

10-1-2013

## Male Veterans' Perceptions of Midlife Career Transition and Life Satisfaction: A Study of Military Men Transitioning to the Teaching Profession

Heather C. Robertson

Pamelia E. Brott

Follow this and additional works at: <https://mds.marshall.edu/adsp>

---

### Recommended Citation

Robertson, Heather C. and Brott, Pamelia E. (2013) "Male Veterans' Perceptions of Midlife Career Transition and Life Satisfaction: A Study of Military Men Transitioning to the Teaching Profession," *Adultspan Journal*: Vol. 12: Iss. 2, Article 1.

Available at: <https://mds.marshall.edu/adsp/vol12/iss2/1>

This Research Article is brought to you for free and open access by Marshall Digital Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Adultspan Journal by an authorized editor of Marshall Digital Scholar. For more information, please contact [beachgr@marshall.edu](mailto:beachgr@marshall.edu).

---

## Male Veterans' Perceptions of Midlife Career Transition and Life Satisfaction: A Study of Military Men Transitioning to the Teaching Profession

### Keywords

veterans, career transition, life satisfaction

## ARTICLES

# Male Veterans' Perceptions of Midlife Career Transition and Life Satisfaction: A Study of Military Men Transitioning to the Teaching Profession

Heather C. Robertson and Pamela E. Brott

*Members of Troops to Teachers (N = 102 male veterans) were surveyed regarding their career transition experiences and life satisfaction. Primary themes related to career transition included preparation for transition, investment vs. sacrifice, and rewards of new career. Primary themes related to life satisfaction included helping and serving others, accomplishment, and contentment vs. struggle.*

*Keywords:* veterans, career transition, life satisfaction

The branches of the United States Armed Services have a long history of being a primarily male-dominated volunteer workforce; currently, approximately 86% of active-duty military members are men (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2008). Reports from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS; 2011) indicate that the United States is not well equipped to handle the influx of returning veterans into an employment market that is reeling from high unemployment. In recent years, the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans has been higher than the national unemployment rate. Although unemployment rates dropped slightly for nonveterans from August 2010 (9.4%) to August 2011 (8.9%), the unemployment rate of post-9/11 veterans increased slightly during that same period from 9.4% to 9.8% (BLS, 2011). The situation is far worse in some states, with states such as Michigan and Tennessee reporting unemployment rates for post-9/11 veterans double and triple that of the national rates (BLS, 2011; Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Association, 2011).

*Heather C. Robertson, Human Services and Counseling, St. John's University; Pamela E. Brott, Department of Counselor Education, Virginia Tech, Northern Virginia Center. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Heather C. Robertson, Human Services and Counseling, St. John's University, Sullivan Hall, Queens, NY 11439 (e-mail: robertsh@stjohns.edu).*

© 2013 by the American Counseling Association. All rights reserved.

These figures indicate that transitioning into the civilian workforce will be challenging for veterans with regard to both work and personal issues (e.g., mental health, rehabilitation).

The issues related to male veterans' reentry into the civilian workforce are of particular concern. Researchers have determined that career transition may affect psychological distress and that this distress may manifest differently in men and women. Cassidy (2001) found that men whose jobs have been eliminated or subject to layoff and who identified themselves as unemployed experienced greater psychological distress. In addition, the longer these men were unemployed, the greater psychological distress they experienced (Cassidy, 2001). Jepsen and Choudhuri (2001) found that men and women experience career change differently; specifically, men had more stable career patterns than women, although women experienced greater midlife satisfaction than men.

## CAREER TRANSITION

A number of models have been developed that can be applied to the study of career transitions of adult men. Satisfaction with one's transitions is influenced by values (Brown, 1995) and reflected through self-respect and meaningfulness (Schlossberg, 1985). Constructivist models, including subjective, meaning-making approaches to counseling, help the client "shift from finding a job to finding one's self" (Brott, 2004, p. 190) and to envision and craft the future by setting goals and recognizing obstacles and resources (Brott, 2004). Understanding that each person has a hand in life events encourages the client to use curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk taking when facing transitions (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999). Grief and loss counseling has been a focus for those experiencing job losses, including both planned and unplanned career change. The five stages of grief, including denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Kubler-Ross, 1969), may be experienced by those facing job loss, much like grieving the death of a loved one (Aquilanti & Leroux, 1999). Individuals grieve not only the job they had previously but also the identity associated with that job, which is easily applicable to veterans separating from the military.

