

STUDENT VETERAN PERCEPTIONS OF COLLEGE-TO-CAREER TRANSITION

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The college-to-career transition of student veterans is challenging. Employers hold misconceptions of veteran employees, such as inflexibility or rigidity, while veterans struggle to demonstrate their skills to an employer (Davis & Minnis, 2017). There is research on the military-to-college transition process, primarily on the academic adjustment of college student veterans (Bauman, 2009; Burnett & Segora, 2009; Darcy, Swagger, & Cordiero Ferreira, 2018; Green & Hayden, 2013; Kirchner, 2015; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010; Wheelus & Boes, 2015). Research on college-to-career transition process of college student veterans is limited, and focused on career decision making (Hayden, Ledwith, Dong, & Buzzetta, 2014; Ryan, Carlstrom, Hughey, & Harris, 2011). To examine the college-to-career transition process, we surveyed student veterans ($N = 141$) to examine career transition resources and barriers, in relation to their overall life satisfaction. We found that student veterans' confidence and readiness for the college-to-career transition correlated to overall life satisfaction. We provide strategies to assist individuals working with student veterans during the career transition process, and advocate for career-transition research focused on student veterans.

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Student veterans enrolled in higher education programs represent diverse students with various educational and occupational goals. These students may include active duty, those separated from the military, those in the Reserves or National Guard, retirees, and those who served, yet don't identify as veterans. They may encompass students who are stationed in the U.S. or deployed abroad, as well as students taking classes online, in-person, or in hybrid format. According to the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (NCVAS), the number of Veterans Administration (VA) Education Beneficiaries has grown from just under 400,000 in the year 2000 to over one million in 2016, demonstrating 150% growth in 16 years (NCVAS, 2018). Despite the large numbers of student veterans enrolling in college, research examining student veterans' college-to-career transition experience is limited, compared to research examining military-to-college transition.

Vacchi (2012) defines student veterans as, "any student who is a current or former member of the active duty military, the National Guard, or Reserves regardless of deployment status, combat experience, legal veteran status, or GI Bill use" (Vacchi, 2012, p. 17). The term *student veteran* will be used throughout the manuscript to describe those identified in Vacchi's definition. This study did *not* include military spouses or dependents. The study aimed to explore the student veterans' perspective of their college-to-career transition process, and to understand the resources and barriers that facilitate the transition.

Literature Review

Military Students on Campus

Student veterans on college campuses face administrative, academic, and social challenges. Identified challenges include delayed academic progress (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010), and advisors not recognizing student veteran struggles (Ryan, Carlstrom, Hughey, & Harris, 2011). Student veterans

with a disability may experience mental and physical demands (Branker, 2009), stigma of disability (Burnett & Segora, 2009), social adjustment issues, and the need to access support services (Belotti, Laffaye, Weingardt, Fischer, & Schumacher, 2011). Adjustment issues may include battling stereotypes of the military (Vacchi, 2012), adapting to an unstructured environment (Kirchner, 2015), feelings of marginalization (Darcy, Swagger, & Cordiero Ferreira, 2018), and possessing invisible wounds, such as moral or relational injuries (Wheelus & Boes, 2015).

Student Veterans of America's (SVA) Million Records Project provided extensive detail on the degree completion rates and time to degree of student veterans (Cate, 2014). Their study indicates that the majority of veterans are completing their educational degrees. National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA, currently referred to as Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education) surveyed 239 colleges and universities and reported that the majority of these institutions were not tracking retention or graduation rates specific to student veterans (NASPA, 2013). The American Council on Education (ACE) examined National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data and measured the engagement of 2,505 student veterans and more than 88,000 non-veterans on college campuses (Kim & Cole, 2013). These studies indicate that graduation, retention, and engagement are adequate measures of student success.

Prior studies recommend a for a 'one-stop-shop' for veterans or a veterans' student organization, in which student veterans can gather to receive assistance and support from others who understand military culture and experiences (Burnett & Segora, 2009; Kirchner, 2015). Other recommendations include special classes targeted for military, priority registration for student veterans, simplified application procedures, and flexible enrollment deadlines (Brown & Gross, 2011), as well as mentors (Darcy, et al., 2018). These generalized recommenda-

tions benefit all student veterans, yet recent literature highlights the need to individualize services to student veterans and focus on the unique strengths that each veteran brings to the college setting (Vacchi, 2012; Vacchi, Hammond, & Diamond, 2017), such as maturity and responsibility (Kim & Cole, 2013).

