.) during your transition into the civilian sector.

3.23 I have used social networking to connect with an individual or organization that could assist me in my job or school search.

  Yes

  No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To The following questions will ask abou...

3.24 I have used the following sites to connect with individuals or organizations about my transition into the civilian sector.

  Facebook

  Linkedin

  Together We Served

  Other. Please specify: _____

3.25 I would rate my satisfaction with the following areas of assistance provided by social networking sites during my transition into the civilian sector as:

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Applicable
Explaining benefits and eligibility information upon separation								
Applying military knowledge, skills, and experience to the civilian sector								
Preparing cover letters or resumes								
Explaining the civilian structured hiring process								
Providing job leads								
Helping with my emotional struggles								

3.26 The following questions will ask about your use of veteran job or school fairs for your transition. A veteran job fair or school/college fair is specifically targeted to separating or former service members seeking job and school placements.

3.27 I have attended a veteran job/school fair.

     Yes

     No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To The final questions will ask about yo...

3.28 I was satisfied with the job/school opportunities at the fair:

     Strongly Agree
     Agree
     Neither Agree nor Disagree
     Disagree
     Strongly Disagree

3.29 The final questions will ask about your general views towards existing sources of support when transitioning.

3.30 Overall, I am satisfied with he support systems/programs available to service members transitioning into the civilian sector.

     Strongly Agree
     Agree
     Neither Agree nor Disagree
     Disagree
     Strongly Disagree

3.31 Rank in order (click and drag) which support system has offered you the most effective guidance thus far for your transition into the civilian sector, with 1 being the most effective and 8 being the least effective.

     _____ Civilian friends
     _____ Family
     _____ Military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP)
     _____ Social networking site (i.e. Facebook, Linkedin, Together We Served, etc.
     _____ Civilian career counselor
     _____ Former military members or superiors
     _____ Veteran job or school fairs

3.32 Please use the space below to discuss any issues related to your transition that have not been previously addressed in this survey.

Appendix C

Site Coordinator Letters of Permission

Site Coordinator Letter of Permission

November 27, 2012

Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
MSC 5728
JMAC-6, Suite 26
Harrisonburg, VA 22807

Dear Institutional Review Board,

I hereby agree to allow Marissa Bamford, a graduate student from James Madison University, to conduct her research on the online Community of Veterans forum of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. I understand that the purpose of the study is to examine the views of military service members who have separated from the military and have transitioned into the civilian sector.

By signing this letter of permission, I am agreeing to the following:

 JMU researcher has permission to have survey posted on Community of Veterans site.

 JMU researcher has access to the data collected to perform the data analysis both for presentation to her thesis committee and/or for publication purposes.

Sincerely,

Laura Slusarczyk, Program Coordinator
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

Site Coordinator Letter of Permission

January 29, 2013

Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
MSC 5728
JMAC-6, Suite 26
Harrisonburg, VA 22807

Dear Institutional Review Board,

I hereby agree to allow Marissa Bamford, a graduate student from James Madison University, to conduct her research via email to Lord Fairfax Community College military veterans. I understand that the purpose of the study is to examine the views of military service members who have separated from the military and have transitioned into the civilian sector.

By signing this letter of permission, I am agreeing to the following:

 JMU researcher has permission to provide the email consent letter and link to her survey to me, which I will make available to Lord Fairfax Community College military veterans.

 JMU researcher has access to the data collected to perform the data analysis both for presentation to her thesis committee and/or for publication purposes.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Byard, Veteran and International Admission Specialist
Lord Fairfax Community College

Site Coordinator Letter of Permission

January 29, 2013

Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
MSC 5728
JMAC-6, Suite 26
Harrisonburg, VA 22807

Dear Institutional Review Board,

I hereby agree to allow Marissa Bamford, a graduate student from James Madison University, to conduct her research via email to military veterans. I understand that the purpose of the study is to examine the views of military service members who have separated from the military and have transitioned into the civilian sector.

By signing this letter of permission, I am agreeing to the following:

 JMU researcher has permission to provide the email consent letter and link to her survey to me, which I will make available to military veterans.

 JMU researcher has access to the data collected to perform the data analysis both for presentation to her thesis committee and/or for publication purposes.