Schlossberg's (1981) research is best known for her focus on the transition process. Her model for analyzing human adaptation to transition (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006) served as the conceptual framework for the current research. Although each transition is different for each individual, the model consists of four main areas: (a) transition as a process, (b) characteristics of transition environment and individual, (c) examination of resources and deficits, and (d) successful adaptation to transition (Schlossberg, 1981). Schlossberg's model recognized internal factors (e.g., characteristics of the individual) and external factors (e.g., characteristics of the environment) that may affect transition. Individuals manage a multitude of internal and external influences during transition (Schlossberg, 1981). Ultimately, the model focuses on the client goal of adaptation to the transition.

## CAREER TRANSITION FOR VETERANS

Previous studies of veterans' career transition needs have not focused exclusively on male veterans but have consisted of predominantly male respondents. Spiegel and Shultz (2003) surveyed 672 retired U.S. Navy officers, 98% of whom were male. Their findings indicated that preretirement planning was correlated to life satisfaction postretirement. However, their research also indicated that former military members evaluated their civilian jobs as less important and of a lower status than their Navy jobs. Krieshok, Hastings, Ebberwein, Wettersten, and Owen (1999) proposed a narrative approach in vocational rehabilitation settings with veterans. Their qualitative study included 17 veterans, 16 of whom were male. Their analyses evaluated the "overall goodness" of the client's story. Overall goodness referred to the counselor's interpretation that the veteran's narrative was a workable road map toward vocational planning. Higher ratings indicated that the stories were more likely to result in vocational successes, based on the counselor's interpretation. Results indicated that clients whose stories had a higher rating had generally better outcomes, such as job satisfaction (Krieshock et al., 1999). Baruch and Quick (2007) studied 315 U.S. Navy admirals, including 312 men, regarding their retirement and postretirement careers. They found that proactive career planning was negatively associated with unemployment periods. In addition to several other findings, Baruch and Quick's research revealed that support from family was positively associated with positive feelings during the transition process.

The return of large numbers of U.S. military personnel coupled with high unemployment rates presents ample opportunity for counselors to provide both career/vocational and mental health services to veterans. On the basis of the large number of men employed by the military and the differences in which men and women may navigate career transition, individuals working with this population should have a working knowledge of male veterans' perceptions of career transition, as well as the manner in which their career transition may affect other areas of their overall wellness.

## METHOD

The findings reported in this article are part of a larger research agenda (Robertson, 2010) aimed at understanding veterans' life satisfaction during a midlife career transition. Using Schlossberg's (1981) model as a framework, we sought methods that would adequately capture the framework of internal and external resources, as well as adaptation and life satisfaction. Exploratory questions were posed to develop the research questions, including the following: Why is one individual satisfied with his or her life posttransition and another distraught? What impact does support from spouses, children, and administration play in life satisfaction pretransition, midtransition, and posttransition? How does the length of the transition and the amount of time to plan for the transition affect one's life satisfaction throughout the process?

Given the foci of (a) life satisfaction among midlife career changers and (b) military members who are transitioning or have transitioned to teaching, the following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent is the life satisfaction of military members who are transitioning or have transitioned to teaching explained by five career transition factors (readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence)?
2. To what extent did other demographic variables, such as age, gender, marital status, and number of dependents, relate to military personnel's life satisfaction and career transition factors?

Military members transitioning to teaching were examined because their transition was seen as a true career change (e.g., as opposed to simply a task, employer, or position change) and because of their commitment to both the military and teaching (Feistritzer, 2005). Studying this population helped eliminate potential confounds due to different variables that could mask the relationships being considered and also reflected earlier studies of male career changers transitioning to teaching, social work, or psychology (Perosa & Perosa, 1983).