Career Development of Student Veterans

Historically, there has been limited research on the career development of the student veteran when compared to academic and social development, however research on student veteran career development has increased in recent years. Hayden, Ledwith, Dong, and Buzetta (2014) conducted a career development needs analysis for student veterans and found that 55% of those surveyed wanted assistance with transferring the skills they learned in the military to the civilian workforce. A Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) model was proposed to meet student veterans' career transition needs, specifically, a four-week psychoeducational group that parallels the CIP process (Hayden, et al., 2014). Howe, Lenz, and Oliver (2017) also used a CIP model in their development of a Career Transition Program for student veterans. Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) theory, includes elements of self-knowledge, occupational knowledge, and decision making skills (Clemens & Milsom, 2008). Clemens and Milsom (2008) argued that concepts from CIP, such as identifying transferable skills and community resources, have specific value to student veterans whose military experience might not easily translate to a civilian career.

Rhodes (2018) examined student veterans' awareness and use of college campus career resources, as well as their perceptions of these services. Rhodes advocates for the development of specialized career services for student veterans, including career services, psychoeducation groups, and the specialized academic and resources recommended for student veteran academic suc-

cess. In a study comparing student veterans to non-veteran peers, Ross, Bullock-Yowell, Werner, Osborne, and Mathis (2018) found no significant differences in occupational interests or career decision making patterns of veteran and non-veteran students, in relation to Holland codes. These studies address the student veteran's career decision making and awareness of resources, but fail to address the student veterans' outlook or readiness for the college-to-career transition process

Transition Experiences of Student Veterans

Transitions are natural events throughout life, which alter "our roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions" (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 139). Schlossberg is best known for her research on transition, including the Model of Human Adaptation to Transition (Schlossberg, 1981), the Model of Individual Transition, the 4-S model, and the Integrative Model of the Transition process (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Schlossberg and colleagues identify 4 S's of transition, including the transition situation, support for the transition, strategies used during transition, and characteristics of one's self, which may serve as a strength or barrier to the transition process.

Schlossberg's models have previously been applied to the academic transition process of student veterans in earlier studies. Rumann and Hamrick (2010) utilized Schlossberg's transition model to examine military students and identified several aspects of the situation (e.g. delayed academic progress, limited awareness of veterans issues), self (e.g. military values, maturity, appreciation for diversity), support (e.g. connecting with peers, military and civilian friends), and strategies (e.g. seeking veteran peers, strategic self-disclosure, self-discipline and structure) that impacted the military-to-college transition experience. Ryan, et al. (2011) applied Schlossberg's 4-S model to the academic advising process for college advisors, encouraging advisors

to consider veteran students' role, situation, supports, strategies, and strengths. Schlossberg defines successful adaptation as the overarching goal of transition (Goodman, et al., 2006; Schlossberg, 1981).

These prior studies examined barriers and resources for the academic transition to college, but they come short of conceptualizing what "successful adaptation" (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 5) means for the student veteran. Vacchi, et al. (2017) describe multiple conceptual models of student veterans that emphasize the individual identity of the veteran, including Hammond's (2015) Combat Veteran Conceptual Identity Model, Diamond's (2012) Adaptive Military Transition Theory, and Vacchi's Model of Student Veteran Support. Each of these models require institutions and researchers to "develop a more holistic understanding of this unique population as they depart the military and utilize their education benefits to find a place in the civilian world" (Vacchi, et al., 2017, p. 38) Though these models have been applied to academic success and adjustment of student veterans, they are rarely applied to the career transition experiences of student veterans.