Sincerely,

Lieutenant Colonel Terrance Portman, Instructor
Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS

Appendix D

Additional Tables

Age of All Respondents

Age	Response	Percentage
18-24 years old	4	5.13%
25-31 years old	12	15.38%
32-38 years old	13	16.67%
39-45 years old	16	20.51%
46-52 years old	28	35.90%
53-59 years old	2	2.56%
60 years old or older	2	2.56%
Prefer not to disclose	1	1.28%
Total	78	100.00%

Sex of All Survey Respondents

Sex	Response	Percentage
Male	62	79.49%
Female	15	19.23%
Prefer not to disclose	1	1.28%
Total	78	100.00%

Education Level of All Survey Respondents

Answer	Response	Percentage
Less than high school	0	0.00%
High school/GED	3	3.85%
Some college	18	23.08%
2-year college degree (Associate Degree)	9	11.54%
4-year college degree (Bachelor's Degree)	17	21.79%
Master's Degree	28	35.90%
Doctoral Degree	2	2.56%
Professional Degree	1	1.28%
Total	78	100.00%

Military Service of All Survey Respondents

I have served in the United States military.	Response	Percentage
Yes	77	98.72%
No	1	1.28%
Total	78	100.00%

Branch of Service of All Survey Respondents

The branch I separated from or will separate from is the:	Response	Percentage
Air Force	8	10.39%
Air Force Reserve	1	1.30%
Air National Guard	1	1.30%
Army	25	32.47%
Army National Guard	5	6.49%
Army Reserve	4	5.19%
Coast Guard	1	1.30%
Coast Guard Reserve	1	1.30%
Marine Corps	26	33.77%
Marine Corps Reserve	3	3.90%
Navy	3	3.90%
Navy Reserve	2	2.60%
Total	77	100.00%

Respondents' Actions Following Separation

Decision	Responses	Percentages
Applied/applying to school	3	5.36%
Began/will begin work- had already found another job	17	30.36%
Retired/retiring & did not search for another job	2	3.57%
Searched/searching for a civilian job	17	30.36%
Searched/searching for a job and applied/applying to school	9	16.07%
Other	8	14.29%
Total	56	100%

Respondents' Agreement with Emotional Stress of Transition

Transitioning out of the military and into the civilian workforce or school setting is/was emotionally stressful.	Responses	Percentages
Strongly Agree	23	41.07%
Agree	24	42.86%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	6	10.71%
Disagree	2	3.57%
Strongly Disagree	1	1.79%
Total	56	100%

Respondents' Identified Transition Issues

Issues	Responses	Percentages
No issues	3	5.36%
Change in military identity	31	55.36%
Change in responsibility	37	66.07%
Change in structure	40	71.43%
Change in benefits	28	50.00%
Change in camaraderie	40	71.43%
Finding placement	24	42.86%
Emotional distress	20	35.71%
Homelessness	2	3.57%
Unemployment	20	35.71%
Combat related disabilities	20	35.71%
Non-combat related disabilities	9	16.07%
Financial issues	19	33.93%
Other	5	8.93%

Responses to Success of TAP

The military's TAP provided me with the information I needed to successfully transition into the civilian sector.	Responses	Percentages
Strongly Agree	4	8.33%
Agree	15	31.25%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	12	25.00%
Disagree	8	16.67%
Strongly Disagree	9	18.75%
Not Applicable	8	16.67%
Total	56	100.00%

Respondents' Satisfaction with Areas of TAP

I would rate my satisfaction with the areas of the military's TAP as:	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	N/A	Total
Explaining benefits and eligibility information	3	5	5	6	11	14	3	1	48
	6.25%	10.42%	10.42%	12.5%	22.92%	29.17%	6.25%	2.08%	100.00%
Applying military knowledge	5	6	9	4	13	7	4	0	48
	10.42%	12.50%	18.75%	8.33%	27.08%	14.58%	8.33%	0.00%	100.00%
Preparing cover letters & resumes	6	8	9	6	9	4	4	2	48
	12.50%	16.67%	18.75%	12.50%	18.75%	8.33%	8.33%	4.17%	100.00%
Explaining civilian structure	7	9	6	5	7	11	1	2	48
	14.58%	18.75%	12.50%	10.42%	14.58%	22.92%	2.08%	4.17%	100.00%
Providing job leads	15	5	13	6	4	2	2	1	48
	31.25%	10.42%	27.08%	12.50%	8.33%	4.17%	4.17%	2.08%	100.00%
Helping with emotional struggles	9	9	6	13	3	2	1	5	48
	18.75%	18.75%	12.50%	27.08%	6.25%	4.17%	2.08%	10.42%	100.00%

Respondents' Recommendation of Additional TAP Use

I would recommend that transitioning service members use additional TAP activities, workshops, and programs beyond what is mandatory.	Responses	Percentages
Strongly Agree	24	50
Agree	11	22.92
Neither Agree nor Disagree	7	14.58
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	6	12.5
Total	48	100

Respondents' Suggested Changes of TAP

I would suggest the following changes be made to the military's TAP:	Responses
No changes	2
Increase duration	14
Tailor to years, rank, etc.	39
Create one-on-one	37
Involve former service members	34
Offer more info	29
Hire more experienced facilitators	22
Offer more emotional support	18
Other	14

