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Letter from the Editor

The *Journal of Military and Government Counseling* (*JMGC*) enters its sixth year of publication as a quarterly! *JMGC* is the official journal of the Military and Government Counseling (MGCA). This journal is designed to present current research on military, Veteran, and government topics.

This issue is an eclectic collection of articles in practice, theory, and research. Three of the articles concern Veterans on campus. As a former college career center director, I am pleased to see the attention Veteran career issues and campus concerns are getting in the research. A unique article with a Navy viewpoint and unmarried military couples provides insight for counselors working with this overlooked group. The final article provides a review of treatment options for insomnia an nightmares in Veterans with PTSD.

I am still seeing an increase in submissions and gladly welcome more submissions for the JMCG. I do hope that we sustain the submission. So, ask around where you work – or try writing yourself. I'm advertising for submissions through ACA channels.

Benjamin V. Noah, PhD
JMGC Founding Editor

Student Veterans on Campus: Next Steps in Program Development

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Abstract

This article explores student service members/Veterans' adjustment as they enter an academic setting. Veterans Resource Center staff undertakes a needs assessment of student service members/Veterans to explore ways they describe their experiences in academic and social aspects of the academic community. Focus group information is reviewed to understand how SSM/V incorporates military identity into identity as students. Schlossberg's (1989) concept of mattering and marginality is used to report student service member/Veteran responses as a way to conceptualize their experience transitioning to an academic setting. Responses align with three constructs as mattering (attention, dependence and appreciation) and two constructs as marginality (importance and ego-extension). A recurring theme of mentoring is identified as important to SSM/V in feeling that they matter to the academic community. Results are discussed for the ways Veterans Resource Center personnel can provide meaningful services to SSM/V to enhance their college experience.

KEYWORDS: student service member/Veteran, higher education, mattering, marginality

Since the passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill (US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2009), institutions of higher education (IHE) have experienced growth in enrollment of student service members/Veterans (SSM/V). Recent reports show the VA has funded 1.5 million beneficiaries with Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits (US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2015). With such significant college enrollment of student Veterans, many college campuses have developed strategies to support SSM/V unique issues in their transition to and success in academic endeavors.

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Unique Student Veteran Issues

As far back as WWII, Veterans returning to college were identified as having special characteristics stemming from military experiences and maturity that set SSM/V apart from other students (Donahue & Tibbitts, 1946). A systematic review of data-based peer-reviewed research examining SSM/V in higher education (Barry, Whiteman, & Macdermid Wadsworth, 2014) highlights that SSM/V are distinctly different from their civilian counterparts. In appraisals of GPA, health risk behaviors, and social support, this summary of quantitative and qualitative studies indicates SSM/V are facing many challenges during their academic pursuits. SSM/V who have experienced trauma during combat may have special behavioral health needs related to symptoms of PTSD which has been linked to lower academic performance and lower academic persistence, and may impact educational self-efficacy (Barry et al., 2014; Widome et al., 2011). SSM/V may experience symptoms of depression and anxiety which has been positively associated with reports of binge drinking (Barry, Whiteman, Macdermid Wadsworth, & Hitt, 2012). Behavioral health needs of female Veterans may differ from males as they face post-trauma psychological problems related to sexual harassment or assault during their military experience (Ackerman et al., 2009; Killough, 2009). Combat related injuries such as traumatic brain injury may lead to mental/emotional challenges as well as physical and behavioral difficulties leading to difficulties with concentration and memory (Barry, Whiteman, Macdermid Wadsworth, 2012; Ackerman et al., 2009).

In addition to unique behavioral and physical health needs, many findings point out distinct perceived differences from other civilian counterparts that SSM/V experience in the academic community. Studies exploring Veteran student experience on college campuses find SSM/V describe difficulty relating to fellow students (Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010), and student Veterans report feeling markedly separate from their civilian counterparts with a desire for interactions with other Veterans on campus (Darcy & Powers, 2013; DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010; Strickley, 2009). Student Veterans often view their student civilian counterparts as immature and find other student Veterans understand their circumstances and previous experiences better than civilian students (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010).

Some editorial reviews suggest a common difficulty SSM/V face goes beyond behavioral, physical, or transition needs and is, in fact, a challenge of acculturation. While in the military, service members are socialized to assume a collective identity in which discipline and teamwork are of primary importance. When SSM/V leave the highly structured team-based military environment, they carry with them the determination to never be a weak link on a team (Vacchi, 2012). Transition challenges SSM/V may be facing are changes in status from careers with high responsibility in a structured environment to a student status responding to faculty expectations. With this change into a less structured community, a loss of camaraderie with fellow service members and change in sense of purpose can follow (Black, n.d.). Whereas military responsibilities revolve around routine, following orders and meeting set expectations in order to accomplish a mission, higher education may appear much more loose and difficult to interpret what is expected from a student. Adjusting to a campus community involves shifting from an atmosphere dedicated to duty, honor, and country to a community which values freedom of inquiry, questioning, and tolerance for ambiguity (Raybeck, 2010).

When considering the possible physical, behavioral, transition, and identity related needs of SSM/V, one might predict a difficult fit in an academic environment. For example, a review at the community college level reported that SSM/Vs attending "Veteran friendly" schools did not sense that faculty communicated SSM/Vs have the ability to do the work or succeed and these students sensed a lower feeling of belonging at the college (Heineman, 2014). One recent national survey highlights differences in student engagement between Veterans and non-veterans with Veterans indicating lower engagement with faculty, a perception of less campus support, and overall less student engagement. Yet despite this relative lack of engagement, there was no significant difference in Veterans and non-veterans in their levels of overall satisfaction with their education (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2010). Additionally SSM/V are selective about the campus life and academic activities in which they involve themselves focusing primarily on academic areas necessary for academic progress rather than college life and activities (Kim & Cole, 2013).

Findings such as these on SSM/V engagement, their focus on academic not personal pursuits on campus, and their transition to higher education being an acculturation process suggest that understanding the experience of SSM/V in academic settings is complex. In spite of the possible challenges from physical and behavioral health needs and their challenges in transition, SSM/V may be achieving what they seek in academic settings. Many scholarly articles are encouraging campus leaders to develop better awareness of Veterans and service members and to gauge their college experience in order to improve services and programs that support SSM/V (Kim & Cole, 2013; Rumann et al., 2011).

Campus Services for Student Veterans

Just one year after implementation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, a report confirmed 57 percent of institutions of higher education (IHE) having services and programs for Veterans (Cook & Kim, 2009), and by 2013 nearly 75 percent of respondents reported having a specific staff member or office focused exclusively on active duty military students and student Veterans (Sponsler, Wesaw, & Jarrat, 2013). IHEs are encouraged to develop specific campus policies and procedures for administering Veteran information, benefits, and services (Griffin & Gilbert, 2015). Examples include Executive Order 13607 Principles of Excellence which established practices for IHEs to strengthen oversight of education benefits (Obama, 2012), and the 8 Keys to Veterans' Success designed for IHE programs to support Veteran access to resources in order to promote program completion and workforce readiness (US Department of Education, 2013). Additionally, recommendations for best practice for the SSM/V are included in VA Campus Toolkit (2016), American Council on Education (Steele et al., 2010) and others which include various suggested practices to assist student Veterans to meet their educational goals.

Campuses are encouraged to provide adequate training to staff who will assist with processing education benefits (McBain, Kim, Cook, & Snead, 2012; Steele et al., 2010), and develop practices to coordinate timing of SSM/V enrollment for classes, and receipt of the certificate of eligibility to smooth access to education benefits (Vacchi, 2012). Hitt et al. (2015) suggests campuses implement flexible practices such as rolling admissions, course enrollment without penalty for lateness or wait time, and preferential course registration such that all SSM/Vs regardless of year in school, are allowed to register with upper-level students. Flexible

academic and support services that meet the demanding schedules of these military students can aid in the transition into academia (Ford, Northrup, & Wiley, 2009).

IHEs are encouraged to gain proper training on the award of military credits so SSM/V earn credits consistently, fairly and efficiently, and avoid repeating unnecessary coursework (Griffin & Gilbert., 2015; Herrmann, Raybeck, & Wilson, 2008; Steele et al., 2010). An important opportunity exists for institutions making credit-transfer decisions if they develop practical guidelines and tools for transferring a variety of military experiences into academic credit (Hitt et al, 2015). Developing a Veteran specific or focused student orientation on campus can support the unique personal and academic needs SSM/V may have (Herrmann et al., 2008; Rumann, Rivera, & Hernandez, 2011).

In addition, IHEs should consider expanded transition assistance by providing professional development and awareness-raising for faculty and staff so they have adequate knowledge and skill to deal with Veteran specific hidden and visible physical and mental health injuries and disabilities (Elliott, Gonzalez, & Larsen, 2011; Hitt et al, 2015; Kim & Cole, 2013; Steele et al., 2010). A ''first-stop'' approach in offering services to SSM/Vs is suggested which combines Veterans' services with other campus services, provides accurate, consistent information, and then directs the student Veteran to liaisons in other offices and campus contacts based on the identified need (Hitt et al, 2015). Other recommended practices include creating a working group across campus departments for better coordination and awareness of unique SSM/V needs (Steele et al., 2010).

Additionally, SSM/V who deploy during enrollment may benefit from maintaining connection during the deployment (Ackerman, DiRamio, & Mitchell, 2009). Hitt et al. (2015) suggest allowing student Veterans to complete coursework while deployed, and creating nontraditional options for meeting course requirements which recognizes the dual obligations of service to country and achieving a degree. Additional possibilities include creating a course that assists student Veterans in the transition from military to civilian life or from deployment to post-deployment life, and career classes for student Veterans where they learn about themselves, develop personal and professional goals, learn about the work world, and determine how to make career-related decisions (Rumann et al., 2011).

Suggestions for faculty practices that create a classroom environment that values military students include efforts to bridge civilian military cultural gaps. Ideas include debiasing perceptions of the military and increasing self-awareness in faculty to improve faculty self-efficacy for teaching SSM/V, and use of military narratives in the classroom to personalize military experiences for students and faculty in the classroom (Barnard-Brak, Hall-Badby, Jones, & Sulak, 2011; Hawn, 2011). Both practices acknowledge differing perceptions of the military, military conflicts, and mental health challenges to create self-awareness for faculty and students who do not have military experience so they can understand and appreciate the student Veteran population (Baechtold & De Sawal, 2009). They provide for opportunities to discuss the military and its role in society in a balanced and informative way (Herrmann et al., 2008). Even Veteran-only courses are possible and revealed positive effects such as increasing cohesion for the SSM/Vs, grade point averages, retention rates, and enrollment (Cunningham, 2012).

College policies aimed at community building generally focus on engagement with other Veteran students on campus. A local campus chapter of the Student Veterans Association (SVA) can offer peer to peer support, can connect student Veterans to resources, and advocate on their behalf all of which can be instrumental in helping Veterans attain success in higher education (Rumann et al., 2011). Creating a social group in which Veterans can network with other Veterans may ease the transition from the battlefield to the classroom (Cunningham, 2012). Campus officials can support Veteran student engagement by coordinating Veteran-related events on campus, and providing meeting space for student Veterans to gather, study, and socialize (LeMire, 2015). Providing opportunities for interaction and support amongst student Veterans can help make the college environment feel less isolating and can ease their adjustment (Rumann et al., 2011).

Designing Services on Our Campus

Shortly after the 2009 launch of the Post 9/11 GI Bill, our college opened a campus Veterans Resource Center (VRC) which then partnered with the Department of Veterans Affairs as a pilot site for VetSuccess on Campus. The campus VRC serves a medium sized college campus that is not in proximity to any active duty military installations. There are modest differences of our campus SSM/V from national statistics. For example, SSM/V represents only 2% of our campus student population compared to national averages of 4%. Demographics we have collected show that our campus SSM/V are generally older at 30 than the national averages for student Veterans at the start of post-secondary education (25), and they have more years of service (7 as opposed to 5 years; American Council on Education, 2014). The average amount of time between military service and beginning studies at our college was 6 months. SSM/V on our campus resemble national averages in other areas with approximately 1/3 being married, close to 1/2 having dependents, and 30% working full time while going to school.

VRC staff has conducted ongoing focus groups to gain an understanding of the unique perspective of SSM/V on our campus. The goal has been to create a cycle of inquiry to inform the academic community for ways to tailor services to support SSM/V success. Themes derived from focus groups conducted in 2009 and 2011 at our campus have revealed that (a) SSM/V are proud of their military service with the unanimous belief that it gives them an advantage in being students and productive citizens of a campus environment; (b) SSM/V describe feeling apart from but not wanting to be treated differently than others on campus (Darcy & Powers, 2013); and (c) SSM/V define their academic success in much the same way as non-veterans students; it is the area of social success in which there are differences. These themes about the unique nature of SSM/V experiences on our college campus have supported VRC planning, development and implementation of services such as academic forums highlighting military/civilian transition, and an academic sponsor program connecting student Veterans to other Veterans and resources integral for success.

Ongoing Needs Assessment.

The VRC staff maintains a strengths based as opposed to a deficits based focus on the qualities SSM/V bring to our campus. There is merit in identifying SSM/V as a unique cohort of college students requiring targeted programs and policies designed to aid them in transition and

integration into higher education (Barry, et al., 2014). That impression is supported by some research which indicates that combat Veterans becoming students represent a population with special needs (Ackerman et al., 2009). VRC staff is sensitive to a significant difference between understanding SSM/V as a special population with unique needs from conceptualizing them as a special needs group. By maintaining a strengths based focus, needs assessments from the VRC delve into the value of a military background. We focus on the benefits of military experiences, military training and service, and the ways those experiences inform the unique perspectives SSM/V bring to the campus community.

As a next step in needs assessment with the SSM/V in our academic community, the members of the VRC conducted a focus group related to SSM/V sense of fit with the members of the campus community. As we conceptualize SSM/V experiences, we acknowledge their perceived sense of marginality as well as the isolation and separateness they experience on campus. In an ongoing cycle of inquiry from the VRC, we sought input on ways to involve SSM/V in meaningful ways in our academic community.

Schlossberg commented on Diramio and Jarvis (2011) that during military service, SSM/V "felt they were doing something important, that they mattered to their country, and performed beyond what most people can do. Now, they have come to college and are often treated like children. [There are many things that could potentially make them feel put down.] Here they are, men and women, strong in the military and now they are children in the classroom" (2011, pp. 18-19). This description reflects the constructs of Schlossberg's model on mattering and marginality (Schlossberg, 1989) a theoretical framework in which mattering involves feeling like you belong in a community and that you are significant to those around you whereas marginality is having a sense you do not fit or are not valued in a community.