In addition to completing other instruments, participants responded to the following open-ended questions:

1. What insights have you gained from your career transition that might benefit others as they pursue a midlife career transition?
2. Given your stage of transition, what additional thoughts come to mind about the relationship you see between your midlife career transition and your life satisfaction?

Analysis of the participants' responses to the open-ended questions added new, rich content to the overall research, which led to a secondary analysis, with a focus on the open-ended responses of male veterans. The results of the secondary analysis are presented in this article.

Participants in the original research completed the Career Transitions Inventory (Heppner, 1991), the Satisfaction With Life Survey (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), demographic questions (13 items), and the two open-ended questions. The original research examined relationships between the five career transition variables (i.e., readiness, confidence, support, control, independence) and life satisfaction. It was hypothesized that all five career transition variables would be positively related to life satisfaction. Only two of the transition variables—confidence ( $r = .232$ ) and control ( $r = .313$ )—demonstrated positive, yet weak correlations to life satisfaction. Results from the original research are detailed elsewhere (Robertson, 2010) and are not intended to be a primary focus of the current article.

## Participants

Attempts were made to gather data from two specific populations from the Troops to Teachers (TTT) program ([www.proudtoserveagain.com/](http://www.proudtoserveagain.com/)), namely TTT mentors ( $N = 178$ ) and TTT members. The number of TTT members in the database is unknown, and responses were solicited via indirect methods, as opposed to direct individual e-mails such as those sent to the TTT mentors. Members are individuals who are going through the transition process, whereas mentors are those who have completed the process and have volunteered to help others. A total of 143 responses were received (90 mentors, 53 members). After incomplete responses were removed, data from 136 respondents were used for the original analysis (90 mentors, 46 members); 86% of the participants were men. Characteristics of the mentor and member groups were examined separately using cross-tabs and  $t$  tests to determine if the two samples were comparable, and no significant differences were noted between the two samples.

The secondary analysis examined those who provided open-ended qualitative responses. Of the original 136 respondents, 118 provided open-ended responses; 102 respondents were men. Racially, these 102 men were 84% White, 8% Black, 6% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 3% multiracial. (Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.) The average age of the men was 52 years, with 94% married, 2% divorced, 2% single, and 2% widowers. Men reported an average combined household income of \$104,000 annually and an average of one dependent child living at home. Male respondents served an average of 21 years in the military (range = 4–36 years) and an average of 31 months in between leaving the military and beginning their new career in teaching. Respondents represented all branches of service, including the Air Force (33%), Navy (31%), Army (22%), Marines (13%), and Coast Guard (1%). They represented a vast range of military ranks upon discharge, including enlisted personnel (military ranks ranging from E4 to E9), military officers (military ranks ranging from O2 to O6), and warrant officers (military ranks ranging from WO2 to WO3), with the largest percentages of high-level enlisted and officer ranks, specifically E7 (24%) and O5 (23%). Respondents were 30% TTT members and 70% TTT mentors. Most respondents (91%) identified themselves as being in the post-transition phase, meaning that they had already begun their career in teaching.

## Procedure

Participants were asked to respond to two open-ended questions related to career transition and life satisfaction. Responses to each question were limited to 1,000 characters. All responses to the open-ended questions were collected in text format using an online survey tool. Responses to the questions were imported into an Excel document, with each comment presented in a different row and columns representing each question. We used a descriptive qualitative research design to code procedures to organize and interpret the participants' responses; all coding was completed by hand.

To examine the qualities reflected in the participants' responses to the open-ended questions, we used qualitative procedures to determine themes and rich descriptions of their experiences related to career transition and life satisfaction. A system of organizing and managing data (i.e., the written responses) was needed, which was accomplished through coding responses, developing categories, and interpreting meanings (Merriam, 1998). Coding is a means of designating words, phrases, or a combination into shorthand so that the researcher can retrieve and interpret specific pieces of the data. There were five steps to the coding procedures in this study: (a) write down notes and comments to isolate the most striking and relevant aspects of the data, (b) group the comments and notes if they seem to go together, (c) compile a master list of reoccurring patterns, (d) name the patterns as categories related to the research questions, and (e) associate participant responses to categories. Categories were developed and named to capture recurring themes that emerged from a constant comparative method. Interpretive meanings were written to conceptually describe the career transition and life satisfaction experiences of male veterans leaving the military.