Military Values and Purpose

Military members are trained in the core values of their branch of service. Military members view these core values as aligned with their life purpose, and for some, that purpose may translate to their post-military career (Baruch & Quick, 2007; Spiegel & Shultz, 2003; Wilson & Smith, 2012; Robertson & Brott, 2013). The student veteran's *life mission* is critical to explore when advising student veterans, which reflect values such as service or commitment (Wilson & Smith, 2012). For some student veterans, attending college may be part of their overall life mission, or it may be simply a focus of their military career in an effort to obtain promotion. Advisors are encouraged to allow the student veteran to share and explore their personal life mission (Wilson & Smith, 2012), which aligns with Vacchi, et

al.'s (2017) call for individualized services incorporating student veteran identities. Student veterans possess their own personal definition of successful career transition, which may not align with institutional missions of retention, graduation, and engagement.

The prior research begins to close the gap between the academic/social development literature and the career development literature of student veterans. Yet there is a dearth of literature addressing characteristics required for student veterans to successfully navigate from college-to-career, as well as how student veterans view their college-to-career transition. This study is designed to address this deficit, using Schlossberg's (1981) 4-S model as a conceptual framework.

Method

In order to examine successful adaptation to the college-to-career transition, it was necessary to identify and quantify career transition characteristics, as well as an individualized and personal measure of successful transition. The Career Transitions Inventory (CTI; Heppner, 1991) was utilized to conceptualize Schlossberg's (1981) model, including the career transition variables of confidence (self), control (situation), readiness (strategies), perceived family support (support), and decision independence (situation/support). These variables represent resources or barriers that could impact college-to-career transition. Life satisfaction was selected to capture the individualized experience and personalized definition of "successful adaptation to transition" (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 5) of the student veteran. Life Satisfaction was measured using the *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985).

The question, "*To what extent is the life satisfaction (e.g. personalized measure of successful transition) of student veterans transitioning to civilian careers explained by career transition factors, including internal and external strengths and barriers (e.g.*

career transition characteristics)” guided the research. It was hypothesized that career transition strengths and barriers would correlate to one’s life satisfaction. Specifically, those indicating greater strengths regarding career transition would report greater life satisfaction, and conversely, that those indicating stronger barriers to career transition would report lower life satisfaction. Institutional Review Board approval was obtained from the authors’ institution.

Sampling

Voluntary, non-random respondents ($N = 141$) were recruited for this study. Veterans’ services staff at two local colleges were contacted and asked to invite student veterans on their campus to voluntarily complete the survey. Additionally, 814 campus contacts listed on the Student Veterans of American website (SVA, <https://studentveterans.org/>) were emailed, requesting that they invite members of their student veterans’ organization to voluntarily complete the survey. Of those 814 contacts, 48 stated that they would distribute the survey to their veterans. It is not possible to calculate an accurate response rate because, despite 48 schools agreeing to distribute the survey, it is unclear how many students the survey was sent to within their distribution list. The campus contacts geographically spanned 39 states across the country and the District of Columbia. No incentive was offered for participation.

Participants

Respondents were primarily male (78%; $n = 110$; female, 22%; $n = 31$). The average age of respondents was 35 ($SD = 9.8$), with a median age of 32. Racially, respondents identified primarily White (77%; $n = 109$), as well as multiracial (7%; $n = 10$), Black or African American (5%; $n = 7$), Asian (3%; $n = 4$), and American Indian or Alaskan Native (1%; $n = 2$). Ethnically, the majority of respondents identified as non-Hispanic (90%; $n = 128$). Over half of respondents were married (52%; n

= 73), with other respondents identifying as single (22%; $n = 31$), divorced (15%; $n = 21$), or living with significant other (8%; $n = 11$). Respondents reported an average combined annual household income of \$48,930 although several respondents reported having no income ($SD = \$43,011$). Respondents indicated varying degrees of educational attainment, with the majority of respondents indicating some college (40%; $n = 56$) or an associate’s degree (24%; $n = 34$), while others had already completed bachelor’s (21%; $n = 29$), master’s (11%; $n = 15$), and doctoral degrees (2%; $n = 3$).