Schlossberg's model has been applied to understanding transitions and role changes for college students, and suggests that issues of mattering and marginality can influence the college experience (as cited in Dixon Rayle, & Chung, 2007). Although Schlossberg's (1984) constructs related to adult transition and the multi stage process of transition (Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989) have been applied to descriptions of student Veterans' transition to higher education (e.g., Diramio & Jarvis, 2011; Ford & Vignare, 2015), the more specific constructs of mattering and marginality have not been applied to understanding student Veterans experiences in college. Schlossberg's model seems useful to our understanding of how SSM/V perceive themselves in the academic community, and it is used to report the SSM/V responses to the questions in the current focus groups.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited through email correspondence sent to student email addresses of all SSM/V using educational benefits on our college campus. There are 250-260 SSM/V attending this public 4-year college in New England with a student population of 9000 (7500 undergraduate and 1500 graduate students). All SSM/V enrolled in spring semester 2015 were

sent one initial and two reminder emails requesting their voluntary participation in one of two focus groups.

The inclusion criteria for participation were that each student be currently enrolled and a military service member or Veteran. A total of 25 students responded to the email. With phone call follow up, 11 met the criteria and agreed to participate in one of the focus groups.

Participants were two female, nine male Veterans ages 24-64 (pseudonyms included in Results). Nine identified as White/Caucasian, one as Hispanic/Latino, and one Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Five stated they are married, three never married, and three divorced. The SSM/V current military status was: five retired, five discharged, and one active duty in the Army National Guard. Years of military experience ranged from four to twenty two. Two of the focus group participants served in the Navy, most participants served in the Army (7 total), including one who also served in the Navy, and there were two Marine Corps students. All participants had at least one deployment, most had one to three (8 veterans), with one being deployed seven or more times. Ninety percent of the student Veterans reported that it had been over 18 months since their most recent deployment. The length of time students have been enrolled at this campus varied: 18% had just started their education, 18% have been enrolled for 1-2 semesters, 18% for 3-4 semesters and most veterans (45%) have been a student for at least 4 semesters. Lastly, choices of major were mainly in the criminal justice studies (4 Veterans) and nursing programs (3 Veterans), counseling/social work (2 Veterans) and one philosophy major.

During the spring semester of 2015, a focus group was conducted on two different occasions each lasting approximately 90 minutes. Of the 11 Veterans participating, four signed up for the first focus group (1 female, 3 male) and seven for the second group (1 female, 6 male). To start each group session the three authors/group leaders introduced themselves; gave a description of the participation process; and answered any questions. Participants next signed the informed consent document and a brief demographic questionnaire. After all informed consent documents were collected, audiotaping began.

Procedure

The focus groups began with a request to participants to introduce themselves and briefly describe their military service. Five remaining questions were then posed and focus group leaders facilitated conversation on each topic.
1. What is it like being a college student at this institution?
2. What was the transition like from military service to being a college student?
3. How would you describe finding meaning and purpose in your life after military service?
4. In previous focus groups we have done, Veterans who are students have told us they want to be treated like all other students but they also want people to recognize how unique they are for their military service. Tell us how that seems to you?
5. What things do you wish the members of the college community could know about you that would help them understand you better?

Participants were invited to contribute to the responses and when conversation came to a natural end, the group leaders moved on to the next question. The questions focused on various

aspects of academic interactions with students and faculty. The intent was to explore SSM/V experiences related to mattering and marginality in the academic environment. Questions were designed to (a) focus on ways SSM/V would like to be recognized by civilian faculty and students, (b) explore attributes SSM/V would like the members of a college campus to know about them, and (c) discuss ways our college can facilitate positive faculty and student interactions with SSM/V.

Results

After the focus group recordings were transcribed, focus group leaders read the transcriptions for content and identified responses that represent the constructs of Schlossberg's (1989) model of mattering and marginality. The constructs are dependence, appreciation, attention, importance, and ego-extension. The focus group leaders separately assigned participant responses to the constructs of Schlossberg's model. The selection of representative responses for each construct was identical for the focus group leaders with two exceptions - attention and importance. The focus group leaders found the responses selected from those constructs could fit in either category. The final decision for fit was discussed collaboratively, and the final placement was determined based on the context in which the responses were given. Focus group leaders found examples for the presence of three constructs that portray a feeling of mattering - attention, dependence, and appreciation. In two constructs, importance and ego-extension, responses from focus group participants portrayed a sense of marginality.

Attention

Schlossberg's (1989) concept of attention includes commanding the interest or notice of someone. There are two different areas in which the focus group participants found they received attention from faculty and students. The first involved varied ways SSM/V decided to tell others about their military service thereby attracting attention to themselves for that detail. SSM/V also gained attention during classroom participation particularly in the ways their interaction supported other students and faculty.

Revealing military service. Focus group participants had mixed opinions about receiving attention for their military experience and described different approaches to telling others about their military background. Several agreed with this statement "I don't feel any particular need for anybody to know that I was in the military; not in a way if it's not relevant. If it is relevant I'll bring it out (Beverly)." Conversely, other Veterans found many more opportunities to inform others of their military experiences. One statement captured that sentiment: "for me, I always like to make the association (about being in the military). I like to tell everybody if I can if there is a reason… and in class if it is something military related… so other Vets in the room, they can know (Joseph)." These two differing approaches are examples of revealing military or Veteran status, and reflect some of the decisions a Veteran makes about drawing attention to military experience.

One Veteran revealed his military status when he told a faculty member how long it had been since he was a student in high school. The faculty member invited him to meet after class for any supports he might need. The Veteran went on to say that many faculty members have

told him "we're glad you're here because you're the only one that does talk (David)" referring to his class engagement when he answers questions or participates in conversations. This example of drawing attention to his unique background resulted in a positive and supportive interaction.

Support to students and faculty. Another more subtle way of describing ways Veterans may draw attention to themselves in their academic experience was described by many when they gave examples of their participation in the classroom. There was general agreement among all focus group participants that lack of participation in class is disrespectful. They explained that a military background helped them feel at ease in group settings; for most, talking in a classroom is comfortable and okay. For all, contributing responses in a classroom is an expectation instilled in them in military training. By answering questions or contributing to discussions, they may draw attention to themselves even though that may not be their goal. On the other hand, they cannot imagine a silent classroom in which no one responds and often feel compelled to respond when questions are posed to the class.

This willingness to engage in the classroom is an extension of military and leadership experiences that the focus group participants brought to their academic experience. They expressed this as part of their responsibility to be active and involved in classes especially when civilian students are not participating. One stated "I choose to be the example. I feel that in some of my classes I am the one person to say, 'Anybody have any questions?' or 'Hey, this is the topic; I want to hear your ideas (David).'"This way of engaging in classes commands attention of students and faculty without it being the SSM/V intent. By just being themselves and drawing on the expectations of their military service, they take responsibility for group interaction in the academic classroom. With this they have drawn attention to themselves and commanded the interest of others.

Dependence

In Schlossberg's (1989) constructs, dependence is described as being needed. Respondents discussed several ways they were dependable in classroom interactions by being reliable in class discussions, encouraging others to participate in class, and acting as a person to turn to for support. The respondents connected this capacity to be counted on to their previous leadership experience in the military. They considered it a form of mentorship and described situations in which fellow students, especially younger students, depended on them for advice or ideas about what to do in situations. One Veteran stated "being in class with 20 year olds is awesome because I get a lot of mentoring ....that reinforces that we (student Veterans) have a great deal of leadership… and there has to be a way for us to relay or convey that in a positive way (Robert)." He described further advice giving when he described stepping in like an older brother figure; encouraged a younger civilian student to stop skipping class, and pressed him to do better in academics.

Being dependable and serving as a mentor was something respondents felt well-suited to do. Several respondents said they appreciated the role of being depended upon for the mentoring they provided. "Military people ...are ... almost obliged to provide some sort of leadership… it isn't always discipline that a Veteran can be counted on to provide to civilians around us. It's

mentorship (Dante)." This participant believed civilian students benefited from the leadership SSM/Vs have to offer.

Appreciation

Schlossberg's (1989) construct of appreciation is a feeling that efforts are appreciated; others recognize the contribution you make to a situation. Participants gave several examples of how they feel appreciated on campus especially for their mature approach to their studies. Participants extended the high expectations they had for themselves in the military to their performance as students. They were accustomed to hard work and high achievement in their past and anticipated the same of themselves in the academic setting. Grades and feedback on assignments worried some of them sometimes. Much of that stress was put in perspective when they felt acknowledged and appreciated by faculty. Simple statements of appreciation mattered to the respondents. "... (Professors) have told me this, they appreciate having an older student in the class; especially Vets because we're more disciplined to do our work. We can sit there in class, pay attention in class, type a 10 page paper… Especially when you've served and you've been in combat and you know certain things …you have to make life-and-death situations. … You just sit there and you just do it (your work). You gotta do it (Ben)."

Even with this recognition for their discipline as it related to coursework, some Veterans yearned for appreciation on another level. They described a sense of having belonged to something important and that civilians around them in the academic community just couldn't fathom the "big deal" it was to serve in the military. One Veteran expressed his connection to something bigger than just being a student. He wanted his real world experience and his service to his country to be appreciated and recognized for the meaningful work he believed it to be. "Students in the community don't understand that we were part of something way bigger than… just this (on this campus). We were federal, we weren't state, we weren't municipal. We were federal. We're big - like the biggest military in the world, you know (Joseph)." Others agreed that they generally felt appreciated by faculty and students, and that they really wanted their efforts to be further acknowledged and recognized.

Importance

Schlossberg's (1989) theme of importance is evident when someone cares about what you think; you are important and valued for who you are. Focus group participants provided examples of ways in which they felt unimportant based on the ways others responded to learning about their military background. These focus group responses reflect a lack of feeling important or valued for what SSM/V think or have experienced. They also gave examples of ways they would like to be validated by civilians around them for the important work they have done.

Lack of validation of military experience. Participants had examples of negative experiences which made them feel not important as SSM/V in the classroom. One participant stated he had learned that he "shouldn't project so much military and just use it when really needed since some people gave an impression of not caring (Robert)." For this Veteran's example, this lack of caring about his military experience seems to relate to a lack of being important. The experience of not being validated for previous military experience is also evident

in another student Veteran's classroom experience. He stated "the instructor joked about Iran and Iraq and all these nuclear bombs. It's gotten to a point now where people think it's funny to joke about this thing and … I was getting so agitated….I wanted to say something too—but then you don't feel like it's the proper place to say something… (Dante)."

Lack of recognition for military experience. Several focus group participants connected this sentiment of feeling unimportant to suggested ways they would like to be treated. Rather than keeping opinions to themselves and feeling marginalized by the direction of some classroom conversations, one participant suggested Veterans should be consulted for their valuable experiences in real world settings. He suggests his experience be validated "…recognize me as a Veteran. I want equity in the student body (Dante)." Another participant extended this idea of preferred interaction which could validate his military experience and make him feel as if the instructor cares about what he thinks. He stated "…. If we decide to share our experience given so much of it's real and it's meaningful …(professors) could just like nod, or (say) 'all right'. (Unfortunately) some professors just move on….or (act like) I have to pick on you because you raised your hand (Robert)." These ideas requesting validation and recognition for military experience were stated as suggestions to help SSM/V feel more valued and important in the academic community.

Ego-extension

Schlossberg's (1989) construct of ego extension involves students feeling others are proud or sad by what they do. There was not a match for focus group responses in this construct with no examples that civilians in classroom interactions could connect emotionally to what SSM/V do or had done. In fact, participants described others around them were often sad, derogatory, or indifferent to military accomplishments.

One Veteran described a classroom situation in which a fellow student was particularly derogatory "hammering on the war and Veterans and his opinion on it… he went as far as saying 'soldiers are pieces of shit. They're over there just killing innocent people.'" The focus group participant felt disrespected, misunderstood, and saddened by this exchange. He reported he had "just gotten back from one of the most horrible deployments I've been on. I lost so many guys it wasn't even funny (Brian)." This response exemplifies a unidimensional perspective of service members as killers. Such disrespectful interactions drastically limit any chance others will be proud of SSM/V as individuals or respected for the work they have done.

Another focus group participant expressed a vast difference in the way she sees herself and the overgeneralized view that Veterans are all damaged by their military experience. She described her own feelings of pride for what she had accomplished, for the importance of her duties, and in contrast she really dislikes "the stigma of 'oh you're a Veteran, you're fragile, you need help or (you're) crazy' …..A lot of people hear Veteran and they automatically assume that you're just like everyone else that you hear on the news. …like mentally unstable (and) you have a lot of guns at home and all that stuff (Beverly)." This Veteran's example does not express any sense of pride extended to her for her military service or accomplishments. More generally these examples and others shared in the focus groups speak to an overall lack of understanding that civilians have for military experience which may result in SSM/V not feeling as if they matter.

Limitations

The responses from these focus groups should be considered in light of several limitations. First, the small sample of participants from our campus does not necessarily represent all the beliefs or experiences of others on our own campus. Other students with different characteristics (age, rank, prior schooling, time on campus) may have different perspectives on how they are treated by faculty and students in our campus setting. Additionally the conversational nature of the focus groups may not have included all participant perspectives on the questions posed. Generally, the participants in each group developed a consensus response for each question and then group leaders moved the interview along to other questions. Also, focus group leader interpretation of these responses as they align to the Schlossberg (1989) constructs may not match what the participant intended. Finally, applicability of these results to other campuses must be considered since the focus of the inquiry was feelings of fit on our own campus.

Discussion

The results of these focus groups connect well to Schlossberg's (1989) model of mattering and marginality. Responses reflected three constructs of mattering – attention, dependence, and appreciation – and two constructs in which the respondents felt marginalized – importance and ego extension.

Mattering was evident when the participants felt attended to; when they interacted with students and faculty in ways they felt they were depended on. The respondents found they mattered when they were appreciated and relied on as contributing members of the academic community. Mentoring as a natural offspring of military experience resounded as the most broadly discussed topic in both focus groups. Bringing their military leadership background into current mentoring relationships seemed to be the most direct link to Schlossberg's constructs in the ways they feel they mattered. In this way, SSM/V felt they were appreciated, validated and recognized for who they are; their background and military identity contributed positively to their current academic experience. When military identity was an asset such as a measure of their maturity, ability to mentor other students, and support classroom interactions, they felt competent and as if they mattered as important members of the academic community. The responses reflecting attention, dependence, and appreciation were examples of feeling they mattered based on assets, strengths, and virtues (Hassan, Jackson, Lindsay, McCabe, & Sanders, 2010) as individuals and as military service members.

Conversely when interactions conveyed a lack of respect for the importance of their military service, glossed over the reality of their prior experience, or showed disrespect to the pride a service member has for his or her service, the respondents felt marginalized. They were disappointed when their opinions were dismissed having hoped for basic acknowledgement of their prior experience. When there was no curiosity expressed about their military work and when their contributions were overlooked, their responses connected to the marginalized side of Schlossberg's (1989) constructs for importance and ego-extension. These experiences lacked academic and interpersonal validation influencing their perception of "institutional fit" or sense

of belonging (Ford & Vignare, 2015). They did not feel validated and expressed feelings of being marginalized within the civilian academic community.