We addressed researcher biases on a continual basis through self-reflection, discussions with fellow researchers, and written notes as part of the coding procedures. It was important to acknowledge the possibility of past experience working with military members as an influence while writing interpretive meanings. To counter this, we kept an open mind and frequently discussed multiple interpretations. Response codes were triangulated with data from quantitative outcomes of the overall study as well as existing literature.

## RESULTS

### Insights Gained From Career Transition

Veterans were asked, "What insights have you gained from your career transition that might benefit others as they pursue a midlife career transition?" From the coding procedures, five themes emerged to describe the meaning of a midlife career transition for these participants: (a) preparation, (b) investment versus sacrifice, (c) attitude, (d) rewards of teaching, and (e) military to civilian transition.

*Preparation.* Most of the comments involved preparing accordingly for the transition. Comments such as "do your research," "have a plan," "set a goal," "start early," and "don't wait" appeared multiple times in the responses. The comments included preparing for all aspects of the transition, such as academic requirements, licensure requirements, relocation, job hunting, and financial planning. Many male veterans indicated that solid preparation was the key to a successful transition or that lack thereof would cause difficulty in the process. One veteran discussed both the urgency of planning and the reality of caring for one's family:



For a transitioning military member, you cannot wait until the end of your career to decide what you want to do after you get out. You have to plan for it from day one and make progress towards putting things in place so the transition goes smooth. You want to be able to separate from military service and do what you want, [as opposed to what you] have to do to put food on the table.

*Investment versus sacrifice.* The concept of investing in the transition process was also evident. Several veterans indicated that one should expect to work hard and invest significant amounts of time and effort in academic pursuits, job search, and transition to the civilian sector. One veteran said, “Be willing to commit to 3–5 years so that you give the new career a fair chance. Have a financial plan that will carry you until that first teaching paycheck is in your hands.”

Along with that investment of time and hard work, others veterans discussed the sacrifices that must be made to accomplish the transition. One respondent stated, “Finally, you must be willing to work hard, stay up late, or sacrifice social pleasure to achieve the most out of your opportunities.”

*Attitude.* The concept of sacrifice and missing out was also reflected in veterans’ responses pertaining to attitudes. Most commonly cited suggestions and encouragement included being flexible, being positive, taking risks, having fun, and not giving up. The phrase “don’t look back” was used by several participants. One veteran stated, “Don’t look back—your military career is over. Stay focused on the future. Have fun!!! If you’re not enjoying life, you are doing something wrong.”

In addition to giving suggestions and encouragement, respondents exuded confidence in their ability to make the transition based on their military background and the skills they had gained. Using an adage that was likely often heard during their military career, one veteran wrote, “Accomplish the mission—stick with it!”

*Rewards of new career.* Male veterans readily shared the benefits gained by accomplishing the mission, working hard, and sticking with their goal of becoming a teacher. Many respondents’ comments indicated the degree of satisfaction and reward they received from teaching, both in their professional life and in their personal life. Veterans called their teaching careers wonderful and fulfilling, and they considered themselves “blessed” to work with children. In addition to rewards on the job, respondents cited rewards at home, such as spending more time with their spouse or children. One respondent said,

Teaching is the most rewarding job that I have had the pleasure of doing. The young children have so much to give back to me in intrinsic rewards. I do not ever regret giving up a promising career move. This was much better than moving up to command positions.

*Military to civilian transition.* Veterans cited further insights gained as a condition of transitioning from the military to the civilian sector. Their comments described mixed experiences. For example, veterans discussed the difficulty of transitioning to the civilian sector because many coworkers and students have no experience and/or interest in their military background. They discussed how their confidence and professionalism may be seen as a threat to other employees. Veterans had both positive and negative comments about how the military prepared them for the transition. In relation to the formal transition programs that are offered to military members, comments were not favorable and included the following:

Transition program offered by the military is close to worthless. The military does NOT provide you with enough mental or emotional preparation for transition to civilian life. The so-called transition team, designed to help prepare military members for transition to the civilian world, didn't have a clue!