Respondents' Use of Military Mentors

I contacted a former service member or superior for assistance transitioning into the civilian sector.	Responses	Percentage
Yes	29	51.79
No	27	48.21
Total	56	100.00

Respondents' Opinions about Assistance of Mentor

Having a mentor helped with my transition into the civilian sector.	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	18	62.07%
Agree	8	27.59%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	2	6.90%
Disagree	1	3.45%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Total	29	100.00%

Respondents' Satisfaction with Assistance Provided by Military Mentor

I would rate my satisfaction with the areas of assistance provided by my military mentor as:	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	N/A	Total
Explaining benefits and eligibility information	1	2	1	7	4	3	9	2	29
	3.45%	6.90%	3.45%	24.14%	13.79%	10.34%	31.03%	6.90%	100.00%
Applying military knowledge	1	2	2	1	4	4	14	1	29
	3.45%	6.90%	6.90%	3.45%	13.79%	13.79%	48.28%	3.45%	100.00%
Preparing cover letters & resumes	1	2	1	6	4	3	10	2	29
	3.45%	6.90%	3.45%	20.69%	13.79%	10.34%	34.48%	6.90%	100.00%
Explain civilian structure	1	2	3	1	3	4	13	2	29
	3.45%	6.90%	10.34%	3.45%	10.34%	13.79%	44.83%	6.90%	100.00%
Providing job leads	1	4	3	1	2	4	10	4	29
	3.45%	13.79%	10.34%	3.45%	6.90%	13.79%	34.48%	13.79%	100.00%
Help with emotional struggles	2	1	3	9	1	3	6	4	29
	6.90%	3.45%	10.34%	31.03%	3.45%	10.34%	20.69%	13.79%	100.00%

Respondents' Recommendation of Use of Military Mentor

I would recommend that future transitioning service members have a military member as a mentor.	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	29	51.79
Agree	17	30.36
Neither Agree nor Disagree	6	10.71
Disagree	3	5.36
Strongly Disagree	1	1.79
Totals	56	100.00

Respondents' Use of Civilian Career Counselors

I contacted a civilian career counselor when I transitioned into the civilian workforce.	Responses	Percentages
Yes	17	30.36%
No	39	69.64%
Totals	56	100.00%

Respondents' Satisfaction with Assistance Provided by Career Counselors

I would rate my satisfaction with the areas of assistance provided by the civilian career counselor as:	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Not Applicable	Total
Explaining benefits and eligibility information	10	2	5	0	17
	58.82%	11.76%	29.41%	0.00%	100.00%
Applying military knowledge	9	2	6	0	17
	52.94%	11.76%	35.29%	0.00%	100.00%
Preparing cover letters & resumes	9	2	5	1	17
	52.94%	11.76%	29.41%	5.88%	100.00%
Explain civilian structure	8	1	8	0	17
	47.06%	5.88%	47.06%	0.00%	100.00%
Providing job leads	10	1	6	0	17
	58.82%	5.88%	35.29%	0.00%	100.00%
Help with emotional struggles	6	5	2	4	17
	35.29%	29.41%	11.76%	23.53%	100.00%

Respondents' Use of Social Networking

Used Social Networking	Responses	Percentages
Yes	24	42.86%
No	32	57.14%
Total	56	100.00%

Social Networks Used by Respondents

Social Networks Used	Responses
Facebook	9
LinkedIn	15
Together We Served	3
Other	8

Respondents' Satisfaction with Areas of Assistance Provided by Social Networks

I would rate my satisfaction with the areas of assistance provided by social networks as:	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Applicable	Total
Explaining benefits and eligibility information	0	1	2	6	3	6	0	6	24
	0.00%	4.17%	8.33%	25%	12.5%	25%	0.00%	25%	100.00%
Applying military knowledge	1	0	4	4	3	6	1	5	24
	4.17%	0.00%	16.67%	16.67%	12.5%	25%	4.17%	20.83%	100.00%
Preparing cover letters & resumes	1	2	1	7	5	4	0	4	24
	4.17%	8.33%	4.17%	29.17%	20.83%	16.67%	0.00%	16.67%	100.00%
Explain civilian structure	1	1	2	8	4	4	0	4	24
	4.17%	4.17%	8.33%	33.33%	16.67%	16.67%	0.00%	16.67%	100.00%
Providing job leads	0	1	0	5	9	6	3	0	24
	0.00%	4.17%	0.00%	20.83%	37.5%	25%	12.5%	0.00%	100.00%
Help with emotional struggles	3	0	0	8	4	2	0	7	24
	12.5%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	16.67%	8.33%	0.00	29.17%	100.00%