Implications for Campus Practice

These focus group responses provide information for VRC personnel to consider in tailoring campus practices that support SSM/V fit in the academic community. Using Schlossberg's (1989) construct of mattering and marginality is useful for understanding SSM/V on our campus. Schlossberg's premise is that an institutional focus on mattering will create a climate where students are motivated to learn, and promote retention. Since most college students, faculty, and administrators (97%) lack a military background (Raybeck, 2010), opportunities for civilians to naturally interact with military personnel are limited and may result in lack of understanding. U.S. Department of Education (2013) guidance encourages IHEs to create a culture of trust and connectedness across the campus community to promote well-being and success for Veterans. Designing interactions in which civilian students, faculty and staff can bridge this knowledge and empathy gap with SSM/V is imperative particularly when the goal is to support how SSM/V feel as if they matter to the academic community.

Based in part on results of these focus groups, VRC personnel will enhance efforts to create an atmosphere for SSM/V to feel valued and important to the academic community. The major finding of these focus groups points to the value SSM/V place in being mentors and leaders within the community; when they feel important and depended upon, they find that they matter to their community. This subtle, nuanced way of being appreciated can be enhanced by initiating opportunities in which SSM/V can actively be supportive to others on campus in ways that value their leadership and teach others about their experience. We are exploring possibilities for awareness exercises in-class and in other settings; pairing members of student organizations with the Student Veterans Organization in planning and implementing campus events; colloquia on leadership and the military; and presentations during Diversity Week that highlight SSM/V real world experience and their ability to be an asset to the academic community.

When they participate in an academic setting, SSM/V are experiencing the push of student identity while retaining the pull of their identity as a military professional (Borsari, et al., 2017; Darcy & Powers, 2013). It can be difficult for an academic environment to replicate the belongingness that is inherent in military service - being a member of a team; part of a collective identity which relies on you implicitly for your role in achieving the mission. Holding SSM/V to high academic standards while valuing their strengths can help balance the two parts of SSM/V identity and draw them into a sense of mattering. Ways to accomplish this can incorporate the constructs of mattering and marginality, recognizing SSM/V leadership potential, and valuing.

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Almost Married to the Mission: An Unmarried Couple's Deployment Experience

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Abstract

Counselors utilize a framework of emotional stages of deployment in order to understand the impacts that different stages of military deployments have on individuals. Emotional stages of deployment have been created and applied to military couples (i.e., the service member and spouse) who are married by comparing their emotions experienced during a deployment cycle. This article explores the differences that this stage approach has when applied to unmarried military couples. Additionally, the article highlights implications for future research and implications for counselors to better understand the unique issues that unmarried military couples face.

KEYWORDS: military culture, military couples, deployment

The sacrifice associated with military service extends far beyond the person in uniform. The burden, though differently manifested, is shared by not just the service members themselves, but also by their families, most notably by their children and significant others. According to the last published Department of Defense (DoD) demographic report (2015) there are a total of 1,301,443 active-duty service members and over half of them are married (54.3 percent). The DoD demographic report (2015) does not include the number of active-duty service members who are in long-term or committed relationships, regardless of engagement status; therefore, the total number of unmarried significant others cannot be easily determined (DoD, 2015). A *significant other* is defined by Merriam-Webster as "a person who is important to one's well-being; especially: a spouse or one in a similar relationship; someone you have a romantic relationship with" (Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2017, noun). For the purposes of this article, *significant other* specifically addresses individuals who are in a romantic relationship with the service member (i.e., boyfriend/girlfriend; fiancé). This lack of consideration for unmarried military significant others is common in the existing pool of research and practice guidelines for

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counselors, a problem when these individuals face many of the same cultural stressors (i.e., military moves, military separations, impacts of non-traditional work schedules; Mewes, 2012; Military Significant Other Support [Military SOS], 2017) as their married counterparts. Limited access to information, often due to security concerns, and support resources that are only accessible to spouses of service members (e.g., on base training/workshops like LifeSkills courses; Marine Corps Community Services, 2017), often exacerbates these stressors. In fact, there are a plethora of resources available specific to military spouses and/or families including but not limited to: Military Spouse (2017), Military OneSource (2017a), Military Spouse Advocacy Network (2017), Family Readiness Groups (Duttweiler, 2017), and National Military Family Association (2017). These support networks and resources are especially critical during times of deployment (Duttweiler, 2017; Military OneSource, 2017b; Pavlicin, 2003). The prevalence of these formalized services highlights the very few resources that are reputable and specific to unmarried significant others in the military (e.g., Military SOS, 2017).

There is a continued need for more professional counselors who are equipped to work with the military population (Hall, 2016) especially during cycles of deployment (Jumper et al., 2006). Likewise, there is a similar need for more researchers and counselors to focus on the lived experiences and needs of couples and significant others in the military population. There is scant research that looks at the impacts of military lifestyle and deployments on (a) the dynamics of the unmarried relationship, (b) the experience of the unmarried service member, and (c) the experience of the unmarried significant other.

This article highlights the need for evidence-based research to include unmarried military service members and significant others. It uses the commonly cited emotional stages of deployment approach by Pincus, House, Christenson, and Adler (2001) in addition to a case study example to provide support and insight into differences they experience when compared to a married military couple given the nature of military culture. Lastly, it provides implications for future research and implications for counselors who work with married military couples and unmarried military couples as a pair and/or individually.

Military Deployments

It is common for military couples to experience a deployment. Deployments are temporary placements away from the home (DoD, 2012). Deployments differ from each other in several factors such as mission (training or operational), length (from a month to even a year or more), location (stateside or overseas), and how much notice is given (known well in advance versus short notice; DoD, 2012; Institute of Medicine, 2013). There are different *cycles* to deployments created to prepare service members and their families for the changes and challenges to come. Similarly, there are different *emotional stages* to deployments that are associated with these cycles to prepare service members and their families for the psychological rigors to come. Deployments are an important and distinguishing element of military culture when compared to other cultures.

Military Culture

Military culture is very different from its civilian counterpart. Some of these differences include: ways of thinking, behaving, and living. Military culture has its own values, virtues, beliefs, customs, language, laws, and job titles (Exum, Coll, & Weiss, 2011; Gooddale, Abb, & Moyer, 2012; Hall, 2016). Service members are held to high standards in this culture comprised of discipline, order, loyalty, and self-sacrifice. Particular importance is given to the mission, historic traditions and ceremonies, ethos, and group cohesion (Gooddale et al., 2012; Hall, 2016; Pryce, Pryce, & Shackelford, 2012). At the core of their values are honor and integrity, which are often portrayed in everything that service members do (Goldenberg, Hamaoka, Santiago, & McCarroll, 2012). A significant other has similar guidelines for behavioral and cultural etiquette and his/her actions reflect back on the active duty partner (Hall, 2016). Living in the military culture often entails being associated with a base or installation (often living within the perimeter), relocating frequently, and experiencing extended separations due to training and deployments (Goldenberg et al., 2012; Hall, 2016; Pryce et al., 2012).

Implications for Unmarried Military Couples

For married and unmarried military couples, military culture can interfere with the focus on their relationship; the *mission* often takes priority. In order to keep relationships intact given this fact, each individual should understand military culture and be able to discuss the implications it will have on his or her relationship in order to best prepare for likely situations such as moves and separations (Snyder & Monson, 2012). These common situations may be harder to figure out for unmarried military couples given the understanding of military culture of the significant other in the relationship and their relationship commitment level. For example, does the significant other understand the difficulties military culture may place on the relationship and is he or she committed to making the relationship work regardless?

Literature is able to support unique difficulties for unmarried military couples when compared to married military couples; it becomes problematic though that the literature, which provides some insight into the experiences of this subgroup, comes mainly in the form of blogs and books, where authors disclose from experience and opinion rather than on scholarly work with research evidence to support it (e.g., "Dating an Army Soldier Stories;" Site Visitors, 2010-2016). Without formal studies providing support and understanding to the experiences of married versus unmarried military couples, counselors and researchers cannot develop evidence-based interventions or recommendations and are left with only anecdotal results.

Implications for the Unmarried Significant Other

Unmarried significant others in the military are a unique subset of the military population. As previously mentioned, they are often left out of the military's consideration providing them with barriers to overcome, in understanding the military culture and becoming part of the military community; they do not experience the same cultural immersion experience since formal recognition by the military is only granted after marriage (Military.com, 2017). Therefore, military significant others, especially the unmarried, may fall more in line with the civilian culture of living or may be torn between the two.

Unmarried significant others may not be taken seriously in the military community as they are viewed as temporary (Mewes, 2012). With a marriage certificate, the military grants significant others access to military bases without being escorted, healthcare and support services, and shopping facilities just to name a few (Adler, 2010; DoD, 2012). Marriage also opens doors to information regarding the service member's status (Mewes, 2012). For example, if a couple is separated by deployment, the unmarried significant other will have limited access to information regarding his/her service member in comparison to a spouse. "Where is my service member going?" and "How is my service member's well-being?" are examples of questions that any significant other may want answers to, but these answers may be difficult to attain outside of marriage. Rules dictate keeping information *within* the military and thus, without being married, it is harder to be *in* this culture (Mewes, 2012; Pryce et al., 2012).

Not being fully accepted within one's culture can lead to a variety of difficult situations and negative associated feelings (Hays & Erford, 2013). In addition, significant others that come after military service may have even less exposure to and understanding of the unique military culture that is not seen in the civilian society (e.g., understanding ranks and structure; Exum et al., 2011; Hall, 2016, Pryce et al., 2012) and therefore have difficulties during transitions that are occurring in their life and relationship because of the military.

According to the Navy's Family Readiness Group [FRG] Handbook (2011), FRG membership includes "family members, Sailors, and civilians associated with the command and its personnel" (United States Navy, 2011, p. 18). By *civilians*, this resource would include significant others, though some FRG and military branches may have different rules and deciding factors on whether or not a military girlfriend/boyfriend is invited into the group. Special arrangements also need to be made to get said partner to events that take place on base as she/he cannot have a DoD ID (Bushatz, 2014; Finley, 2013). The unmarried significant other may be considered the service member's "family" and only sense of support, so including them in these cases would be crucial. Unfortunately for most, their only option for support is civilian counselors/resources; this can divide the unmarried military couple. For example, it is much harder to find appropriate couples counseling options. A civilian significant other would likely be unable utilize a military provider. When seeing a civilian counselor, there is no guarantee that the civilian counselor would (a) make special arrangements for the couple (e.g., have a time that worked with the service member's schedule), (b) be military culturally competent, or (c) be able to accept TRICARE insurance if that was the insurance they wanted to use. Depending on the level of perceived competency by the couple regarding civilian resource's ability to understand and work with the military aspect, the couple may become even more frustrated by misinterpreting the counselor's lack of relative competence as further proof of their pending failure as a couple.

Implications for the Service Member

Service members are trained for physical and psychological stressors. In the work setting, especially while deployed, they must face unique physical and psychological challenges, in addition to balancing their work schedules and family responsibilities (Beasley, MacDermid Wadsworth, & Watts, 2012). When issues arise in their relationship the service member may become distracted from the mission and/or see changes in their day-to-day functioning. This

distraction can lead to dangerous circumstances for a unit in the deployed setting, or even possibly in garrison, where depending on the task any distraction can have profoundly negative consequences for everyone involved. Furthermore, service members may be limited in time and resources available, such as reliable internet, to address any concerns that arise back home.

Unmarried service members have unique risks and emotional considerations regarding their relationships that are distinct from those of their married colleagues. The unidirectional relationship gateway that marriage represents implies that unmarried service members are more likely to have been in their relationship for a shorter duration prior to a deployment. This increases the likelihood that it could represent the first significant amount of time the couple spends apart. The lack of formalized commitment also lends itself strongly to the perception that a relationship is more tenuous. While marriage itself represents a formal commitment to a long-term relationship, it is only that more stable relationships are likely to result in marriage not that inherent stability is somehow conferred upon the signing of a legal document. On a relationship-by-relationship basis it is entirely likely that an individual service member may have as great a degree of emotional investment in a relationship as their married compatriots, while still contending with the perceived tenuousness of the couple's relationship.

Components of Military Deployments

As previously mentioned, individuals in the military are a unique population to understand given the foundations of military culture and the life changes that must be made during times of deployment. Deployments are made up of phases and have emotional stages associated with these; understanding both helps educate the military community as well as those outside of this community (i.e., researchers and mental health counselors) on what occurs. The DoD (2012) follows a four-phase deployment cycle for active duty: pre-deployment phase, deployment phase, post deployment phase, and reintegration phase. Pincus et al. (2001) and Morse (2006) have created a framework for emotional stages of deployment. This is a tool to help educate mental health providers and other interested individuals on the thoughts and feelings associated with deployment for the military service member, spouse, and children. Pincus et al. (2001) explained, in five stages, the emotional deployment cycle that occurs for those experiencing a deployment of six or more months. These five stages are: pre-deployment, deployment, sustainment, re-deployment, and lastly post-deployment (Pincus et al., 2001). Morse (2006) extended this cycle, to seven stages, to include the following: anticipation of departure, detachment and withdrawal, emotional disorganization, recovery and stabilization, anticipation of return, return adjustment and renegotiation, and lastly reintegration and stabilization. Both the deployment cycle and emotional stages will be further explored below.

While not the focus of this this article, it should be noted that these phases are substantively different for National Guard and Activated Reserve service members. The DoD phases for these groups are pre-deployment phase, deployment phase, post deployment phase, demobilization phase, and reintegration phase (DoD, 2012). The main differences occur during the start and end of the deployment cycle, where those in the National Guard or Reserve will be activated/deactivated during this time changing them from Active Duty and Guard/ Reserve status (DoD, 2012).

Department of Defense Deployment Cycle

The *pre-deployment phase* consists of typical training and constant monitoring of individual service members as well as unit performance. The service member and his/her family see a normal life at this point, where the service member works his/her day and has the ability to come home afterward. When official deployment orders are given, the phase picks up the pace with deployment-specific training, informational meetings, and health evaluations to ensure readiness; families see changes in their service member's availability and prepare for them to leave. This phase ends when the unit leaves home for their mission (DoD, 2012).

The *deployment phase* includes the unit's travel from home to the location of their mission. During this time service members, as well as their families, feel the effects of physical distance; this is a very anxiety-provoking time for both parties as they adjust to these changes. The deployment phase ends with the service member returns home from their mission (DoD, 2012).

The *post deployment phase* begins when the service members return to their home station. Service members undergo observation and a variety of debriefings and health evaluations (e.g., Post Deployment Health Assessment [PDHA] or mandatory decompression periods; Marine Corps Order 5351.1, 2013). During this process, they are referred to any necessary medical and/or mental health services as they return to their pre-deployment duties (DoD, 2012).

The *reintegration phase* starts when the service member returns back to the positions they held before deployment. The service members work to acclimate to the life they had before with their families, friends, and community (DoD, 2012). Time away may indicate the level of stress and difficulty this poses for both the service members and their families (e.g., three months away versus eight months).

Emotional Stages of Deployment

What happens emotionally during these stages specific to the service member, spouse, and couple will be shown alongside the case study below. While these stages show implications for service members and their spouses and children, the framework may need to be adapted in order to better understand unmarried military couples. For the purpose of this article, an example is given by the following case study which focuses on lived experiences as defined by Pincus' et al. (2001) five stages as this is easier to compare to the service member's deployment cycle; the four-stage DoD model. Though there are fewer stages associated with the Pincus et al. (2001) model, five as opposed to seven with Morse (2006), upon review each stage is generally more comprehensive, well defined, and more widely established in pre-existing literature on the topic.