However, when veterans discussed how their jobs in the military prepared them to teach or prepared them for the career transition, they were very satisfied. Many veterans explained that their constant transitions in the military helped them prepare for this transition as well, and others stated that they felt better prepared for a transition to a new career than someone who was not in the military. Veterans regularly cited the tasks and skills learned on the job and the manner in which they currently use those skills either in their transition or on the job. Skills such as communication, training, and leading others, and characteristics such as hard work, loyalty, and one's ability to manage uncertainty, were all cited as benefits to their transition process that were gained in the military. One veteran said, "Former military people are successful in career transitions because we are flexible, disciplined, mission oriented, and self-motivated. In a school setting former military stand out and are looked at as leaders who know what needs to be done."

Some veterans saw their military career as simply a step to their true career and their satisfaction with that career, as indicated by this veteran's statement: "My first career in the Navy was what I had to do. Teaching is what I am supposed to do."

### **Connections Between Career Transition and Life Satisfaction**

Personal experiences pertaining to career transition and life satisfaction were captured by the following open-ended question: "Given your stage of transition, what additional thoughts come to mind about the relationship you see between your midlife career transition and your life satisfaction?" Responses varied greatly; however, emanating from the coding procedures were the following themes identified by the male veterans regarding their career transition and life satisfaction: (a) helping and serving others, (b) accomplishments, (c) contentment versus struggle, (d) disagreement, and (e) advice.

*Helping and serving others.* The greatest number of responses involved the veterans' desire to help others or to serve others and the importance of this task in their overall life satisfaction. Many veterans indicated that the satisfaction they received from teaching others resembled the satisfaction that they received from serving others in the military. Respondents discussed making a difference in the lives of others and giving back to their community as contributing to their life satisfaction. One veteran stated, "I have always thought that the most important aspect of my life satisfaction was that I do something important to the country, society, and the planet. Military service did that. So does my teaching career."

There was tremendous pride and occasional longing for military service reflected in veterans' comments, similar to responses concerning the grieving process. Comments included "I miss the military still to this day," "I miss the Marine Corps daily," and "I would mount up [recommit to the military] tomorrow if asked." One veteran wrote,

After 20 years in the Marines I spent another 7 years searching for a job that would give me as much personal satisfaction. I found that job in teaching. Granted, nothing will come close to the meaning and satisfaction derived from service in the Marines, and I will never establish friendships that were created while in the Corps, but teaching comes closest.

*Accomplishments.* Many respondents cited their accomplishments, both in the military and in teaching, as evidence of their life satisfaction. Respondents highlighted their length of time in the military, rank attained, length of time in teaching, promotions received, or awards received. They also discussed other accomplishments outside of their teaching or military career, such as furthering their education or spending time with their family, as accomplishments that have added to their life satisfaction. One respondent stated,

I am very satisfied with the things I have accomplished in life up to this point. There are still a few more things I want to accomplish in the military, but I will not be distraught if they do not come to pass.

*Contentment versus struggle.* Veterans mentioned contentment in life more often than they mentioned struggle; however, struggle was present often enough to warrant attention. Both contentment and struggle were often cited in the same entry. Responses pertaining to contentment generally indicated that veterans were satisfied with their life at this point, although several veterans clearly responded to career satisfaction as opposed to overall life satisfaction. Many veterans cited an overall work-life balance as a condition of their life satisfaction. Still others indicated their ability to make their own decisions and direction, which they were unable to do in the military, as rationale for

their life satisfaction. Comments pertaining to individual struggle were more disturbing and focused around two themes: finances and relationships. Many veterans commented on the financial struggle caused by lower paying teaching jobs or going to graduate school. Several comments addressed relationship issues, broken relationships, and relationship struggles during the transition. One veteran wrote, "At the time it was very taxing on my relationship with my spouse and in retrospect eventually cost me that relationship."