Respondents represented all branches of service, specifically: Army (47%; $n = 66$), Navy (21%; $n = 29$), Marines (16%; $n = 22$), Air Force (12%; $n = 17$), National Guard (3%; $n = 4$), and Coast Guard (2%; $n = 3$). Respondents represented a wide variety of military ranks upon discharge, ranging from enlisted personnel (E2 to E9), and military officers (O2-O6). The largest number of respondents were E4 (21%; $n = 29$), E5 (31%; $n = 44$), and E6 (20%; $n = 28$), indicating mid to higher-ranking enlisted personnel. Seventy percent ($n = 98$) of respondents reported no current National Guard or Reserve affiliation, while others reported affiliation with the Active Reserves (10%; $n = 14$), Inactive Reserves (11%; $n = 16$), and National Guard (6%; $n = 8$). Respondents reported serving an average of 10.4 years ($SD = 8.04$) in the military.

The majority of respondents were pursuing a Bachelor’s degree (55%, $n = 77$), while others were pursuing Associates (14%, $n = 20$), Masters (23%, $n = 32$), Doctorate or Professional (3%, $n = 4$) degree, Certificate program (3%, $n = 2$), or that they were not currently enrolled in an education program (4%, $n = 6$). Respondents indicated that they were primarily attending classes in-person on an academic campus (64%, $n = 80$), as opposed to online (14%, $n = 17$) or in a hybrid format, including both on-line and in-person (22%, $n = 27$).

Instruments

We used a secure, web-based survey instrument to collect data. The survey consisted of the 40-item *Career Transition Inventory* (CTI) (Heppner, 1991), five-item *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985), 11 transition questions pertaining to military and career goals, and 12 demographic questions. The survey also contained six items on help-seeking behavior and two open-ended questions. A total of 81 items were included in the survey. The survey contained an Informed Consent agreement and no personal identifying information. Findings from the CTI, SWLS, and demographic variables are presented in this manuscript.

The *Career Transitions Inventory* (CTI; Heppner, 1991) assesses perceived strengths and barriers during career transition. The 40-item instrument consists of five subscales, including *confidence* (belief in one's self pertaining to the transition), *control* (degree of control respondent feels they have during the transition), *readiness* (motivation or preparation for the career transition), *support* (perceived support from significant others), and *decision independence* (respondent's responsibility to others). Sample statements from the CTI include:

Confidence: This career transition process may be too complex for me to work through. (Heppner, 1991)

Control: If you think you are really calling the shots in your career transition, you are only fooling yourself. (Heppner, 1991)

Readiness: I feel as though I have a driving force within me to work on this career transition right now. (Heppner, 1991)

Support: People whom I respect have said they think I can make this career transition successfully. (Heppner, 1991)

Decision Independence: Career choices affect others and I must take the needs of others into account when making a career transition. (Heppner, 1991)

A high score on a particular scale indicates a strength; low scores suggest barriers. The exception is *decision independence* scale, which does not operate on a positive-negative continuum (Heppner & Hendricks, 1995). Of the 40 items, each variable is assigned a selected number of items corresponding to the subscales, as well as an average score from high to low. Specifically, subscales and scores on the CTI include: *confidence* (11 items, high = 48-66, medium = 39-47, low score 11-38), *control* (6 items, high = 24-36, medium = 19-23, low = 6-18), *readiness* (13 items, high = 66-78, medium = 57-65, low = 13-56), *support* (5 items, high = 26-30, medium = 22-25, low = 5-21), and *decision independence* (5 items, high = 20-30, medium = 16-19, low = 5-15) (Heppner, 1991).

Reliability estimates for the Career Transitions Inventory were developed with Cronbach coefficients. Total scale Cronbach alpha for the CTI is reported as .85. The CTI subscale scores' reliability ranges from .66 to .87 (median .69); test-retest (three-week interval) reported for *confidence* (.79), *control* (.55), *readiness* (.74), *support* (.77), and *decision independence* (.83). The overall CTI test-retest reported as .84 (Heppner, Multon, & Johnston, 1994). Research has supported construct validity for specific groups and convergent validity with external instruments (Fernandez, Fouquereau, & Heppner, 2008). As discussed earlier, the CTI was selected as a representation of Schlossberg's model, as the instrument addresses both internal (e.g. readiness, confidence, and control) and external (e.g. support and decision independence) resources measured as strengths and barriers, similar to Schlossberg's assets and liabilities of the 4-S theory. Additionally, Schlossberg's 4-S theory correspond to the transition variables of the CTI, for example, self (confidence), support (support), strategies (readiness) and situation (control, decision independence).