Emotional Stages of Deployment Case Study Example

Bridget, a military significant other, is a 24-year-old, Caucasian, female. She is a full-time graduate student pursuing a Master's degree and also works full-time hours balancing several part-time jobs. Lucas, the service member, is a 29-year-old, Caucasian, male. He is an active duty Naval Officer, currently working in healthcare, assigned to an aviation unit in the

United States Marine Corps. Bridget and Lucas have been an unmarried military couple for approximately two years. Lucas was deployed around the end of their first year together and returned roughly six months later. The 6-month post-deployment period has just ended. Bridget resides with her family in her hometown in Pennsylvania. Lucas is also from this town. Since being assigned to the Marines, Lucas has resided in North Carolina, where he lives alone off-base. As a couple, they have endured a 6-month deployment where Lucas was supporting combat operations taking place in the Middle East. During his deployment, Lucas provided medical support to local military personnel and directly participated in combat sorties over the engagement zone. As Lucas and Bridget were not co-located at the beginning of the deployment, the total time apart ended up being closer to eight months. Their time through the emotional stages of deployment is shown by comparing and contrasting their lived experiences to the notable characteristics of the Pincus et al. (2001) emotional stages.

Pre-deployment Stage

The pre-deployment stage starts when the service member receives word that a deployment is in sight and lasts until the service member leaves home (Pincus et al., 2001). This stage is filled with planning, and training, in order to prepare for the deployment (Pincus et al., 2001). Commonly tied to this planning is (a) arguments among couples, (b) feelings of anxiety and loss, and (c) remoteness (Pincus et al., 2001). The couple knows the deployment is coming, but it is the unknown questions like, "what will it be like when they are away for so long?" that may be the hardest to handle (Pincus et al., 2001).

Significant other experience. Bridget saw this stage as a relationship decision making stage, even though she felt she had very little control over what happened with her relationship. Bridget experienced similar emotional feelings to military spouses of "loss" and "denial" during this stage (Pincus et al., 2001, p.1). She also experienced similar schedule changes, in her ability to see Lucas as his work and training schedule had picked up and she no longer expected him home and available during his usual times. There were a lot of arrangements to be made (e.g., stopping mail) and she had very little to do with this. The majority of the planning made was not shared as it did not impact her or need to involve her. This meant there was nothing to argue about, a significant event that Pincus et al. (2001) predicts happening among couples. Instead, Bridget felt detachment and worried that her relationship would not survive the time apart. Lucas was leaving at such a delicate time; she felt insecure in her relationship given what the year had to offer both of them. She felt frustrated that a conversation about the status of their relationship was not being prioritized and helpless in her role to support Lucas. She tried to be there for him on the day he left, but could not make the arrangements on her end to work with everything she was balancing. This plagued her with guilt, sadness, and anxiety as she felt, Lucas wanted her there. This stage was marked by a variety of strong negative emotions including, loss, denial, not belonging, helpless, fear of the unknown, guilt, sadness, and anxiety.

Service member experience. Lucas approached this stage with a "presumption of persistence." The pre-deployment period was, like for many active-duty service members, an incredibly busy time period (Pincus et al., 2001). Squadrons operate on a fairly strict deployment schedule and many come off training operations at the beginning of this period, leaving a small window prior to deployment to get everything done (DoD, 2012). During this time Lucas

reported being held in limbo due to geopolitical and military issues that left his unit wondering where they would end up, if anywhere at all. As such, he had to make sure that his squadron was medically prepared to operate in either of two regions. This lack of clarity led to increased anxiety in both the professional and personal realms leaving little time to focus on his relationship. He knew that he wanted to stay with Bridget and it was much easier to assume that Bridget wanted the same. The couple had briefly spoken on the topic a few times leading up to the deployment (by a month out Lucas knew where his unit would be going). Bridget seemed hesitant but amenable during their discussions. Lucas knew Bridget was worried about it, but it was much easier for him to focus on "the few fires that popped up rather than worrying about preventing anything from causing an issue." Lucas felt that they had always gotten along rather well and could not recall any significant arguments, a common problem during this time as mentioned by Pincus et al., (2001). Lucas believed that the distance helped with this. They could chat about the big things "but ignore all the mundane day-to-day stuff that can drive you nuts in a high stress situation."

        In preparation for his deployment Lucas began to get his personal affairs in order. He already had a pre-existing will and life insurance, both of which listed his parents as beneficiaries. Additionally, he wrote a Power of Attorney designating his parents to address concerns in his absence. Since he and Bridget were neither married nor engaged, Lucas felt that it would have been inappropriate to officially list her on anything. Lucas gave his parents a key to his apartment and left another with local friends, as they were the go-to contact if something popped up. Bridget was only a "just-in-case" resource.

        When the time came to leave for deployment Lucas did not have anyone there to see him off. Bridget was busy and neither she nor his parents could get to the departure. Regardless, he felt it would have been difficult, though not impossible, to get them on base.

Deployment Stage

        The deployment stage starts when the service member leaves home and throughout the first month away (Pincus et al., 2001). Often this stage is filled with strong emotions like anxiety and/or no emotions at all (e.g., feeling numb) while families adjust to the service member being gone (Pincus et al., 2001).

        Significant other experience. Bridget experienced the deployment stage similar to what Pincus et al. (2001) had described, experiencing a number of strong emotions at times and no emotions at other times. Strong negative emotions included anxiety, grief, and guilt. Anxiety was attributed to *change* and *thinking* about her relationship, which was plagued with grief at the loss she was experiencing and guilt in how she left things (e.g., "I should have said this." "I should have done that."). She had to adjust like everyone else to the limited communication through unreliable modes. She experienced shock being unable to talk to Lucas on a day-to-day basis which was how it had been since the start of their relationship. She had many questions related to his wellbeing, such as how he was doing, how the travel went, how the conditions were where he deployed. She also had so much to share about how things were going for her and on how she was coping based upon how they had left things. It was already an anxiety provoking time for her nearing graduation. Having Lucas leave further exacerbated the anxiety. When she was

finally able to talk to Lucas through the WhatsApp application, it never felt like the right time or right way to share her true feelings. In the back of her mind she had fears of distracting her service member from his important work by explaining any sort of negative situation or emotion with him. The time zone difference frustrated her significantly, because Lucas could only talk when she was working and talking was always on his terms. The first month was full of adjustments, but time flew by, and there was a lot of relief in that she was getting the deployment over with.

Service member experience. Lucas described this phase as "perpetually busy with disjointed and offset communication." He felt as though the characteristics of this stage as described by Pincus et al. (2001) applied loosely to him, at best. The first month for Lucas was filled with a lot of activity and very long days, along with the rest of his squadron, who were also very busy during the initial phases of the deployment. The daily schedule was 12+ hours long and with few days that could have been considered *light*. The workload, at times, resulted in periods of feeling overwhelmed or adrift.

There were some communication concerns with Bridget during this time. Lucas' new time zone was Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) +3 which meant that he was eight hours ahead of Bridget. He was also now on an international cell network that his phone could no longer operate on. A large part of the first month of his deployment was trying to identify the how and when to best get in touch with Bridget. What had previously been a reliable avenue of communication had suddenly become much more tenuous and several of the mechanisms that had allowed them to be responsive to one another were now much less reliable. They had generally used text messaging as their primary form of communication prior to deployment. A brief attempt at email seemed cumbersome and they ended up communicating through the WhatsApp application when Lucas was able to get onto a Wi-Fi network. Despite the communication challenges, Lucas never perceived a threat to their relationship during this time period, nor was there any need to try and stay connected with what was going on in North Carolina.

Sustainment Stage

The sustainment stage starts one month into the deployment until the month before the service member is expected to return home (Pincus et al., 2001). This stage is filled with readjusting to new life roles and filling the gaps with new routines, and needed support (Pincus et al., 2001). Support may be crucial in this stage because of its length and common problems that come with that (e.g., miscommunications, family difficulties, etc.; Pincus et al., 2001).

Significant other experience. Bridget wondered in this stage, about the status of her relationship and where it was going. Her experience was similar to what Pincus et al. (2001) had described in that the lengthy time associated with this stage was spent readjusting and reaching out for support. She felt strongly about needing support now, as her inability to cope with all of life's stressors (e.g., worrying about Lucas and their relationship, school, work, etc.) was starting to impact her wellbeing and the work that she was expected to do. This was also where major relationship problems started for her. Bridget explained that during this stage it was easy to allow space to grow between her and Lucas and that at times she welcomed the space. Space gave her

leverage to end the relationship, given that they no longer shared meaningful conversations, a time zone, or a life. After an opportunity to talk to Lucas, she felt more positive about the relationship, but then the long period of silence that followed this conversation started the vicious thinking cycle again that left her wanting out of it. One thing she worried about was having an argument during their conversations because she knew there was no easy way of *fixing it* after the fact, so this led her to censor what she shared with him though there was a lot more that she wanted to about their relationship, her personal life, and her problems in school. Bridget explained that she often doubted her relationship as it often felt uncontrollable and not reciprocal*;* communication was always when it worked best for Lucas and minimal information was shared from his side.

She was not prepared for the challenges that the time zone differences posed which had Bridget and Lucas on opposite schedules, creating constant feelings of frustration and anxiety trying to balance it. She was also very unprepared to answer the tough questions people asked: "How is Lucas?", "When will you see Lucas again?", "What is next for you two?".

Bridget listed her main supports as her family and one good friend. As a significant other, she had very few supports in her area who *fully understood*. She explained that she had friends who understood the difficulties balancing school, a career, and personal life, but that they did not understand the military side of things in her relationship. Therefore, Bridget did not discuss her relationship nor the impacts of the deployment on her, which made it an isolating experience that led to changes in physical health and drastic mood changes that cycled from highs and lows. Common and notable feelings for her were of guilt, frustration, anxiety, restlessness, exhaustion, difficulties with decision making, and feeling single and alone; typical physical symptoms were associated with these emotional feelings.

Bridget explained that as a significant other, she was often torn between the civilian lifestyle she knew well and craved to be part of, and the military lifestyle that was partially a choice at this point since there was no *official commitment* to her service member. Bridget noted that this lack of commitment meant she could be as selfish as she wanted when decisions needed to be made for the future (e.g., applying to a PhD program), but that decision-making was especially difficult when wondering whether or not Lucas should be consulted.

Service member experience. During the sustainment phase of the deployment Lucas settled in to the "day-to-day grind." He began to perceive days as generally blurred together as any collective group of days was largely identical to any other. This included not simply daily work-related activities, but also leisure activities, physical training, and dietary options. As these new routines became more established, he began to feel more in control and readily able to cope with events and minor irregularities that had arisen. This perception of routine setting and changes in ability to handle his situation is in accordance with Pincus et al. (2001).

Lucas felt an increased sense of closeness with the Marines of his squadron during this period as well. There was a notable increase in daily interaction with the personnel in his care, especially on the enlisted side, as compared to back in garrison. This was attributed to his establishing of a "flight line clinic" in the squadron work spaces rather than working out of a

separate building on another part of the base. Additionally, he grew in level of trust and reliance on his abilities given his availability and the lack of alternative healthcare options.

Lucas reported a similarly routine interaction with Bridget over the course of the sustainment phase. Once he had established a means of regular communication, he felt that it was largely similar to how they interacted prior to deployment. There were obvious differences regarding when they could interact due to the time differences, but conversations were similar. Daily interaction was based on text messages sent through WhatsApp. There were also occasional video or voice chat sessions. Video and voice were generally more difficult to organize due to the time difference and Lucas reported that he only felt once or twice as though their relationship was really strained and necessitated a prompt video/voice chat. He received regular letters from Bridget, averaging to nearly one per week as well as a few care packages throughout the deployment. He wrote many fewer, only three, letters back to her during this time period. His perception was that she was very busy and that, since interaction with him only made up a small part of her daily activities; that she was generally keeping active and coping well. Lucas reported the belief that though he was handling the increased separation and strain of the deployment on their relationship better than Bridget was, he never truly felt as though their status as a couple was threatened.

During the 3rd month of the deployment, there was some civil unrest that occurred in the country where Lucas was based. This time was especially busy for Lucas given the additional planning that was required to deal with the increased uncertainty. Lucas was able to maintain contact with Bridget through use of the local cellular networks, but was unable to share many details of the situation.

Re-deployment Stage

The re-deployment stage marks the month before the service member is expected to return home, and this time is filled with enthusiasm of his arrival and nervousness by what has changed since (Pincus et al., 2001).

Significant other experience. Bridget explained that this stage for her was very similar to the stage as defined by Pincus et al. (2001) and surrounded concern of "What has changed?" She noted that she felt the enthusiasm and nervousness (Pincus et al., 2001) for Lucas coming home in addition to feelings of guilt and anxiety in trying to make things work to go see him. For her, she was in the last semester before graduation so taking the time off and making the long trip was one obstacle. A second obstacle she faced was getting onto the base where Lucas would be returning. Those who are unmarried face specific obstacles to gaining base access and these were outlined in e-mails sent by Lucas' Family Readiness Officer. Ultimately, Bridget made the decision not to be there when Lucas returned, hoping that Lucas understood how hard the decision had been for her to make. The decision also led to the concern of if Bridget could not see Lucas when he returned, when would she be able to see him again; they had already been separated for far longer than most couples were in Lucas' squadron.

Service member experience. Lucas describes his re-deployment as somewhat atypical compared to the married members of his squadron and that as described by Pincus et al. (2001)

given the fact that he would be returning to living alone. Unlike his peers, he had no specific concerns about changes to his home life or major pre-return decisions to be made. He reports being very excited to come home; however, that excitement was tempered by the understanding that he would be unable to see Bridget for at least another month or two. During this phase, there had been a lot of communication back and forth regarding the topic of his homecoming. He had hoped that Bridget would be able to be there for his return; however, it quickly became apparent that the amount of time away from school would have been deleterious to Bridget. Even if she were able to come to his homecoming, there were mild concerns that she would be unable to get on base to be there when he landed. He was fairly confident that that particular concern could have been reasonably surmounted; however, given the amount of effort it would have taken Bridget to get there, the consequences of an unforeseen hiccup were very significant. Despite his understanding of, and agreement with, the situation, there was still some small measure of disappointment when he was finally able to return.

Shortly before his return he engaged in a significantly increased level of preparatory activities such as calling to resume utility services, ensuring continuity of mail, and research into getting a new car. He also began to plan some basic return activities such as "restauranting" and interacting with friends. These social plans did not involve Bridget at all.

Re-deployment activities with his significant other meant returning to their usual methods of communication. There was a large improvement in their ability to interact due to his relocation to the same time zone. He and Bridget began sketching tentative plans on how to make their reunion happen. Eventually, it was decided that they would see each other again during his post-deployment leave about a month after his return.

Post-deployment Stage

The post-deployment stage starts when the service member is home and lasts for about three to six months after a deployment (Pincus et al., 2001). This stage starts with excitement over the return of the service member, but this feeling can quickly turn to tension, when roles and routines need to be adjusted again amongst the couple and/or family (Pincus et al., 2001).