*Disagreement.* Some veterans disagreed that there was any relationship between career transition and life satisfaction. Some stated that their career transition was so smooth that it did not affect their life satisfaction. Others stated that career had always been separate from life satisfaction for them and, therefore, there was no impact on their life satisfaction as a result of the transition. One respondent called the relationship between life satisfaction and career transition "immaterial," and others did not see how their ability to transition may have affected other areas of their relationship. One veteran wrote,

The tension between my midlife career change and my life satisfaction [has] nothing to do with each other. I work because I want to. If I could do it, I would change my mate and get on with really living in this life.

This comment may indicate that some veterans believe other areas, such as one's relationship, have more of an impact on one's life satisfaction than on one's career change.

*Advice.* Another large segment of responses to this question included advice for those making the transition as opposed to providing specific responses pertaining to life satisfaction and career transition. These comments supported the themes of preparation, investment/sacrifice, and attitude that were identified as veterans' insights from having experienced career transition after their military service.

### **Model of Male Veterans' Perceptions of Career Transition and Life Satisfaction**

The coding procedures revealed a pattern of participant responses from which the themes related to career transition and life satisfaction emerged. These themes are supported by previous research and lead to a richer understanding of how male veterans perceive their transition into a postmilitary career in teaching. The proposed model (see Figure 1) generated from the results of this research captures how veterans' self-reflection and insights come together to support the transition variables of confidence and control, which emanated from the original research.

The model reflects the conceptual framework drawn from developmental and constructivist career models that address clients' transitions across the life span. Satisfaction is influenced by one's values: finding meaning, being adaptable, and embracing change. This subjective, meaning-making approach reflects how male veterans can use their values, such as helping and serving others and being

prepared, to embrace the change created by the transition. This strengths-based approach emphasizes a personal narrative of the transition process that focuses on the rewards of the new career and the accomplishments during the career change process. The personal narrative gives voice to the loss experienced by the veteran, which affects satisfaction with transition. Male veterans can demonstrate more control in dealing with the loss of their military career when their values and meanings are used as transition resources.

## DISCUSSION

Outcomes from this research provide the benefit of being derived exclusively from male military members, including themes and rich descriptions of their career transition and life satisfaction experiences.

### Implications for Counselors

Narrative approaches appear to work well with the veteran population. Male veterans had substantial meaningful life experiences, and they took the time and opportunity to share these when posed with open-ended questions. This supports earlier research cautioning against the use of traditional assessments with adults in transition in favor of constructivist assessments (Brott, 2004). Counselors may choose to use more storytelling, narrative approaches when working with male veterans (Brott, 2001; Krieschok et al., 1999). Counselors

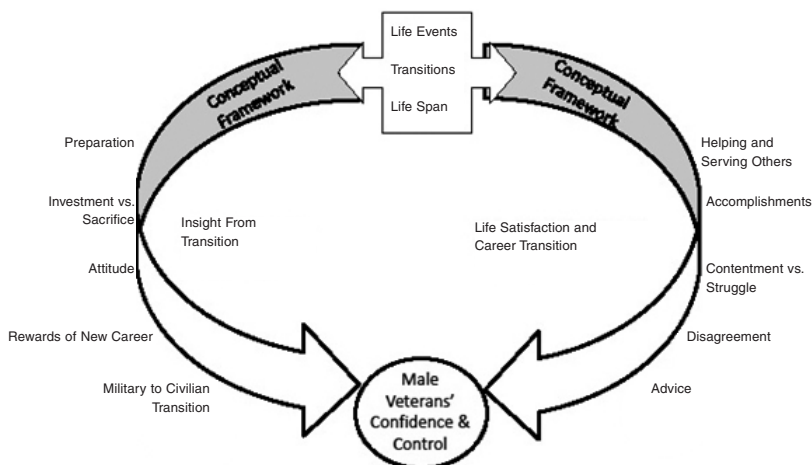


FIGURE 1

### Male Veterans' Career Transition and Life Satisfaction

*Note.* Visual model of themes present in male veterans' perceptions of career transition and life satisfaction. Themes support the concepts of confidence and control derived from original research.

working with male veterans may draw upon several themes that emerged from the secondary qualitative analysis. Specifically, veterans saw planning for their postmilitary career as crucial to their successful transition and life satisfaction. Counselors may wish to help veterans focus on the planning and preparation for the transition, including career changes, financial changes, and emotional changes. Because veterans value planning and preparation, counselors can introduce veterans to what Mitchell et al. (1999) referred to in their article title as “planned happenstance,” to help veterans prepare for and embrace unexpected issues that may arise during the transition.