The *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985)

is a global measure of life satisfaction, in which respondents evaluate overall satisfaction based on personal perceptions. The SWLS includes five statements on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Specifically the items read: (a) In most ways my life is close to my ideal; (b) The conditions of my life are excellent; (c) I am satisfied with my life; (d) So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life; and (e) If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing (Diener, 2009). Results provide an overall level of life satisfaction, including *highly satisfied* (SWLS Score 30-35), *satisfied* (SWLS Score 25-29), *average* (SWLS Score 20-24), *below average* (SWLS Score 15-19), *dissatisfied* (SWLS Score 10-14), and *extremely dissatisfied* (SWLS Score 5-9) (Diener, 2006).

SWLS reliability reports indicate a Cronbach's alpha of .87 for the scale and .82 for test-retest (two-month interval). Validity measures indicate moderately strong convergence ranging from .50 to .75 with 12 other instruments (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Researchers have utilized the SWLS with the United States Marine Corps (Pavot & Diener, 2008), as well as college students (Weinstein & Laverghetta, 2009). The SWLS was selected to capture military students' overall satisfaction, as an indicator of successful adaptation to transition.

Research Design

Data were collected via online survey instrument. Overall 217 online surveys were completed. Data cleaning began by removing blank entries in which the respondents did not complete the survey, resulting in 188 remaining completed surveys. Individuals who did not complete the CTI ($n=17$) were removed, as well as individuals who partially completed the CTI ($n=25$). Partial completion was based on an ability to adequately assess the five subscales of the CTI. After removing five respondents who did not complete the SWLS, 141 useable sur-

vey responses were used for analysis. Data from survey results was downloaded from the survey instrument and stored on a secure computer with password protections. Data was initially stored in Microsoft Excel and exported to SPSS 21 for analysis. Descriptive statistics were examined to provide a demographic overview of the population. Correlation was calculated to address the hypothesis that career transition strengths and barriers would be correlated to one's life satisfaction.

Results

Career Transition and Life Satisfaction

General findings. Respondents reported lower than average life satisfaction ($M = 19.45$; $SD = 8.42$), indicating average to below average overall life satisfaction (Diener, 2009). Respondents reported medium range results for each of the five career transition variables of the CTI, as outlined in Table 1.

Correlation. The hypothesis that career transition strengths and barriers would correlate to one's life satisfaction was tested through the bivariate correlation computation of a Pearson product correlation. Utilizing the Satisfaction with Life Survey (SWLS) average score as the dependent variable, and the Career Transitions Inventory (CTI) mean score on each subscale (readiness, confidence, control, support, decision independence) as independent variables, a correlation matrix was computed in SPSS. The hypothesis was supported in that all five career transition variables were positively and significantly correlated with life satisfaction, with the strength of these correlations ranging from .169 to .507. Table 1 outlines the computed correlation matrix.

Discussion

Student veterans reported below average to moderate levels of life satisfaction. Collectively, career transition variables (readiness, confidence, control, support,

Table 1. *Life Satisfaction and Career Transition: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Career Transitions Inventory*

	M	SD	Life Satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5
Life Satisfaction	19.54	8.42	1.0					
1. Readiness	57.33	9.01	.381**	1.0				
2. Confidence	43.73	7.09	.507**	.384**	1.0			
3. Control	23.10	5.93	.328**	.164	.581**	1.0		
4. Support	24.11	4.32	.379**	.419**	.614**	.502**	1.0	
5. Decision Independence	18.13	4.98	.169*	.344**	.289**	.275**	.367**	1.0

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

and decision independence) of student veterans were neither strengths nor weaknesses, meaning the group did not have any particular asset or liability among these career transition variables (Heppner, 1991; Schlossberg, 1981). Correlations between career transition variables and life satisfaction provide insight as to how student affairs and career practitioners can best assist the student veteran to achieve their career development objectives. Specifically, of the five transition variables, confidence had the strongest correlation with life satisfaction. In addition, readiness, also referred to as motivation (Heppner, Multon, & Johnston, 1994), had the second highest correlation with life satisfaction. Support, control, and decision independence had statistically significant yet weaker correlation to life satisfaction.