Significant other experience. Bridget explained that this stage for her surrounded the concern, "Now what?" Bridget had no idea what to expect in her relationship; she knew that she held very negative thoughts and feelings about it during the deployment and knew that it was going to likely take a significant amount of time to adjust on her end. As mentioned before, Bridget was seeing major changes in many aspects of her life. After graduation, she had a full-time job lined up and planned to move in with a friend until she received word about whether or not she was accepted into a PhD program. Bridget experienced excitement, nervousness, and awkwardness when she reunited with Lucas for the first time after nearly eight months apart. The rest of the time afterward felt normal. Towards the end of the post-deployment timeframe, Lucas and Bridget had a serious conversation about getting engaged; this conversation sparked unresolved issues in their relationship. Given that Lucas was going away for several months for training, their relationship felt put on hold again for Bridget. She did not feel circumstances allowed her to have such a serious conversation, much like she felt in the deployed setting.

Bridget's experience during this stage differed from how it was detailed by Pincus et al. (2001) because her roles and routines did not change nor really need to be adjusted given Lucas' return home; they both had their separate lives and continued on with them. It also sparked serious conversations about the status of her relationship with Lucas.

Service member experience. Lucas began his discussion of post-deployment with a report that he did indeed experience some level of the disappointment that he was expecting when nobody was there to greet him on his return. This was tempered by the fact that it was a perfect day, he was back on U.S. soil, and there were so many happy people around him that it was hard to dwell on it. He states that he texted Bridget the moment that his aircraft touched down. Overall, he remembers the day fondly.

Pincus et al. (2001) described the return home for many; often there is a family to welcome the service member home and a sense of readjusting to living with the family with the service member wanting responsibilities back in the home. Lucas noted a profound sense of relief and peace when he was finally able to get back to his apartment and lock the door behind him and he perseverated somewhat on the feeling of control in his environment; free from the expectation of intrusion. As he lived alone, there was no concern about spatial conflict. He was simply able to establish new routines, and for several weeks his deployment gear remained scattered around the apartment without concern.

Throughout this stage, Lucas reports that he and Bridget were able to spend roughly one month together across the various holiday and leave periods. He reports that their initial encounter was very happy for him, but there was a slight "feeling out" period that he had to contend with. His response was to push through and try and get things to a new normal, "hopefully the same as the old normal," as quickly as possible. He feels this may have been more effective for him than for Bridget. That said, he reports that he never felt any "real doubt" as to the continuation of their relationship. He held the belief that they had just come through what he hoped was the hardest period of their relationship and, since they were still together, he was confident that they would remain so at least for the short-term foreseeable future.

Given the transient nature of their togetherness, Lucas declined any perception of loss of control though he acknowledges that Bridget had a lot going on during this period. He says that he was aware that she was likely experiencing some control concerns and that he simply tried to be supportive, especially during times when they were not together. He perceived a period of decreased communication after the conclusion of their time together; this coincided with a disagreement that they had had while discussing engagement options. It was further complicated, however, by Lucas's squadron again deploying, this time to a series of training missions (2.5 months in duration) within the U.S., roughly 4 months after his return from overseas. During this period, Lucas again reports that he never felt that his relationship was threatened on his end, though he was worried that Bridget was considering if she was willing/ready to take a more seriously commitment. This stage markedly differed from experiences as described by Pincus et al. (2001) in that Lucas never identified major concerns relating to renegotiation of routines or a loss of independence, largely due to their lack of cohabitation.

Discussion

Military couples, both married and unmarried, experience hardships associated with military culture and lifestyle. During times of deployment, military couples live through emotional stages that share both similarities and differences when comparing married military couples to unmarried military couples. There is existing research and resources dedicated to military service members, spouses, and military families; however, research and support is lacking when unmarried military significant others are concerned, regardless of their importance as a loved one who helps support their service member and ultimately the military's mission.

The experience of Bridget and Lucas, as they progressed through the stages defined by Pincus et al. (2001), highlighted several of the key discrepancies between married and unmarried military couples. These differences were not simply with regards to their relationship, but also regarding specific events and scenarios relevant to both the significant other and service member. Bridget noted reoccurring themes such as being uninvolved, unprepared, and unsupported in her detailed experience throughout the deployment cycle; these themes differed in nature when compared to spouse descriptions in Pincus et al. (2001). If included more in the deployment cycle from the pre-deployment stage she may have felt better prepared for what was to come. She could have felt more support if involved in the FRG, a possibility if she had lived closer to base and had individuals who were willing to sponsor her at base activities. A big difference Bridget faced when compared to spouses, was that she commonly faced concerns about her *relationship status* and how it could easily change negatively (e.g., a breakup) given the distance and multiple stressors. Because of this threat, she had a more difficult time speaking honestly about relationships issues and with decision-making. Being unable to express feelings, Bridget suffered from both physical and psychological duress. Lucas likely enjoyed the more typical deployment experience of the partners though, upon review, significant deviations from that of a married service member are also identifiable. Perhaps one of the most easily observed was his exclusion of Bridget from much of the pre-deployment and planning processes. This was likely deliberate, as it can be inferred from some of his responses that he felt involving Bridget in tasks such as establishing his Power of Attorney and a care plan for his apartment would have been inappropriate. That said, during his feedback he rarely noted specific concerns regarding the durability of his relationship with Bridget though he regularly endorsed the belief that Bridget was having a tougher time than he was. It is unclear why Lucas did not seem to equate Bridget's difficulties with a major threat to his relationship though the authors postulate that this may have been secondary to the distinctly independent nature of their long-distance relationship. Lucas's biggest concerns regarding his relationship seemed to relate to failures to meet perceived norms of deployment, notably the lack of company on both his departure and homecoming.

Implications for Research

It is clear that continued research is needed to (a) provide updated information on the emotional stages of deployment as experienced by military service members, spouses, families, and unmarried military significant others and (b) consider and differentiate between married/unmarried military couples' experiences in order to fill in the current gap in research. The emotional stages of deployment, cited and used in this article and in research and practice, were originally created sixteen years ago by Pincus et al. (2001) and has not seen major updates

since Morse (2006) eleven years ago. Many changes have occurred over this time that could drastically change the way individuals experience deployments (e.g., changes in ability to communicate given advancements in technology; Seidel, Franks, Murphy, & MacDermid Wadsworth, 2014). The emotional stages should be redefined based on the new wars the U.S. is fighting (e.g., The War on Terror) and major changes that have occurred since their creation.

Military significant others face unique challenges stuck in-between military and civilian lifestyles. As this case study example helps illustrate, the emotional stages of deployment *are* different, for those directly attached to the military (i.e., spouses) versus those who are not (i.e., significant others); however, more research supporting these differences should be done. Once this occurs, the thoughts and emotions should be laid out specifically for significant others in the military and show similarities and differences so that counselors can be better educated on issues and appropriately intervene. For example, the pre-deployment stage marked a time where several major decisions needed to be made (e.g., designating a Power of Attorney and continuing the relationship) that are more complicated for an unmarried couple. Throughout the stages, as times get hard, the ability to end the relationship exists as an "easy way out." If more support is given to significant others through resources and education, devastating consequences to relationships, like a breakup during deployment, may be prevented. Through resources such as counseling services, the unmarried couple could learn strategies to improve their communication skills. When couples learn how to communicate their thoughts and feelings open and honestly, they can provide better reciprocal support to one another during long separations. Long separations often feel like there is little to no support, especially for the unmarried significant other. Social support was limited for the significant other is this case study example. Bridget explained her deployment experience was "isolating." No one in her primarily civilian community understood the emotional and physical impacts on her related to Lucas being deployed to a conflict area. Research has shown that social support is an important part of coping for military spouses and social support is likely to be defined differently for military spouses given the unique culture that they are in (Vincenzes & Author, 2016; Vincenzes, Author, & Raymond, 2016). Research can help uncover what is needed for military significant others who are more reliant on civilian resources given their inability to access those who are specific to spouses and/or require military status through marriage.

Furthermore, it should be noted that there is a subset of military couples that will choose to marry shortly before a deployment, change of station, or other major military transition. While these couples fall outside of the scope of the subgroup proposed by the authors, they may represent a similarly unique population that warrants further research. The motivation for marriage, including potentially avoiding some of the difficulties presented by authors in the case study example, as well as the vulnerabilities and durability of these relationships, is relatively unique among civilian and/or other military couples. This subgroup may, therefore, represent an interesting and important avenue for investigation.

Implications for Counseling Practice

Given that there is a continued need for more professional counselors with the competency to work with the military population (Hall, 2016), this article supports that both civilian and military counselors need to be educated in military culture, the deployment cycles

and associated emotional stages, and the implications these have on the service member, military spouses/ families, and unmarried significant others. Counselors can be a critical support for the military population as they struggle with military-related issues (e.g., psychological and physical symptoms of stress, relationships, separations, etc.); though they cannot competently and ethically do this without first understanding the culture (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014, C.2.a.). Individuals who are part of the military culture differ from other cultures in patterns of thinking, behaving, and living, knowing that the military entity must be considered at the forefront of all (Exum, Coll, & Weiss, 2011; Hall, 2016). The impact of deployment cycles may further complicate the functioning of an individual and/or couple in this culture, bringing normal but negative associated emotional consequences. Understanding both military culture and the impacts of deployment cycles are a critical piece to civilian counselors and military counselors appropriately providing support (Exum et al., 2011; Hall, 2016).

Civilian counselors may be one of the few resources that unmarried military significant others have easy access to. Many, like Bridget, are unable to use spouse- and base-specific resources. Many, like Bridget, live far away from a military community and are surrounded by people who do not understand military lifestyle. Furthermore, many individuals, like Bridget, endure negative psychological and physical consequences as part of the deployment experience. Military counselors have the access and ability to help the service member at all times when needed; however, this military counselor may not have the access and ability to treat the couple and/or unmarried significant other when issues occur. Lastly, with this education and understanding, civilian and military counselors can (a) help educate the public about challenges that military spouses and significant others face, noting the distinct differences, (b) advocate that more services be provided to significant others in the areas they work, and (c) appropriately intervene in counseling practice; and help further this area of research as discussed.

Recommendations for Further Research

The authors propose that (a) continued research is needed to support the emotional stages of deployment as defined by Pincus et al. (2001) and Morse (2006) given that some aspects of these phases are outdated, (b) researchers separate married from unmarried military couples to make comparisons, (c) counselors are educated on the important differences between direct military spouses/families and those who are significant others and not fully accepted into this culture. The authors recognize that, while every relationship is unique, the experience of Lucas and Bridget may have been complicated by their long-distance relationship. In the absence of published data regarding the frequency of unmarried relationships, let alone the proximity of the partners, it is impossible to determine how common this subgroup is among the military population.

Conclusion

In order to fill in the gaps in research, and gain a better understanding of their support needs in counseling and other healthcare settings, more focus needs to be placed on the lived experiences of unmarried military couples. A new set of guidelines for the emotional stages of deployment should be created for researchers and counseling practitioners to use as a starting point; these should be updated given the time period changes and differentiations between

married and unmarried couples' lived experiences in the military. Both researchers and counselors can play a critical role in the development of evidence based protocols to better support the wellbeing of unmarried military couples and the military community as a whole.

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Examining Postsecondary Student Veterans' Awareness of, Access to, and Use of Veteran Specific Career Services

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigated student Veterans' awareness of, access to, and use of military Veteran specific career development programming and services that are necessary to enhance their transitional career readiness while in higher education at a large public university. This study examined how these student Veterans may identify and realize how such campus Veteran career services can help them to meet their career goals. Participants were former military service members currently enrolled as full-time students. Data was gathered from six individual interviews, observational protocols, and demographic surveys. This study correctly assumed that the participating student Veteran would identify career barriers and seek university services. Resulting implications for policy, recommendations for practice, and implications for future research are discussed.

Keywords: student Veteran, higher education, career development, career services

Nearly two million individuals have served in the U.S. Armed Forces since the attacks of September 11, 2001 making many of these military Veterans eligible to use the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008—better known as the Post-9/11 GI Bill (Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010). Veterans use these benefits to aid their transition from military experience to civilian careers. Hundreds of thousands of current and former service members enter college each year and their ranks are expected to swell as several major US military engagements overseas wind down (Callahan & Jarrat, 2014). Numerous papers address the recent Veteran population's strengths, needs, and challenges and suggest higher education institutions (i.e., administration, faculty, and staff) consider these when developing programs to support student Veterans' educational goals (O'Herrin, 2011; Ryan, Carlstrom, Hughey, & Harris, 2011; Steele et al., 2010; Vacchi, 2012). However, these articles do not extensively present or model student Veteran career development or career preparedness in a Veteran specific manner. Instead, the above referenced papers point out student Veterans, just like non-traditional or transfer students, need individualized assistance in reference to housing, academic,

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social, financial aid, and other such issues like transferring military training and experience into college credits. This study adds to this discussion by showing postsecondary student Veteran career development or career transitional assistance must attend to the individualized strengths, needs, and challenges of today's higher education student Veterans.

A central theme of this research involves the development of a comprehensive, well-connected, and effective Veteran centered employability program significant to human development by providing these Veterans a fully integrated and effective model of resources necessary to ensure employability within the civilian workforce. Of importance for this study is McLagan's (1983) definition of human resource development (HRD) as "the integrated use of training and development, career development and organization development to improve individual and organizational performance" (as cited in Egan, Upton, & Lynham, 2006, p. 443). McLagan's definition provides a lens through which to view the student Veteran's engagement with career centered Veteran specific higher educational resources (i.e., career development) to improve individual performance (i.e., meet desired career goals).

Like HRD, career development has multiple definitions (Egan et al., 2006), and "is often presented as providing major structural support for the practice and scholarly endeavors associated with HRD" (p. 443). The following two definitions are most relevant to this study:
- Career development is a balancing operation—recognizing and meeting the needs of the individual while recognizing and responding to outer forces and a lifelong process of working out a synthesis between the self and the reality, opportunities, and limitations of the world. (Kroll, Dinklage, Lee, Morley, & Wilson, 1970, p. 17)
- Career development is an ongoing process and action toward personal work and life goals. Development means growth, continuous acquisition and application of one's skills. Career development is the outcome of the individual's career planning and the organization's provision of support and opportunities, ideally a collaborative process. (Simonsen, 1994, p. 1).

Literature Review

Research indicates there is a higher rate of unemployment among recently separated U.S. military Veterans compared to other unemployed populations (Humensky, Jordan, Stroupe, & Hynes, 2012; Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2013; U.S. Department of Labor, 2013). It is also known there are significant barriers to employment within this Veteran population (Aquino, 2013; Booe, 2005; Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2013). Swanson and Woitke (1997) define career barriers as events or conditions within the person (internal) or in the person's environment (external) that make career progress difficult. An example of an internal career (or employability) barrier or challenge is a student Veteran who is not aware of institutional Veteran centered supports, resources, services, and programs (i.e., programming and services) that can help them to meet their career goals. This example is important because research shows Veterans have trouble translating military skills into civilian credentials and employment (Van Horn, Edwards, & Greene, 2015). DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) found a college's career services center has an important role in helping transitioning student Veterans integrate, develop, and prepare for civilian employment. Relatedly, for those military Veterans who wish to enter the civilian workforce using the traditional higher education

pathway, there is the following transitional step that student Veterans and higher education institution officials must consider: how student Veterans deals with unique barriers while transitioning from military service through higher education toward civilian employment.