Respondents' Attendance of Veteran Job/School Fairs

Attended Veteran Job/School Fair	Responses	Percentages
Yes	29	51.76%
No	27	48.21%
Total	56	100.00%

Respondents' Satisfaction with Opportunities at Job/School Fairs

I was satisfied with the job/school opportunities at the fair:	Responses	Percentages
Strongly Agree	3	10.34%
Agree	8	27.59%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	5	17.24%
Disagree	10	34.48%
Strongly Disagree	3	10.34%
Total	29	100.00%

Respondents' Overall Satisfaction with Transition Support Systems and Programs

Overall, I am satisfied with the support systems/programs available to service members transitioning into the civilian sector.	Responses	Percentages
Agree	19	33.93%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	10	17.86%
Disagree	27	48.21%
Total	56	100.00%

Respondents' Overall Ranking of Support Systems

Support Systems	1 most effective	2	3	4	5	6	7 least effective
Civilian friends	14	13	8	10	3	6	2
Family	11	14	11	7	6	3	4
Military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP)	5	4	9	14	12	4	8
Social networking site (i.e. Facebook, LinkedIn, Together We Served, etc.	0	3	7	8	15	10	13
Civilian career counselor	2	3	1	4	12	19	15
Former military members or superiors	23	15	11	4	0	2	1
Veteran job or school fairs	1	4	9	9	8	12	13

Appendix E

Qualitative Coding of Responses

No Response
"m"
"?????????????????????????????"
"NA"
"*"
"none"
"-"
"None"
"1"
"None"
"none"
"x"
"None"
"   "
"   "
"   "
"   "
Total= 16 comments

No Transition Issues
"I didn't have any issue when I separated from the military."
Total= 1 comment

Transition- General Dissatisfaction
"As a SNCO with a master's degree in my field (public health), it is very frustrating that a lot of the information and programs seem to focus on seperating/retiring officers having formal civilian educations and being steered towards white collar jobs and separating/retiring enlisted personnel lacking civilian education and being steered towards blue collar jobs. Given that by the time somebody reaches my rank, over 60% have a bachelor's or higher, we are not getting effective help."
"My experience has been that most of the so called resources for transition are just paying lipservice to the issue. The word seemless transition is just a joke, more like a giant sieve we fall through. My experience has also been that the military, the VA and civilian society do not want to reintegrate combat injuries or ill veterans back into the workplace, but in the shadows. It is our strong military families who sacrificed already who pull us through in the end."
"I never wanted to separate. I got passed for promotion to maj. I had a perfect record; no adverse material! I feel cheated and lied to by the Corps. I know fat officers w/adverse reports and 2nd class PFTs that got promoted to maj. It's all about who you know. The

promotion boards are corrupt. I have small children. I won't get a retirement. TAP & Job fairs are shit. Everyone said being a USMC officer, that I would have no prob finding work. That's Fuc$ing BS. My dad just died. 13 yrs wasted. ??"
Total= 3 comments

Transition- Improved Timeline
"Would like a more detailed briefing / timeline / checklist of required actions tailored to my retirement date - i.e., when I need to schedulve VA briefings, exit physical, etc."
"I was an Infantry soldier in Baghdad. When I entered the army they spent 4 months training me to kill for them. When I was released it took 2 days to sign paper work and no sort of adjustment training. How are we supposed to just turn it off."
Total= 2 comments

Transition- Support for Relocation
"One issues is soldiers who are transitioning but are not near the state that they will transition to when they retire. For instance I am transitioning at Fort Benning GA and will return to Oregon when I am fully transitioned, there is no support to tie me to and job providers across state.
"Decisions concerning what regions provide the best support to assist with transition to final place for retiring"
Total= 2 comments

Transition- Civilian Sector's Unfamiliarity with the Military
"As a SNCO with a master's degree in my field (public health), it is very frustrating that a lot of the information and programs seem to focus on seperating/retiring officers having formal civilian educations and being steered towards white collar jobs and separating/retiring enlisted personnel lacking civilian education and being steered towards blue collar jobs. Given that by the time somebody reaches my rank, over 60% have a bachelor's or higher, we are not getting effective help."
"Part of the difficulty during transition, particularly after serving long enough to reach retirement eligibility, stems from translating a wide range of experiences into an applicable industry/positional narrative. While level of authority and responsibility increase with rank, detailed technical skills tend to degrade. The civilian sector has some level of perceived understanding of the duties or importance of a General/Admiral however, this does not appear to be true at the subordinate grad"
"I think the biggest issue is the civilian sector not understanding what a Soldier is dealing with."
Total= 3 comments

Transition- Compensation & Salary for Transition
"pay compensation and salary transition, inability to find work without civilian experience"
Total= 1 comment