These findings parallel previous literature on the military career transition process, indicating that the career transition process of student veterans is similar that of general military populations. For example, there was a statistically significant re-

lationship between student veterans' readiness (e.g. motivation) and life satisfaction, which parallels the relationship between preparedness and life satisfaction discussed by Spiegel and Shultz (2003) in their study of Navy officers' career transition. Additionally, confidence and readiness are internal variables. Internal feelings of career success were correlated with changing career patterns (Baruch & Quick, 2007) indicating a connection between internal career transition variables and internal perceptions of career or life satisfaction. Confidence was addressed in Hayden et al.'s (2014) career development needs analysis, indicating that student veterans most often wanted help transferring military skills to civilian sector. Identifying transferable skills contributes to the military student's overall confidence in transitioning to civilian careers. Finally the slight, yet statistically significant correlation, between support and life satisfaction, supports Brown and Gross's call to implement increased support services for student veterans on campus (2011).

Implications for Career Development Practitioners

Student veterans come to their college classrooms having emerged from a military culture that instilled confidence, competence, courage, and commitment. Yet college and campus culture can challenge the otherwise confident and motivated student veteran, due to lack of structure/order/unified services, lack of peer connections, uncertainty about policies and procedures, the need to balance adult life responsibilities such as families and employment, and a disconnect between military and higher education culture (Burnett & Segora, 2009; Brown & Gross, 2011; DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Kirchner, 2015; Vacchi, 2012). Institutional obstacles include GI Bill processing, health insurance, bill payment/bursar, academic advising, and faculty interaction, as well as personal obstacles of not wanting to ask for help (Vacchi, 2012). Despite research on the military-to-college transition, few resources are available for the student affairs professional assisting the student veteran with their college-to-career transition.

It is important to examine the student veteran's confidence to pursue a new career beyond the military. The positive skills and attributes they gained from service, including work ethic, discipline, teamwork, leadership, mental toughness, and the ability to adapt (Zoli, Maury, & Fay, 2015) should be highlighted in their college-to-career transition process. These attributes increase student veterans' confidence as they prepare to transition from college-to-career. Prior experiences with supervisors, interviews, and advancement may impact their transition experience, as may disability (Belotti, et al., 2011; Burnett & Segora, 2009). Assist student veterans by engaging in activities which help develop confidence in relation to career goals. These activities include internships, mentoring, job shadowing, or informational interviewing.

Consider exploring the student veteran's readiness and motivation to pursue a civil-

ian career. For example, in a survey of more than 8,500 service members (active-duty, reserves, National Guard, veterans, and families) respondents' motivation to pursue higher education included career or job opportunities (86%), self-improvement or personal growth (71%), improving economic status (69%), professional advancement (56%), using their earned benefits (51%), desire to help people/society (43%), and to enhance their technical skills (31%) (Zoli, et al., 2015). Explore how the military student's career transition fits with their overall life mission (Wilson & Smith, 2012), keeping in mind that disability and discharge status may have been a factor in their decision to pursue a new career. External factors, such as time to complete a degree (Cate, 2014), may impact student veterans' readiness for transition to the civilian sector.

Examine the student veteran's support system – including family, friends, university, military command, and other external supports, which provide financial and emotional support. Assess the level of support the student veteran has while undergoing career transition. More than half of the respondents in this survey reported being married (52%) or living with a significant other (8%). These students may have support from others, yet may also feel obligated to support significant others or family member, which may influence their outlook toward career transition. Nontraditional students, particularly women, experience interrole conflict between their role as student, partner, parent, and worker (Markle, 2015). Exploring student veterans' roles, identifying potential barriers, and making plans to overcome those barriers can assist nontraditional students, such as student veterans, to persist toward their college-to-career aspirations (Markle, 2015).