Positive counseling and focusing on client strengths is another approach that counselors should consider with male veterans. Veterans can be guided to recognize that although investments and sacrifices will need to be made, the skills they gained in the military (e.g., confidence, problem solving, leadership, communication) will help them to navigate the transition to civilian employment. Much like the concepts of career adaptability (Savickas, 1997), veterans can use their military training to adapt to a new career setting. Counselors can help veterans to focus their efforts and attitudes on the rewards of the new career and seek careers consistent with their values (Brown, 1995).

Counselors should also be aware of the mental health needs of their male veteran clients undergoing career transition. The current research supports previous findings that grief and loss often coexist with career transition (Aquilanti & Leroux, 1999). Veterans indicated that focusing on their new career or helping and serving others provided them with more life satisfaction. This focus may help veterans combat feelings of loss and grief as they separate from their former military career. Nevertheless, counselors should still be aware of the grief process, as well as techniques for counseling those dealing with grief and loss.

### **Resources for Male Veteran Clients**

More education is needed on male veterans’ issues and resources, particularly pertaining to career transition. The labyrinth of services and resources for veterans is difficult to navigate, and counselors should familiarize themselves with national, regional, and local resources for veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs ([www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)) provides information on multiple services for veterans, including employment and vocational rehabilitation, mental health, crisis management, and posttraumatic stress disorder. The Department of Labor provides information for veterans, their families, and their employers on their website ([www.dol.gov/vets/](http://www.dol.gov/vets/)). The Armed Forces Support Foundation formed “Hire a Hero” ([www.hireahero.org](http://www.hireahero.org)) in 2006 to provide job search assistance to returning military. Counselors should introduce veterans to and instruct them on how to use these websites so that these resources do not become overwhelming and impersonal, which may add to the isolation that many service members feel upon return.

Veterans can benefit from meaningful separation programs that prepare them for the civilian sector, as well as career counseling to help them learn

how to tell their story and shape their experiences to fit into the civilian employment sector. Employer incentive programs have recently been proposed to provide tax breaks to employers who hire returning Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom veterans and to double the benefits for hiring veterans with disabilities. Although these programs are important, counselors need to encourage their local and national legislators to support programs that provide meaningful counseling and career transition services for returning veterans.

### **Limitations and Opportunities for Further Research**

Limitations of the current study include a lack of diversity among the respondents and the fact that the findings are not generalizable to other populations, such as nonmilitary men or men transitioning to nonteaching careers. Participation was voluntary as opposed to randomly generated, and responses were self-reported and not observed.

There is an opportunity to conduct similar research on a population of male veterans that will more fully encapsulate the transition stages (pretransition, midtransition, and posttransition). Execution of such research could be conducted at military installations during Transition Assistance Programs or perhaps via military installation education programs. Studies specifically of those in pre- and midtransition phases are needed to fully evaluate the relationships between life satisfaction and career. A longitudinal study that examines the same individuals at the pre-, mid-, and posttransition stages and measures their life satisfaction in relation to career transition variables throughout the process would be ideal. Opportunities exist to diversify the population in terms of the careers and demographic diversification, specifically men in nonmilitary or nonteaching careers.

### **Conclusion**

Counselors working with male veterans will benefit from using a storytelling, narrative approach to career counseling whereby the veteran can both plan for career transition from the military and voice concerns with the transition process. Counselors can help veterans invest and sacrifice in their transition while maintaining a positive outlook and attitude focused on the rewards of their new career or perhaps seeking careers that allow them to help and serve others. Despite the multitude of online services, websites, and hiring incentives, veterans will require career counselors to help them navigate the transition process and translate their military skills to a civilian workforce. Counselors are called upon to familiarize themselves with veterans' services and train others on veterans' issues. Moreover, counselors need to be advocates for policy and legislation focused on providing direct services to veterans that pertain to their employment, career, and mental health needs.