Transition- Stigma/Stereotypes
"I transitioned twice. Once in 1997 to the Reserves. Again in 2011 from the Reserves to civilian. The program has improved. However, active members who are not transitioning may view those servicemembers going to TAP (especially enlisted) as "boondogglers". #1 break that stereotype. #2 former members who successfully transitioned would be a great resource for 'real-world' information. No offense, but government employed presenters lack a rounded civilian skill set. I need more room...."
"I served from 1995-2005. As USMC Infantry, training in the field was over transition preparation. School won't apply your military training because it takes money out of their pocket, the military does not provide you with civilian accepted certificates of skill abilities, GI Bill changes at a whim removing ability to plan your future, mental health views you as a 'case study' not a human, something to be removed from society, and job fairs either want officers or guys just for cheap security"
Total= 2 comments

TAP- General Dissatisfaction
"My experience has been that most of the so called resources for transition are just paying lipservice to the issue. The word seemless transition is just a joke, more like a giant sieve we fall through. My experience has also been that the military, the VA and civilian society do not want to reintegrate combat injuries or ill veterans back into the workplace, but in the shadows. It is our strong military families who sacrificed already who pull us through in the end."
"The TAP/TAMP program should be revamped entirely ! !"
"I did get contacted by programs after I got out about the transition. At the same time it all felt very in-personal including TAP's. The programs are very broad and need to split into smaller more specific groups.:)"
"I transitioned from my unit in Italy and I think the program was un-successful for the group. I didn't really get much out of it. I think the lead of the class should have more experience. If you haven't done it yourself, you can you teach it?"
"I retired just about a year ago. It took me one month after retirement before I found a job. Just last weekend I went through a lot of old 'stuff' and threw out a bunch of my TAP stuff. TAP gave me a lot of STUFF, but didn't necessarily train me. Would like to see more training (how to find a job, how to interview, how to organize and plan) and fewer handouts in the future."
Total= 5 comments

TAP- Standardize Across Branches
"There must be a unified effective transition with each service branch. A military member must not be separated until he/she is officially assigned to a VAMC, Mental/Behavioral Health Center, & to a VR&E Counselor for on-going feasibility. Services must improve PTSD-type programs. Vet spouses and Dependents must go through parallel programs through both service and VA programs."
Total= 1 comment

TAP- Improved Facilitators
"I transitioned twice. Once in 1997 to the Reserves. Again in 2011 from the Reserves to civilian. The program has improved. However, active members who are not transitioning may view those servicemembers going to TAP (especially enlisted) as "boondogglers". #1 break that stereotype. #2 former members who successfully transitioned would be a great resource for 'real-world' information. No offense, but government employed presenters lack a rounded civilian skill set. I need more room...."
"I transitioned from my unit in Italy and I think the program was un-successful for the group. I didn't really get much out of it. I think the lead of the class should have more experience. If you haven't done it yourself, you can you teach it?"
"The counselors could be a bit more update as to what is needed in the workforce, this would prevent wasting valuable time."
Total= 3 comments

TAP- Tailor Program
"Would like a more detailed briefing / timeline / checklist of required actions tailored to my retirement date - i.e., when I need to schedulve VA briefings, exit physical, etc."
"Ironically I work for VA now and have had a hand in the development of the new TAP which is greatly required! A better TAP and break out sessions on many other issues should be attended by all, not just involuntary. I would like to assist more in this land and have been trying to get hired on their staff for some time now. I presently work in Education Service which deals with ALL GI Bills and how they are made into law. It is unreal how many people dont attend the Education session!"
"I did get contacted by programs after I got out about the transition. At the same time it all felt very in-personal including TAP's. The programs are very broad and need to split into smaller more specific groups.:)"
"The biggest issue I saw with my trasnition is that the majoirty of the TAP programs are geared towards the lower enlisted levels of service. There was minimal to no specialized support for the careerist and tailoring the skills learned overa 20+ year military career into successful trasnition. Most job fairs I attended only included lower to middle level jobs, many solely focused on overseas contingency locations. Few if any jobs at the fair included middle to upper level opportunity."
"When we leave the service we don't know what we don't know. TAP needs to inform members what to expect and how best to transition. Not all advice fits all, but some is better than none. Breaking the sessions down by rank/grade and education at TAP would be beneficial."
"The DOD has mandated TAP. Each branch of service is now offering four 'pathways' (Employment, College/University, Voc/Tech and Entrepreneurship/Franchising. Initial feedback has been mostly positive from junior personnel. However, officers, retirees and those receiving less than honorable discharges receive the identical training..."
"I retired just about a year ago. It took me one month after retirement before I found a job. Just last weekend I went through a lot of old 'stuff' and threw out a bunch of my TAP stuff. TAP gave me a lot of STUFF, but didn't necessarily train me. Would like to see more training (how to find a job, how to interview, how to organize and plan) and fewer handouts in the

future."
"guidance and support for mid-sr level combat arms personnel. Entrepreneur education."
Total= 8 comments