Examples of unique or individualized issues that both parties (i.e., student veterans and higher education institution officials) should consider are:
- How does an employment resume differ than that of one that is non-military in terms of illustrating and describing military work experiences, training or acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs; The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning [CAEL], 2013)?
- How do military veterans connect to those potential employers and recruiters differently than that of the non-military (or civilian counterpart) occupational candidate and in what, if any, specific way (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011)?
- What are the procedures or process, if any exist, for the student Veteran's particular higher education institution to recognize past military training (programs) or college work and award equivalency to them (The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), 2013)?

In moving forward, the author believes a starting question that both parties should ask is, "What are student Veterans' strengths, needs, and challenges during their transition concerning their career development?" Thus, this study intends to provide substantive understanding to this generalized question as there is a necessity to examine U.S. military student Veterans' awareness of Veteran specific career programming and services on [a large public university] campus in terms of institutional availability, access, and effectiveness toward helping student Veterans with their career development or career preparation.

Purpose Statement

This qualitative study investigated the perspectives of multiple U.S. military student Veterans enrolled at a large public university. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to understand how these student Veterans transition and overcome any career development related obstacles or challenges as well as how they become aware of and use any student Veteran postsecondary career preparation or development programming and services [see (b.) and (c.) in Figure 1]. As a result, this study stands to examine how the Veteran population finds it more difficult than other U.S. employment populations in successfully transitioning into new employment, and accordingly, a successful social reintegration (Humensky et al., 2012).

Figure 1 is intended to illustrate the potential career or professional development pathway of a student Veteran's journey in higher education. First, student Veterans arrive on campus and orient to university student life [shown in (a.)]; second, they become aware of real and perceived employment challenges/barriers [shown in (b.)]; third, they learn about available campus career/professional development resources [shown in (c.)]; and finally, they graduate and transition into the civilian workforce [shown in (d.)].
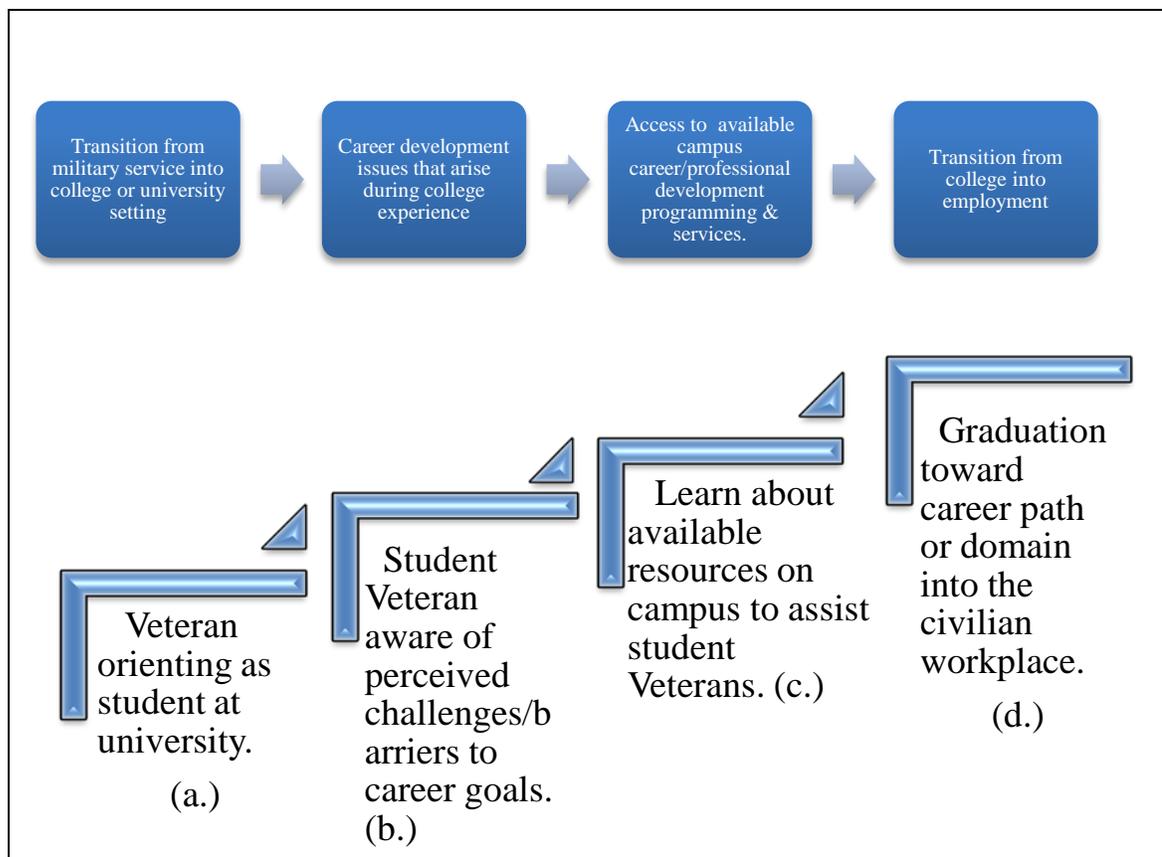
Figure 1. A military Veteran's pathway from military to higher education to employment. *Note*: This figure illustrates the potential career or professional development pathway of a student Veteran's journey in higher education.

Research Question

This study's research question was: How do student Veterans at a large public university become aware of and use available student Veteran oriented career development or career preparation resources (i.e., Veteran career services) in helping them to meet their career goals?

Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986) provides a useful theoretical framework for this study. His theory is comprised of three aspects: self-efficacy, self-regulation, and goals. Figure 2 illustrates how social cognitive theory is used to guide this study. Social cognitive theory provides a three dimensional structure to guide the data analysis. For example, a student Veteran may possess both a high efficacy and a high outcome expectancy toward identifying and using available college or campus resources to effectively deal with encountered potential or perceived career development challenges or barriers. This may occur when the student Veteran learns where to go for a campus career resource by word of mouth from another student Veteran who has experienced the same career development difficulty and satisfactorily resolved it. This student Veteran may experience such effects as productive engagement or personal satisfaction. However, the opposite experience of frustration, disappointment, and disassociation may occur

for the student Veteran, when under the same circumstances, this student Veteran cannot identify and use available campus resources. This latter experience most likely would result in low efficacy and low outcome expectancy. Thus, this student Veteran may experience such effects as resignation or apathy.
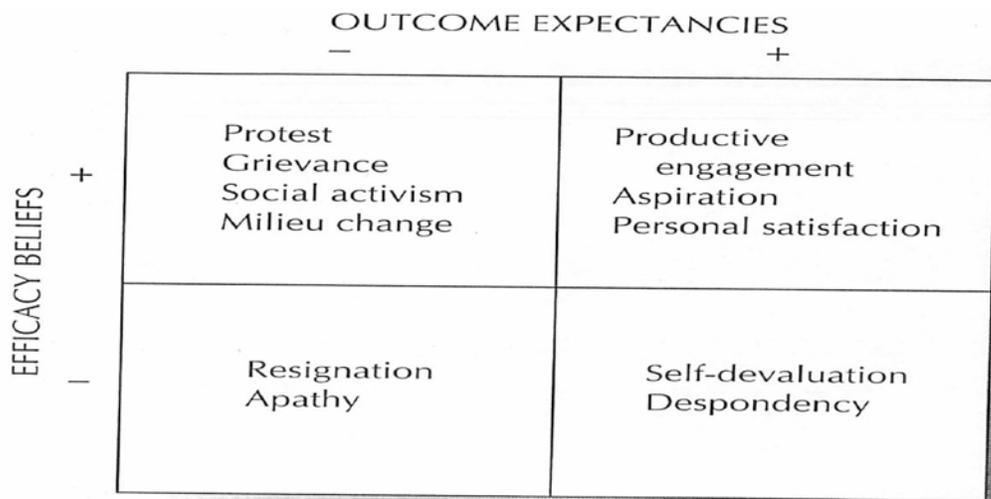
Figure 2. Efficacy vs. Outcomes Expectancies. (Adapted from Bandura's (1982, p. 140) Interactive effects of self-percepts of efficacy and response outcome expectations on behavior and affective reactions).

Methodology

Creswell (2014) contends the plan or proposal to conduct research involves the intersection of philosophy, research design, and specific methods used within a framework of research intended to approach and explore a study's research problem, research question(s), and purpose. This study's methodology used what Creswell contends to make up a research framework by explaining this intersection of inquiry. This section elaborates on this research framework by describing the philosophical paradigm, the research design, and research methods used to compose this study.

Philosophical Paradigm

For this empirical study, the author used social constructivism as a philosophical paradigm to connect the research design and methods and this study's research focus and research question toward generating resulting findings, themes, and conclusions. According to Creswell (2014), researchers use social constructivism in order to understand the subjective meaning, reality, and experience of those individuals being researched based upon expressed views, especially through the use of open-ended questions. Creswell (2014) continues by stating:

> Researchers recognize that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation, and they position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences. The researcher's intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world. Rather than starting with theory (as in postpositivism), inquirers generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning. (p. 8)

While this author has a background that includes being a student Veteran, the author has not used military related educational benefits for decades, is quite a bit older than and does not socialize with the younger student Veterans attending the university. However, there is a shared understanding of what it means to be a student Veteran but this aspect helps the author better understand the qualitative (i.e., rich, varied, and complex) detail given by the interviewees for the purpose of generating or inductively developing theory or pattern of meaning.

Research Design

The inquiry approach used for this research is case study, which is a qualitative research design that can be used to systematically study a phenomenon. Merrian (1990) defines a case study to be an examination of specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group. Since research, broadly defined, is systematic inquiry and case study can be used to test or build theory, incorporate random or purposeful sampling, and include qualitative data (Merrian, 1990), a case study research design is used to explore and understand the meaning that the participants, whether individually or collectively, assign toward this study's research problem, purpose, and question. This study used purposeful sampling in order to "best help the researcher understand the problem and research question" (Creswell, 2014, p.189). Specifically, the author recruited five interviewees for this study by contacting the university student Veteran registered student organization (RSO) that is affiliated with the national chapter of the Student Veterans of America. After contacting its members, the RSO leadership provided email contact information to the author to establish which student Veteran members would voluntarily be the participants of this study. The author recruited the sixth interviewee at a campus facility after learning this student Veteran was prior service military and currently participates in the university Army ROTC.

Research Methods

This study used multiple individual interviews, demographic surveys, and field notes for the purposes of this research. Specifically, this study's data came from six individual student Veteran interview transcripts, their demographic surveys, and associated observational protocols taken from field notes as indicated by Bogdan and Biklen (2007). The interview format used for this study was semi-structured, which according to Cohen and Crabtree (2006) can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data. An institutional human subject research review process approved this study. Finally, an open coding and focal coding data analysis scheme, as offered by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), was used to develop what was interpreted to be categories, themes, or patterns from this collected data. Resultant analysis developed this study's four emergent thematic units, which are provided in the implications for policy and recommendations for practice section below.

Assumptions

This study assumed that the participating student Veteran would identify some type of career development barrier while enrolled at this particular university and would seek appropriate Veteran career services on campus. This assumption was correct for each of the participating student Veterans interviewed for this study in that each participant identified career-

oriented employability barriers or challenges (real or perceived), which higher education career programming and services can help with. Additionally, all, but one student Veteran, were not only aware of Veteran career services but had accessed and satisfactorily used these services on campus.

Implications for Policy and Recommendations for Practice

Specifically, the data gleaned from this study can help to inform the policies and practices from both a top down manner (i.e., higher education officials) as well as a bottom up manner (i.e., postsecondary student Veterans). A few specific policy implications intended to impact practices involving Veteran career services that ought to be considered were:

1. To what extent are student Veterans able to be aware of and navigate through the Veteran career services offered?
2. To what extent does or can higher education administration ease student Veteran transition in terms of providing the necessary Veteran career services that student Veterans require?

The four themes or thematic units-of-analysis that emerged from this study's data were: student Veteran awareness of Veteran career services, student Veteran access to Veteran career services, student Veteran identified career-oriented employability barriers that higher education can help with, and student Veteran satisfaction with using Veteran career services. Table 1 illustrates resulting vignettes provided by each interviewee that were based upon the study's four thematic units supporting this study's assumption.

The following list, and its subsequent elucidation, indicates how existing higher educational policy and practice may be improved based upon this study's four emergent thematic units. This list is meant to help the reader understand how the above detailed policy implications can be transformed into practical application at an institutional level for the purpose of either providing or enhancing Veteran career services.

- Cooperation with stakeholders in identifying necessary Veteran career services.
- Continuing currently offered Veteran career services.
- Expand upon currently offered Veteran career services.
- Develop criteria involving student Veteran satisfaction with Veteran career services.