Discuss how much control the student had in leaving the military. Negative separation experiences can adversely impact one's confidence and motivation to pursue a new career. Type of discharge and length of time served may impact a student veteran's

ability to access resources and benefits. Specialized staff and collaborative efforts with off-campus resources, such as the VA or Veterans Service Offices, help to address these concerns. Coordinated efforts on college campus are essential in meeting the needs of student veterans (Burnett & Segora, 2009; Kirchner, 2015), not only as they transition to the college campus, but also as they transition out of college and in to the civilian workforce.

Consistent with the National Career Development Association (NCDA, 2015) Code of Ethics, career practitioners should consider cultural implications, which may include military culture. Similarly, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) Statement of Ethical Principles and Standards, requires that professionals be sensitive to background, cultures, experiences, and abilities (ACPA, 2006). Culturally competent career practitioners recognize that student veterans may hold different values and motivating factors than non-military peers, due to their varied life experiences, military experiences, and other life roles.

Limitations

The research is limited by a small sample size and relatively homogeneous sample of respondents (e.g. white, male, married, etc.), although this profile is similar to the demographics of active duty military personnel (Department of Defense, 2017). Results should not be generalized to heterogeneous student veteran populations, or non-military college students. Respondents for the study were volunteer participants, and were not randomly generated. The volunteer nature of participants is significant in that participants self-reported findings as opposed to external observation or objective reporting. These limitations indicate that responses may be influenced by personal factors not examined in this study. For example, geographic region and employment factors within that region may impact career outcomes and student veterans' out-

look toward transition.

Future Research

The findings contribute to military career transition research by specifically examining student veterans' perception of college-to-career transition. Previous literature searches did not identify studies that specifically examined the variables which support student veterans' college-to-career transition. Earlier studies on non-traditional students emphasize the need "to identify what practices might best help nontraditional students in relation to their career growth" (Bradley & Graham, 2000, p. 500). This study expands the research of military-to-civilian career transition and military-to-college experiences in multiple ways. As indicated, the research focuses on the college-to-career transition experience for student veterans, as opposed to the military-to-college transition experience. Secondly, the research examines both internal and external variables which assist a student veteran to navigate the college-to-career transition. Finally, the research utilizes life satisfaction to examine the college-to-career transition of student veterans, which indicates internal, personalized, and individualized measure of success (Vacchi, et al., 2017), as opposed to externally imposed institutional indicators.

There continues to be a significant gap in literature addressing the career transition needs of military college students. Specifically, opportunities exist to examine the transition of student veterans from the military through college and on to their post-college career via a longitudinal study. Studies that examine the career development process of military college students from college-to-career are warranted. These studies may elect to examine individual factors, such as confidence and motivation, environmental factors, such as personal and financial support, situational factors, such as the economy or redeployment, and strategies, such as positive self-talk, networking, or utilizing career counseling. Davis and Minnis (2017), by identifying shortcomings in

veterans' transition to the workplace, provide potential interventions that may be used to guide future research. Davis and Minnis discuss employer misconceptions of veteran employees, such as being inflexible and unable to adapt, while also addressing veterans' inability to translate military skills to civilian terminology. Research that trains employers on veterans' abilities, as well as trains veterans on promoting their skills, would aid career practitioners in implementing effective interventions for the student veterans they serve.

More research is needed on the overall satisfaction of the military member as they transition from the military-to-college-to-career, incorporating student veterans' life roles, values, and responsibilities. Branch of service, degrees earned, or time served may be other variables that impact life satisfaction. Finally, while several best practices exist for student veterans' academic success on college campuses, similar best practices need to be identified to ensure student veterans' career success post-graduation. The career transition experiences of veterans who transition directly to employment also warrant research.

Conclusion

Earlier research on student veterans primarily examines academic support, and tools for successful academic transition. Student veterans, like all individuals, possess resources and barriers in the career transition process. Life satisfaction provides an indicator of one's overall feeling of satisfaction and success, including career transition. Student veterans in this study indicated statistically significant relationships among the career transition variables of confidence and readiness, in relation to their overall life satisfaction. Lesser statistically significant relationships were also noted among the career transition variables of support and control, in relation to life satisfaction. Student affairs and career practitioners working with student veterans are encouraged to help students improve their confidence and

motivation for making career transitions, while also exploring their support systems and the control they had when leaving the military to embark on a new career.

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