TAP- More Training on Civilian Job Process
"There should be more discussion on the difference between military and civilian work environment"
"I retired just about a year ago. It took me one month after retirement before I found a job. Just last weekend I went through a lot of old 'stuff' and threw out a bunch of my TAP stuff. TAP gave me a lot of STUFF, but didn't necessarily train me. Would like to see more training (how to find a job, how to interview, how to organize and plan) and fewer handouts in the future."
Total= 2 comments

TAP- Mandating Attendance of More Services
"I transitioned twice. Once in 1997 to the Reserves. Again in 2011 from the Reserves to civilian. The program has improved. However, active members who are not transitioning may view those servicemembers going to TAP (especially enlisted) as "boondogglers". #1 break that stereotype. #2 former members who successfully transitioned would be a great resource for 'real-world' information. No offense, but government employed presenters lack a rounded civilian skill set. I need more room...."
"Finding a job with the right fit for the transitioning service member was a huge challenge. Job fairs that had good info on jobs in the geographic areas that the transitioning service member was going to would be great. Unit Commanders as a whole allowing a departing service member the time to attend all transitioning events. Too many go to a TAP and that's it."
"Ironically I work for VA now and have had a hand in the development of the new TAP which is greatly required! A better TAP and break out sessions on many other issues should be attended by all, not just involuntary. I would like to assist more in this land and have been trying to get hired on their staff for some time now. I presently work in Education Service which deals with ALL GI Bills and how they are made into law. It is unreal how many people dont attend the Education session!"
"There are free counseling services available to service members, but many do not want to bother with it or think they do not need it. There should be some mandatory sessions during the transition perhaps in groups, to get service members on the right footing."
Total= 4 comments

Family & Friends- Stress/Impact on Family
"The retiring veteran's family must also be considered when separation from the military occurs. They typically bear the brunt of the service members frustration."
"Transition was challenging. Emotional Stress impacted family greatly. Been seeing private counselor to help cope with life changes and impact of combat."
"There must be a unified effective transition with each service branch. A military member must not be separated until he/she is officially assigned to a VAMC, Mental/Behavioral Health Center, & to a VR&E Counselor for on-going feasibility. Services must improve PTSD-type programs. Vet spouses and Dependents must go through parallel programs through both service and VA programs."
Total= 3 comments

Family & Friends- Positive Transition Support
"My experience has been that most of the so called resources for transition are just paying lipservice to the issue. The word seemless transition is just a joke, more like a giant sieve we fall through. My experience has also been that the military, the VA and civilian society do not want to reintegrate combat injuries or ill veterans back into the workplace, but in the shadows. It is our strong military families who sacrificed already who pull us through in the end."
"Family or friends help the most."
Total= 2 comments

Jobs- Job Fairs Not All Encompassing
"As a SNCO with a master's degree in my field (public health), it is very frustrating that a lot of the information and programs seem to focus on seperating/retiring officers having formal civilian educations and being steered towards white collar jobs and separating/retiring enlisted personnel lacking civilian education and being steered towards blue collar jobs. Given that by the time somebody reaches my rank, over 60% have a bachelor's or higher, we are not getting effective help."
"I served from 1995-2005. As USMC Infantry, training in the field was over transition preparation. School won't apply your military training because it takes money out of their pocket, the military does not provide you with civilian accepted certificates of skill abilities, GI Bill changes at a whim removing ability to plan your future, mental health views you as a 'case study' not a human, something to be removed from society, and job fairs either want officers or guys just for cheap security"
"I never wanted to separate. I got passed for promotion to maj. I had a perfect record; no adverse material! I feel cheated and lied to by the Corps. I know fat officers w/adverse reports and 2nd class PFTs that got promoted to maj. It's all about who you know. The promotion boards are corrupt. I have small children. I won't get a retirement. TAP & Job fairs are shit. Everyone said being a USMC officer, that I would have no prob finding work. That's Fuc$ing BS. My dad just died. 13 yrs wasted. ??"
"The biggest issue I saw with my trasnition is that the majoirty of the TAP programs are geared towards the lower enlisted levels of service. There was minimal to no specialized

support for the careerist and tailoring the skills learned overa 20+ year military career into successful trasnition. Most job fairs I attended only included lower to middle level jobs, many solely focused on overseas contingency locations. Few if any jobs at the fair included middle to upper level opportunity."
Total= 4 comments