Cooperation with Stakeholders in Identifying Necessary Veteran Career Services

This study's findings showed participation in the local student Veteran registered student organization and in a type of a formal, structured new student Veteran institutional orientation was beneficial to student Veterans in terms of attending to the individualized strengths, needs, and challenges of today's higher education student Veterans. The involvement and commitment from both parties involved (i.e., the university administration and the student Veterans) is necessary when it comes to understanding where incoming student Veterans are in terms of where they are at with their career development and transitional preparation and where they need to be concerning their career development and career readiness by the time they graduate and enter the civilian workforce. This means cooperation and involvement between these representatives of the campus student Veteran population and university officials should be

Table 1. *Data Source and Thematic Units Vignette.*

	Student Veteran <u>awareness of</u> Veteran career services	Student Veteran <u>access to</u> Veteran career services	Student Veteran identified career-oriented <u>employability barriers</u> that higher education can help with.	Student Veteran <u>satisfaction with using</u> Veteran career services
Student Veteran #1	Believes that the CD of all student Veterans is new to this campus in terms of meeting transitional needs.	Noted concern of specific colleges' career services may not know how to assist student Veteran specific career preparation.	University admin. needs to be a military Veteran to be able to effectively offer CD related "know how" info to student Veterans.	"I know of at least 3 student Veterans who have gotten jobs out of it." – as a result of their direct relationship with the Career Center.
Student Veteran #2	Made aware by a 2014 new student Veteran specific orientation class & by notifications of VSCS	Accessed (3 of 5) of the Career Center's inceptive VSCS workshop series that were offered and the Career Center for info on economics research.	University needs to repeat military specific job/career fair. Offer mock interviewing assistance. Have military Veteran to offer CD related "know how" info to student Veterans.	"I think every experience I've had with the Career (Center) Services has been good because I've gained knowledge that I didn't have before."
Student Veteran #3	Made aware by a 2015 new student Veteran specific orientation class. Mentioned university offered VSCS resume building and interviewing assistance workshops.	Has accessed a fall 2015 resume development one-on-one session at the Career Center. Attended a nationally marketed career fair in Nashville, TN. Learned about new student Veteran specific orientation class through her mother.	Thinks the university should provide a military specific job/career fair similar to the nationally marketed one in Nashville, TN each year. University should "take care of" non-trad. stud. Vet.s for them to successfully graduate.	Spoke of how well her developing her resume before attending the Nashville career fair was helpful. "It really benefitted my career fair experience when I went down to Nashville."
Student Veteran #4	Attended two-hour new student Veteran orientation (2015) that included CD specific VSCS. Aware that Career Center provides VSCS. Knows of Nashville career fair event held in fall 2015.	Per class assign. used the Career Center for 1) career options info & 2) "resume readiness". Intends to access the Career Center during his university tenure for internship opportunities help.	University needs to help him network with companies for internship info & access. Believes he can use university offered VSCS on translating military jargon, etc. onto a civilian resume.	Thought the Career Center was helpful with his resume development & career options: "a better resume" & "she gave me a better idea of where my personality fits with these careers that I was looking into."
Student Veteran #5	Received emails from university official to attend 2014 new student Veteran specific orientation class but had conflict in scheduling. Aware of the (2) events he accessed (see next column) due to RSO/SVA membership.	Accessed (1 of 5) 2015 the Career Center's inceptive VSCS workshop series & the Career Center (fall 2015) resume workshop.	University needs to provide 1) medical clinical shadowing experience 2) medical/healthcare related internships 3) Career Center needs counselors knowledgeable to ea. career field.	Thought the Career Center's inceptive (2015) VSCS workshop series as "helpful"; it covered a range of CD features/skills relevant to student veteran and not offered all at once.
Student Veteran #6	Was not made aware of & did not receive university VSCS during his 4 year tenure. Cannot name any university VSCS programs or centers. No one approached him & has not seen advertisement of such services.	Thinks he could access VSCS online if he had need of these services. Would ask his ROTC cadre & student veteran roommate for info on VSCC if he had need. Has not heard of any campus student veteran RSOs nor the Career Center's inceptive VSCS workshop series.	University needs to provide: 1) resume development assistance in translating military onto civilian resume for a corporate culture. 2) Mock interviewing. 3) Translate Army infantry job skills into a civilian employment resume, to include soft skills learned in military 4) help with military trauma as if not treated, affects CD i.e., job interviews.	Only use was attending the nationally marketed career fair in Nashville, TN that was "completely military career oriented" and both of his prior service roommates found employment via this particular job fair.

Note: Vignettes used to support assertion that student Veterans will identify a career development (CD) challenge and seek appropriate career focused campus Veteran career services (VSCS) thus enhancing their future employability.

paramount when it comes to developing offered Veteran career services topics and curriculum based on attending to the individualized strengths, needs, and challenges of today's higher

education student Veterans. This cooperation and involvement between these two parties is what Simonsen (1994) speaks of when she defined career development as a process of continually working toward individual work and life goals by gaining skills through personal planning and effective use of [educational and] occupational resources, which compliments Kroll et al.'s (1970) definition by showing that the individual's career development is at times mediated by external supports and resources [such as institutional Veteran career services].

An example of this type of cooperation and involvement emerged from the data when a student Veteran interviewee had realized the lack of university Veteran career services being offered, subsequently contacted, and successfully partnered with a university official on what Veteran specific topics and curriculum the institution needed to offer to its student Veterans. The age-old adage of "If you build it, they will come" is applicable here. This finding concerning awareness of Veteran career services is that once such programming and services are created, student Veterans may access and use these services. The issue is how to make student Veterans aware of Veteran career services. How does this happen? One way other than, relying on half-hazard approaches such as word of mouth, advertisement, institution (i.e., registrar's office, admissions, Veteran services or other such office) email notification, or by another marketing process, is to involve leaders of the local student Veteran registered student organization and other such representatives of the entire student Veteran population in announcing any Veteran career programming and services that are to occur on campus. What is important is that the institution must develop an effective and reliable means of announcing these Veteran career services on campus by involving stakeholders, such as student Veterans, employers, faculty, and staff, in order for its student Veterans to become aware of them.

Similarly, another policy implication to consider arises when the same student Veteran interviewee stated a concern that not all of the university's colleges and departments academic and career services personnel knew of existing Veteran career services, which means such personnel could not direct its student Veteran population to Veteran career services. An institution ought to ask itself, "Does a 'one-stop shop' type of Veteran career services center (The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning [CAEL], 2013, p. 15) need to exist and be identified for its personnel and student Veterans to take advantage of offered Veteran career services?" Once such implications are addressed and remedied by the institution the outreach or awareness of Veteran career services should improve.

Continuing Currently Offered Veteran Career Services

Similar to awareness of Veteran career services, findings showed a correlation to the access to Veteran career services in that if student Veterans were participating and involved in a type of a formal, structured new student Veteran institutional orientation, they followed through in accessing available Veteran career services. All but one of the student Veteran interviewees indicated accessing and using offered Veteran career services, such as resume creation or development, mock interviewing assistance, career related information sessions, and a recently created five-session graduated Veteran specific career program called, the *Student Veteran Career Development Transitional Program* [a pseudonym], which is designed to prepare student Veterans for employment. Several student Veteran interviewees that used these Veteran career services examples were concerned that the institution was not going to continue or sustain some

of these programs or services. Once again, cooperation between an institution's student Veteran population (e.g., campus wide surveys and involving leaders of the local student Veteran registered student organization) and designated institution officials is necessary as offered Veteran career services are counted on by transitioning student Veterans. Therefore, meaningful and relevant Veteran career services should be viewed as essential by university administration because knowing how and where to access and use Veteran career services is vital for student Veteran professional development as they transition toward civilian employment.

Expand Upon Currently Offered Veteran Career Services

Student Veteran interviewees identified several career-oriented employability barriers or challenges that student Veterans either face, or believe they will face, which higher education can help with. Examples student Veterans identified that can help mediate or resolve career-oriented employability barriers or challenges that student Veterans may or do face are:
- Resume building or development
- Mock interviewing assistance
- Career related information sessions
- The *Student Veteran Career Development Transitional Program* [a pseudonym]
- Career related internships and shadowing opportunities*
- Expanded Veteran specific job and career fairs on campus*
- Other Veteran related supports intended to help with issues, such as military trauma (i.e., PTSD and depression), and cultural issues inherent with student Veterans belonging to a non-traditional student campus population*

While some of these examples are the same as earlier examples given in the preceding sections, continuing currently offered Veteran career services section, several new barrier-related examples (indicated with an asterisk) that student Veterans believed to not be offered by this institution are identified as needed. Dialogue between administration officials, employers, and its student Veteran population should be established by the university for the purpose of better preparing this population to become successful in their continued transition from their military service through higher education toward their eventual civilian employment by identifying Veteran specific employability or career barriers and developing responsive programming and services aimed at remedying these barriers. As a consequence, this author would adapt what Bandura (1986) posits in his social cognitive theory toward empowering student Veterans employing their self-efficacy, self-regulation, and goal actualization in reaching specific and individualized career goals. Relatedly, all but one student Veteran interviewee understood the value of accessing and using available university Veteran career services in order to successfully transition toward finding civilian employment and possessed the necessary motivation, dedication, and perseverance to seek out such services.

Develop Criteria Involving Student Veteran Satisfaction with Veteran Career Services

The theme of student Veteran satisfaction with using Veteran career services showed the participating student Veterans that used available institutional Veteran career programming and services as having satisfaction with what was offered. A supporting theme that arose from at least two of the six student Veteran interviewees is a statement that their peers had become employed as a result of Veteran career services that were offered. These types of statements of

satisfaction must be explored and developed upon as an outcome of Veteran career services that higher education institutions intend to contextualize and implement for its student Veterans. This satisfaction outcome variable may be what Tinto (1987) speaks of regarding his longitudinal model of student departures when he alludes to an institution modeling its social and intellectual context, along with its formal and informal interactional environment, in such a way to be policy relevant so that university officials can use it as a guide for necessary action to retain its higher educational students until their graduation. DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) adapted Tinto's longitudinal model of student departures for student Veterans and found "one way college administrators, especially those in the career counseling field, can assist military veterans in acquiring the requisite skills for employment is to create opportunities for 'civilian' academic and social development in the broader higher education campus environment" (p.44). After a university or college provides these requisite skills (via Veteran career programming and services), administrators should consider assessment and evaluation of the offered curriculum by surveying and interviewing participating student Veterans, employers, faculty, and staff to understand outcomes and use this data to establish a core satisfaction criteria for student veterans. Such action may help the institution in being successful with outreach efforts intended to promote awareness of its Veteran career services for future student Veteran participants, which may increase overall participation and the realization that provided Veteran career services are beneficial for all intended stakeholders.

Relatedly, a final note of mention involving policy implications and recommendations for practice occurred when two student Veteran interviewees indicated a strong belief that prior-service military Veterans ought to be associated (e.g., as an official) with the university's Veteran career services and should be directly involved in the administration or contextualization and implementation of Veteran career services topics and curriculum. Research regarding student Veteran satisfaction involving Veteran career services shows a preference of having prior-service military Veterans involved in the administration of their Veteran career services as it is inspiring and motivating for them to work with established Veterans, who have successfully transitioned from military service through higher education and has obtained employment (Rhodes, 2017). This example not only supports student Veteran satisfaction levels, but also speaks to the related quality of trust or "buy-in" and comfort level as criteria concerning the appropriateness and relevance of Veteran career services topic and curriculum that is offered by such an official with military experience.

Limitations

The qualitative character of this research means the results or findings are not generalized. The objective of this study was not to generalize, but rather to "provide a rich, contextualized understanding of some aspect of human experience through the intensive study" (Polit & Beck, 2010, p. 1452). This qualitative case study investigated six student Veterans at only one of many large, public universities, which means the interpretation of the findings and results is not necessarily intended to be transferable to all higher education institutions.

Additionally, it should be pointed out that each student Veteran interviewee's actual military service and resulting experiences were different from each other in terms of training received, skill-sets (e.g., knowledge, skills, and abilities or KSAs) acquired, and individual

circumstance experienced, (i.e., military sexual trauma, PTSD, or other injury), as well as positive work related behaviors (i.e., soft-skills) or ethics gained. Similarly, the military career field of a particular student Veteran is likewise relevant, as one student Veteran may have worked as an army infantryman while another student Veteran may have worked as an Air Force mechanical technician. This aspect should be considered as not all student Veterans may have the same career-oriented employability barriers or challenges. This means that these student Veterans have faced, or may face, varied and different career-oriented employability barriers or challenges that may need to be addressed by institutional Veteran career services.

Implications for Future Research

Additional research is needed to understand larger and more diverse student Veteran populations concerning their career development on more than one large, public university campus and across higher education institutionally. Institutional support for these populations is necessary to ensure the provided programming and services are inclusive of all stakeholders in the development and presentation of Veteran career topics and services that participating student Veterans are to benefit from. Also, more research is necessary to identify university officials that either are involved or need to become involved in offering Veteran career services to student Veterans on campus. Both of these research approaches need to be considered in order to fully understand what is needed in terms of provided Veteran specific career programming, supports, and services and how effective associated resources, programs, and events are.

Of issue is how are student Veterans recruited and selected? Similarly, what do recruitment and selection strategies for the top-down postsecondary officials that need to participate in a study involving Veteran career services look like? While the inherent difficulty involved with designing and implementing a solid recruitment strategy for both of these research approaches suggested may be recognized (Creswell, 2014; Fusch & Ness, 2015), it is necessary in order to conduct research that will be more representative and accurate when it comes to future research involving student Veterans in higher education and their associated Veteran career services. Finally, because current literature does not extensively study student Veterans' career development or career preparedness in a Veteran specific manner, it is the author's intent that investigators use Figure 1. (A Military Veteran's Pathway from Military to Higher Education to Employment) as a reference or framework to aid in their research.

Conclusion

It is important for this nation to help its Veterans self-actualize and become successful in life, not only because of their past military service to the country, but because of their potential to become productive citizens in transitioning to the civilian workplace. The university plays an important role in student Veteran career development and readiness. Broadly, postsecondary Veteran career services are a necessary function that helps student Veterans achieve their career goals during their transition from military service through higher education toward civilian employment. Specifically, postsecondary Veteran career services need to assist student Veterans gain employment by helping them to translate their military KSAs, along with their academic training and other employability attributes intended to secure employment, to civilian employers. The findings of this study may enlighten policy makers and officials in government institutions,

higher education, and business organizations to take initiatives to create or enhance a Veteran centered employment program to facilitate military to civilian transition. It is important for the service member to have a smooth, coherent, and meaningful transitional plan from military service to civilian employment.

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College Student Veteran Career Development, Adjustment, and Negative Life Events

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Abstract

This study advanced the understanding of Veterans' adjustment to college and associated career development. Veteran participants (N = 73) were demographically matched with nonveteran participants (N = 73). MANCOVA results indicated no effect of Veteran status on RIASEC interest profile while accounting for sex. MANOVA results indicated no difference in career distress between groups. Regression results for Veterans college students showed cognitive decision-making difficulties and adjustment stress predicted negative daily events. Suggestions for counseling student Veterans and nonveterans are included.

KEYWORDS: college student Veteran, career development, adjustment stress

Since the beginning of the "war on terror" that characterizes the recent Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), and Operation New Dawn (OND) combat era, at least 2.7 million American service members have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan

(Veterans Administration, 2017). The Post-9/11 GI bill grants educational and vocational benefits to returning Veterans. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2016), over 790,000 individuals used the Post-9/11 GI Bill in the year 2015. Aiding in the transition to the college environment and ensuring meaningful career interventions is of paramount importance for college counselors when working with this group.

Student Veterans must navigate new physical environments, social roles, and career goals after making the choice to continue their education (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). College counselors are likely to see student Veteran clients attempting to navigate these issues. Previous research has called for higher education to give special attention to the unique career development needs of student Veterans (Rudd, Goulding, & Bryan, 2011). With education and increased knowledge through research, counselors can be better informed regarding the clinical services that are needed to promote achievement of new career ambitions (Shackelford, 2009).

There are many issues that require empirical exploration to determine the best way to aid Veteran transition into a college environment. As a student's career interests, decision making, and self-efficacy are often at the forefront of navigating choices in a college environment (Liu, Huang, & Wang, 2014; Osipow, 1999), we focused our research on these important career development variables. We also sought to better understand Veterans' experiences in college by examining how post-deployment adjustment and career decision making may impact their experience with negative life events. This research is an effort to determine if college student Veterans have substantial career development and adjustment differences that may impact the services provided by counselors.

Career Interests

As our interests influence the careers we choose and college majors we enter, this study seeks to understand the career interest patterns of college student Veterans. Career interests are commonly defined through Holland's theory of vocational personalities and work environments (Holland, 1997). Holland's theory has been applied to higher education settings (Feldman, Smart, & Ethington, 2004). Holland's theory emphasizes the importance of determining one's interest patterns through resemblance to six personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional (RIASEC). College students fit into the RIASEC types in the same manner as workers who might be classified by Holland's theory. Workplaces differ from higher education institutions in terms of environment; therefore, it is important to examine student Veterans in the unique context of higher education environments to better understand this unique population.