## REFERENCES

- Aquilanti, T. M., & Leroux, J. (1999). An integrated model of outplacement counseling. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 37*, 177–191. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1920.1999.tb01020.x
- Baruch, Y., & Quick, C. (2007). Understanding second careers: Lessons from a study of U.S. Navy admirals. *Human Resources Management, 46*, 471–491. doi:10.1002/hrm.20178
- Brott, P. (2001). The storied approach: A postmodern perspective for career counseling. *The Career Development Quarterly, 49*, 304–313. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.2001.tb00958.x
- Brott, P. (2004). Constructivist assessment in career counseling. *Journal of Career Development, 30*, 189–200.
- Brown, D. (1995). A values-based approach to facilitating career transitions. *The Career Development Quarterly, 44*, 4–11. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.1995.tb00524.x
- Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. (2011). *Table A-5: Employment status of the civilian population 18 years and over by veteran status, period of service, and sex, not seasonally adjusted*. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t05.htm>
- Cassidy, T. (2001). Self-categorization, coping and psychological health among unemployed mid-career executives. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly, 14*, 301–315. doi:10.1080/09515070110102800
- Defense Manpower Data Center. (2008). *Active-duty demographic profile: Assigned strength, gender, race, marital, education, and age profile of active duty force*. Retrieved from <http://www.slideshare.net/pastinson/us-military-active-duty-demographic-profile-presentation>
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. L., & Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction With Life Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49*, 71–75. doi:10.1207/s15327752jpa4901\_13
- Feistritz, C. E. (2005). *Profile of "Troops to Teachers."* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Information.
- Goodman, J., Schlossberg, N. K., & Anderson, M. L. (2006). *Counseling adults in transition: Linking practice with theory*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Heppner, M. J. (1991). *The Career Transitions Inventory*. Columbia: University of Missouri–Columbia.
- Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Association. (2011). *Combat to career: A fight to end veteran unemployment*. Retrieved from <http://iava.org/combat2career>
- Jepsen, D., & Choudhuri, E. (2001). Stability and change in 25-year occupational career patterns. *The Career Development Quarterly, 50*, 3–19. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.2001.tb00884.x
- Krieschok, T. S., Hastings, S., Ebberwein, C., Wettersten, K., & Owen, A. (1999). Telling a good story: Using narratives in vocational rehabilitation with veterans. *The Career Development Quarterly, 47*, 204–214. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.1999.tb00731.x
- Kubler-Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying*. New York, NY: Scribner.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mitchell, K., Levin, A., & Krumboltz, J. (1999). Planned happenstance: Constructing unexpected career opportunities. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 77*, 115–124. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.1999.tb02431.x
- Perosa, S. L., & Perosa, L. M. (1983). The new career crisis: A description of the psychological dynamics of transition and adaptation. *Vocational Guidance Quarterly, 32*, 69–79.
- Robertson, H. (2010). *Life satisfaction among midlife career changers: A study of military members transitioning to teaching* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA.
- Savickas, M. (1997). Career adaptability: An integrative construct for life-span life-space theory. *The Career Development Quarterly, 45*, 247–260. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.1997.tb00469.x
- Schlossberg, N. K. (1981). A model for analyzing human adaptation to transition. *Counseling Psychologist, 9*, 2–18. doi:10.1177/001100008100900202
- Schlossberg, N. K. (1985). Adult career development theories: Ways to illuminate the adult experience. In L. Leibowitz & H. D. Lea (Eds.), *Adult career development* (pp. 2–16). Alexandria, VA: National Career Development Association.
- Spiegel, P. E., & Shultz, K. S. (2003). The influence of preretirement planning and transferability of skills on naval officers' retirement satisfaction and adjustment. *Military Psychology, 15*, 285–307. doi:10.1207/S15327876MP1504\_3