Jobs- Translating Skills
"As a SNCO with a master's degree in my field (public health), it is very frustrating that a lot of the information and programs seem to focus on seperating/retiring officers having formal civilian educations and being steered towards white collar jobs and separating/retiring enlisted personnel lacking civilian education and being steered towards blue collar jobs. Given that by the time somebody reaches my rank, over 60% have a bachelor's or higher, we are not getting effective help."
"Most of the job related expirence I had from the military was hard to be translated to the civilian workforce."
"Part of the difficulty during transition, particularly after serving long enough to reach retirement eligibility, stems from translating a wide range of experiences into an applicable industry/positional narrative. While level of authority and responsibility increase with rank, detailed technical skills tend to degrade. The civilian sector has some level of perceived understanding of the duties or importance of a General/Admiral however, this does not appear to be true at the subordinate grad"
"I served from 1995-2005. As USMC Infantry, training in the field was over transition preparation. School won't apply your military training because it takes money out of their pocket, the military does not provide you with civilian accepted certificates of skill abilities, GI Bill changes at a whim removing ability to plan your future, mental health views you as a 'case study' not a human, something to be removed from society, and job fairs either want officers or guys just for cheap security"
"pay compensation and salary transition, inability to find work without civilian experience"
Total= 5 comments

Jobs- Finding Right Fit
"My experience has been that most of the so called resources for transition are just paying lipservice to the issue. The word seemless transition is just a joke, more like a giant sieve we fall through. My experience has also been that the military, the VA and civilian society do not want to reintegrate combat injuries or ill veterans back into the workplace, but in the shadows. It is our strong military families who sacrificed already who pull us through in the end."
"Finding a job with the right fit for the transitioning service member was a huge challenge. Job fairs that had good info on jobs in the geographic areas that the transitioning service member was going to would be great. Unit Commanders as a whole allowing a departing service member the time to attend all transitioning events. Too many go to a TAP and that's it."
"Part of the difficulty during transition, particularly after serving long enough to reach retirement eligibility, stems from translating a wide range of experiences into an applicable

industry/positional narrative. While level of authority and responsibility increase with rank, detailed technical skills tend to degrade. The civilian sector has some level of perceived understanding of the duties or importance of a General/Admiral however, this does not appear to be true at the subordinate grad"
"I never wanted to separate. I got passed for promotion to maj. I had a perfect record; no adverse material! I feel cheated and lied to by the Corps. I know fat officers w/adverse reports and 2nd class PFTs that got promoted to maj. It's all about who you know. The promotion boards are corrupt. I have small children. I won't get a retirement. TAP & Job fairs are shit. Everyone said being a USMC officer, that I would have no prob finding work. That's Fuc$ing BS. My dad just died. 13 yrs wasted. ??"
Total= 4 comments

Jobs- Finding Jobs in Other Locations
"One issues is soldiers who are transitioning but are not near the state that they will transition to when they retire. For instance I am transitioning at Fort Benning GA and will return to Oregon when I am fully transitioned, there is no support to tie me to and job providers across state."
"Finding a job with the right fit for the transitioning service member was a huge challenge. Job fairs that had good info on jobs in the geographic areas that the transitioning service member was going to would be great. Unit Commanders as a whole allowing a departing service member the time to attend all transitioning events. Too many go to a TAP and that's it."
Total= 2 comments

Jobs- Understanding Civilian Sector
"The use of area business people to help us understand interviews, resumes, and hiring process in most companies"
"Already alluded to, but an indepth understanding of the chain of command in a civilian context would have been very helpful. Although it all makes sense now, at the time I had no concept of the relative responsibility/authority of a supervisor, vs. a manager, vs. a director, vs. a VP, and the difference 'senior' when appended to those terms made, in comparison to military billets."
"There should be more discussion on the difference between military and civilian work environment"
Total= 3 comments

Jobs- Slow Hiring
"The major issue I had was that gridlock in Congress is causing major disruptions in public sector hiring. Federal jobs are highly sought after by Veterans, but Federal hiring has slowed down to a standstill because of the budget impasse."
Total= 1 comment

Health: Mental, Emotional, & Physical- Coping Skills for PTSD, combat, etc.
"Transition was challenging. Emotional Stress impacted family greatly. Been seeing private counselor to help cope with life changes and impact of combat."
"Since I was in the reserves, I had a full time job, therefore I did not need to fully transition into working in a civilian job. I was deployed for a year in Iraq and was able to return to my job when I was finished. I found that no one knew how to help me cope with returning from the war. I felt very isolated at the time and had no help to turn to. Once I fully left the military, I was even worse off. I am now doing well and hopefully finding a happy place."
"Veterans in need of help dealing with PTSD and other combat related stress issues come home and want to receive help dealing with their issues and instead of receiving emotional help VA doctors just throw a series of pills at them thinking that antidepressants will fix them. Sadly our service members are not getting their needs met."
"There must be a unified effective transition with each service branch. A military member must not be separated until he/she is officially assigned to a VAMC, Mental/Behavioral Health Center, & to a VR&E Counselor for on-going feasibility. Services must improve PTSD-type programs. Vet spouses and Dependents must go through parallel programs through both service and VA programs."
"There are free counseling services available to service members, but many do not want to bother with it or think they do not need it. There should be some mandatory sessions during the transition perhaps in groups, to get service members on the right footing."
Total= 5 comments

Health: Mental, Emotional, & Physical- Family Distress
"The retiring veteran's family must also be considered when separation from the military occurs. They typically bear the brunt of the service members frustration."
"Transition was challenging. Emotional Stress impacted family greatly. Been seeing private counselor to help cope with life changes and impact of combat."
Total= 2 comments

Health: Mental, Emotional, & Physical- Need to Reintegrate Combat & Injured Veterans
"My experience has been that most of the so called resources for transition are just paying lipservice to the issue. The word seemless transition is just a joke, more like a giant sieve we fall through. My experience has also been that the military, the VA and civilian society do not want to reintegrate combat injuries or ill veterans back into the workplace, but in the shadows. It is our strong military families who sacrificed already who pull us through in the end."
"Since I was in the reserves, I had a full time job, therefore I did not need to fully transition into working in a civilian job. I was deployed for a year in Iraq and was able to return to my job when I was finished. I found that no one knew how to help me cope with returning from the war. I felt very isolated at the time and had no help to turn to. Once I fully left the military, I was even worse off. I am now doing well and hopefully finding a happy place."
"Veterans in need of help dealing with PTSD and other combat related stress issues come home and want to receive help dealing with their issues and instead of receiving emotional help VA doctors just throw a series of pills at them thinking that antidepressants will fix them. Sadly our service members are not getting their needs met."
"I was an Infantry soldier in Baghdad. When I entered the army they spent 4 months training me to kill for them. When I was released it took 2 days to sign paper work and no sort of adjustment training. How are we supposed to just turn it off."
"There must be a unified effective transition with each service branch. A military member must not be separated until he/she is officially assigned to a VAMC, Mental/Behavioral Health Center, & to a VR&E Counselor for on-going feasibility. Services must improve PTSD-type programs. Vet spouses and Dependents must go through parallel programs through both service and VA programs."
Total= 5 comments

Veterans Administration- Issues
"My experience has been that most of the so called resources for transition are just paying lipservice to the issue. The word seemless transition is just a joke, more like a giant sieve we fall through. My experience has also been that the military, the VA and civilian society do not want to reintegrate combat injuries or ill veterans back into the workplace, but in the shadows. It is our strong military families who sacrificed already who pull us through in the end."
"The VA services."
"The VA Disabilities srvices and compensation is very backed up and is non responsive. I am dissatisfied with the VA system. You did not cover this, but this is an advertised, explained service that I have received NO FEEDBACK and find this program highly user unfriendly. This process is broken."
"I served from 1995-2005. As USMC Infantry, training in the field was over transition preparation. School won't apply your military training because it takes money out of their pocket, the military does not provide you with civilian accepted certificates of skill abilities, GI Bill changes at a whim removing ability to plan your future, mental health views you as a 'case study' not a human, something to be removed from society, and job fairs either want officers or guys just for cheap security"
"Veterans in need of help dealing with PTSD and other combat related stress issues come home and want to receive help dealing with their issues and instead of receiving emotional help VA doctors just throw a series of pills at them thinking that antidepressants will fix them. Sadly our service members are not getting their needs met."
Total= 5 comments

Networking- Need to Network
"Networking is critical for an effective transition"
Total= 1 comment

Networking- Use Former Service Members as Mentors
"I transitioned twice. Once in 1997 to the Reserves. Again in 2011 from the Reserves to civilian. The program has improved. However, active members who are not transitioning may view those servicemembers going to TAP (especially enlisted) as "boondogglers". #1 break that stereotype. #2 former members who successfully transitioned would be a great resource for 'real-world' information. No offense, but government employed presenters lack a rounded civilian skill set. I need more room...."
Total= 1 comment

Networking- Use Civilians to Explain Civilian Structure
"The use of area business people to help us understand interviews, resumes, and hiring process in most companies"
Total= 1 comment

Finances- Need to Prepare Financially
"I believe that a key to my success was that I prepared for discharge for over a year financially. Having a financial safety net helped immensely when I was unemplyed for 4 months. With a family to support, finances could easily have been too much to worry about, but my preparation allowed me to focus on other things. This focus led me to finding a job and moving on with my life."
Total= 1 comment

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