According to Holland's RIASEC model, realistic types enjoy working with their hands and using tools including machines. Investigative types enjoy problem solving and scientific endeavors (Holland, 1997). The realistic and investigative interest areas typify many of the common military positions or activities. While all interest areas are represented in a military environment, the values, skills, and attitudes of the artistic, social, and conventional personality types do not as commonly align with most positions in the military. Artistic types are very expressive and aesthetically focused. Social types are highly interested in interpersonal problem-solving and teaching. Conventional types often thrive in environments that require skills such as

keeping orderly paperwork. This research considers that Veterans transitioning to college may have different interest patterns than the civilian college student.

Previous research among Veterans has provided a glimpse of possible career interest trends among this population. Due to the lack of diverse employment experiences that may result from entrance into the military directly after high school (Clemens & Milsom, 2008), military roles may influence interest trajectories among Veterans transitioning to civilian life. However, there remains a gap in the literature. One study of 55 male Veterans that sought to better understand Veterans' interest patterns found the largest areas of interest was in the Realistic area (26%) with only 11% expressing their main interest in the Investigative area. Both the Social (22.8%) and Enterprising (18%) areas surpassed interest in the Investigative area. However, the mean age of the Veterans in this study was 47.48 years. It is likely the Veterans in their sample had more time to develop interests and skills outside their military experience (Bullock, Braud, Andrews, & Phillips, 2009).

In a sample of 28 Veterans with a mean age of 30.3, interests seemed to differ between men and women yielding an average code of IRS among men and SCI among women. These researchers indicated that the men's interests were more in line with the average military environment than the women's interests (Messer & Green, 2014). Additionally, other research has supported sex difference in interest patterns (Reardon, Bullock, & Meyer, 2007). To better understand career development between college student Veterans and nonveterans, we consider sex as a covariate. Additionally, based on a review of the Veterans and Military Occupations Finder, 42% of military positions are categorized with a first letter code of R (Messer, Greene, & Holland, 2013). Therefore, it is expected that this interest area will be maintained by Veterans at a higher rate than the nonveteran college student, especially due to the relatively brief time between separation from the military and college entrance in the present sample.

Self-Efficacy

Bandura (2012) defined self-efficacy as a belief system that individuals hold about their capability to achieve self-identified goals. This belief system has been shown to be critical for success in achievement of goals and has been found to predict overall life satisfaction and mental health (Finley, Pugh, Noel, & Brown, 2012). The culture of work is trending toward a service and knowledge workforce. As this shift occurs, career decision making is being established as a lifelong challenge (Kelly & Hatcher, 2013). Career decision-making self-efficacy, which is an individual's belief in his or her ability to complete career decision-making tasks (Taylor & Betz, 1983), is a critical piece of this lifelong developmental task. It indicates how much effort individuals will likely put forth towards deciding as well as the level of persistence when faced with obstacles in the process (Liu et al., 2014).

Career decision-making self-efficacy has been found to significantly differ by age in that older individuals report higher levels of self-efficacy (Kelly & Hatcher, 2013), which may be an advantage to college student Veterans as they are typically older than the traditional college student. Career decision-making self-efficacy has been shown to have significant positive relationships with factors such as vocational decidedness, career decision-making attitudes, openness to experience, and positive affect in undergraduates (Hartman & Betz, 2007; Luzzo,

1993). As Veterans are taking advantage of GI benefits for education, understanding the attitudes of student Veterans is becoming critical in providing effective services. Therefore, it is vital to better understand career decision-making self-efficacy in all potential clients to build on self-efficacy's positive correlates.

Career Decision Making

Amir and Gati (2006) noted career decision-making difficulties were one of the most common reasons clients presented to career counseling. Career decision-making difficulties have been linked to lower career decision-making self-efficacy scores and higher levels of negative career thinking (Fouad, Cotter, & Kantamneni, 2009; Peterson, Sampson, Reardon, & Lenz, 1996). When experiencing career decision-making difficulties, people may avoid the decision or make poor decisions (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996) which can lead to undesirable consequences such as lowered self-esteem and self-efficacy, strain on relationships, or financial difficulty (Gati & Amir, 2010).

The implications of poor career decision making demonstrate the necessity of college student Veterans making appropriate career decisions and feeling confident in that process. We are seeking to explore the rates of both cognitive and emotion-based decision-making difficulties in college student Veteran and nonveteran students to better understand any differences that may exist between these groups. Cognitive career decision-making difficulties are operationally defined as difficulty with readiness to make a choice, "indecisiveness, and dysfunctional myths" (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996, p. 552). Emotion-based career decision-making difficulty is operationally defined by Gati, Asulin-Peretz, and Fisher (2012) as consisting of "pessimistic views, anxiety, and self-concept and identity" (p. 8).

There is evidence that decision making may be different for Veterans, especially in higher education. Military culture supports a hierarchy and clear expectations. In higher education settings, expectations of an individual vary based on the experience such as how professors' expectations can vary from class to class (DeSawal, 2013). There is a potential for this change in decision-making structure from military to college life to impact the college student Veteran. Therefore, this study also explored the impact of cognitive and emotion-based decision-making difficulties on college student Veteran's daily experiences.

Events and Stress

Though many clients identify positive events as most important (Rubin & Berntsen, 2003), there are conflicting accounts in the literature. Negative events, such as trauma and anger are significantly disruptive to existing cognitive schemas and life expectations. Negative events have been related to increased rates of medical illness. Research has shown that negative events account for stronger effect sizes than positive events (Boals, 2010; Bono, Glomb, Shen, Kim, & Koch, 2013). Negative events may also influence how an individual perceives their stress and damage their resilience to perceived stress and future events that may be deemed negative (Bono et al., 2013). As Veterans transition to the new environment of a college campus, understanding their negative experiences can help college counselors integrate Veterans into campus.

Research suggests the transition from military to college and university campuses presents challenges for Veterans as well as counselors (Shackelford, 2009). It has been proposed that negative effects of adjustment may be subtler than researchers tend to expect due to possible issues of deteriorating mental health while transitioning to civilian life (Erbes, Kaler, Schult, Polusny, & Arbisi, 2011). Independent of their overt or covert natures, stressful events have been found to consistently exert a harmful influence on well-being even two years after the event has occurred (Armstrong, Galligan, & Critchley, 2011). As Veterans are choosing to take advantage of the educational benefits offered by the government, this study seeks to understand the impact of post-deployment readjustment and career decision-making difficulties on negative events.

Present Study

The present study sought to better account for the unique experiences of college student Veterans' career development and adjustment to college, as well as, answers the call for research on this diverse group of students (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). Therefore, the following three research questions and hypotheses were posed for this study.

1. Will Veterans and nonveterans have different interest profiles when accounting for sex? It is hypothesized that college student Veterans will display a higher level of interest in the Realistic interest area than nonveteran college students while accounting for sex.
2. Is there a difference in Veteran and nonveteran college students' cognitive career decision making difficulties, emotion-based career decision making difficulties, and career decision making self-efficacy? Due to the exploratory nature of this hypothesis, it is hypothesized that college student Veterans and nonveterans will not differ on career decision-making self-efficacy, career decision-making difficulties, and emotional-personality distress.
3. Do post-deployment readjustment and cognitive career decision-making difficulties account for variance in negative daily events experienced by college student Veterans? It is hypothesized that post-deployment readjustment stress and career decision-making difficulties will account for variance in negative daily events.

Method

Participants

This study involved an initial data collection period that resulted in 282 participants; 209 of which were nonveteran college students and 73 of which were college student Veterans. Due to the unbalanced nature of the groups, nonveteran college student participants were matched to college student Veteran participants. Following the recommendations of Peck (1985), the goal of the matching process was to increase homogeneity of the groups. The nonveteran college students were matched to Veteran participants based on age, sex, and college year classification. Ultimately this led to retention of all Veterans in the sample and 73 nonveterans.

In the matching process, age was considered first. The average age of the Veterans was higher than that of the total sample of the nonveterans. Therefore, all older nonveteran participants were retained as initial nonveteran participant elimination was based on those in the younger age range (18-20). Once this stage of the matching process was complete, the

participants were matched on sex. The Veteran sample is majority male and the full nonveteran sample was majority female. Therefore, elimination of some female nonveterans occurred. Finally, college year classification was taken into consideration with an effort to retain those nonveterans that best matched with the age, sex, and classification (e.g., freshman, junior) of the Veterans in the sample.

Therefore, 136 nonveteran participants were excluded from the data which left 146 college students consisting of Veteran and nonveterans. College student Veterans ($n = 73$) were recruited from multiple college settings and reported that they served in the most recent conflicts including OEF, OIF, and OND. Nonveteran college students ($n = 73$) were recruited from a mid-sized university in the southeastern United States. Demographic characteristics for the participants included in the current study's analyses are presented in Table 1. Veterans were predominantly male ($n = 49$). The highest reported race was White (n = 53) followed by Hispanic ($n = 14$). The mean age of Veterans was 28.18 ($SD = 8.5$). The nonveteran college students were primarily female ($n = 42$). The highest reported race was tied between Black/African-American ($n = 34$) and White ($n = 34$). The mean age for nonveterans was 23.75 ($SD = 6.6$).

Table 1. *Demographics and RIASEC Areas of Highest Endorsement*

Characteristics	Veteran (n = 73) n (%)	Nonveteran (n = 73) n (%)
Sex		
Male	49 (67.1)	31 (42.5)
Female	24 (32.9)	42 (57.5)
College Year		
Freshman	10 (13.7)	14 (19.2)
Sophomore	19 (26)	20 (27.4)
Junior	12 (16.4)	17 (23.3)
Senior	17 (23.3)	22 (30.1)
Grad Student	15 (20.5)	
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian	1 (1.4)	1 (1.4)
Asian/Pacific Islander	2 (2.7)	3 (4.1)
Hispanic	14 (19.2)	
Black/African-American	2 (2.7)	34 (46.6)
White	53 (72.6)	34 (46.6)
Other	1 (1.4)	
RIASEC		
Realistic	7 (9.6)	5 (6.8)
Investigative	16 (21.9)	15 (20.5)
Artistic	9 (12.3)	12 (16.4)
Social	17 (23.3)	29 (39.7)
Enterprising	2 (2.7)	3 (4.1)
Conventional	9 (12.3)	6 (8.2)
Missing	13 (17.8)	3 (4.1)
Time since deployment		
> 6 months	9 (12.3)	
6 months – 1 year	9 (123.)	
1 – 2 years	16 (21.9)	
< 2 years	38 (52.1)	

Note. Some percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Procedures

This study was approved by a university Institutional Review Board. Qualtrics, an online data collection and survey platform, was utilized to collect participants' informed consent, demographic questions, and measures of study variables. Participants were recruited through SONA, an online experiment management system offered through the researchers' university. Class credit was offered to SONA-recruited participants to complete this survey. College student Veterans' recruitment was supplemented through additional social networking recruitment. Student Veteran organizations across the United States were contacted and were provided with a link to the online survey for participation.

Instruments

Career interests. The Interest Item Pool-RIASEC Interest Markers (Armstrong, Allison, & Rounds, 2008) is a public domain measure of career interests based on Holland's (1997) theory of vocational interests. The instrument assesses interest in Holland's six RIASEC vocational interest themes. Items are composed of 48 activities (e.g., "fix a broken faucet") and 48 occupations (e.g., "child care workers"), eight for each RIASEC theme respectively. Instructions request test-takers to indicate their interest in each using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly dislike to strongly like. Participant ratings of these activities and occupations determine the primary Holland code for each participant. Armstrong et al. (2008) found each of the six interest subscales to have estimated internal consistency reliabilities ranging from $\alpha = .75$ to $\alpha = .86$. In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha for the RIASEC scales ranged from .93 to .95. For all other measures, reliability estimates in the current sample are reported in Table 2. Convergent validity was demonstrated by strong correlations with ratings of interest in occupations and Strong Interest Inventory scales. Structural validity was supported when the scales produced inter-correlations consistent with the structure of the RIASEC model as outlined in Holland's theory (Armstrong et al., 2008).

Career decision self-efficacy. The Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale-Short Form (CDSE; Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996) is a 25-item inventory based on the social cognitive theory and five-factor model, measuring an individual's belief that they can successfully complete tasks necessary to making career decisions. The total score, which will be the score utilized in the present research, has a reported alpha value ranging from .93-.97. Test-retest reliability of the CDSE was demonstrated at $r = .83$ after a period of 6 weeks (Luzzo, 1993). CDSE concurrent validity has been demonstrated through correlations between the CDSE-SF and measures of vocational identity such as the My Vocational Situation, as well as measures of career certainty and indecision such as the Career Decision Scale (Betz et al., 1996; Luzzo & Day, 1999).

Career decision-making difficulties. Two aspects of career decision-making difficulties (i.e., cognitive and emotional/personality) were measured using two different instruments, the Career Decision-making Difficulties Questionnaire and the Emotional and Personality-Related Career Decision Difficulties Questionnaire. The 34-item Career Decision-making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ; Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996) was used to detect and describe difficulties in career decision making. Each item is measured by a nine-point Likert-type scale with responses on a continuum ranging from *(1) Does not describe me at all* to *(9) Describes me*

well. The total score indicates the general level of difficulty the test-taker is reporting and the subscales indicate specific areas in which the test-taker is experiencing difficulty. The total score test-retest reliability was reported at r = 0.80. The CDDQ was compared with the Career Decision Scale (CDS) and decision-making self-efficacy and a significant positive correlation (.77) was found between the CDDQ and the CDS. A moderate negative correlation (-.50) was found between the CDDQ and the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (Taylor & Betz, 1983), indicating as decision-making difficulties rises, self-efficacy lowers.

The Emotional and Personality-Related Career Decision-making Difficulties Questionnaire (EPCD; Saka, Gati, & Kelley, 2008) was used to assess the emotional and personality-related aspects of career decision-making difficulties. The current study utilized the 25-item short version of the EPCD, created by Gati et al. in 2011. Each item is measured by a nine-point Likert-type scale with responses on a continuum ranging from *(1) Does not describe me at all* to *(9) Describes me well.* The total score was used for the current study and reported internal consistency for the total score is α=.91 (Gati et al., 2011). Structural, convergent, and divergent validity for the original and short version of the EPCD have been tested and supported (Gati et al., 2011; Saka & Gati, 2007; Saka et al., 2008).

Post-Deployment Readjustment Inventory. The Post-Deployment Readjustment Inventory (PDRI) is a 36-item inventory that measures readjustment following military deployment (Katz, Cojucar, Davenport, Pedram, & Lindl, 2010). This measure asks respondents to rate how true statements are following return from deployment on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). The PDRI consists of a Global scale and six subscales: Career Challenges, Social Difficulties, Intimate Relationship Problems, Health Concerns, Concerns about Deployment, and PTSD symptoms. The Global Scale was used to measure the adjustment stress variable in the current study. Katz et al. (2010) reported internal consistency for the Global scale as α = .97. Convergent validity was reported with strong positive correlations established between the PDRI and the Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogatis, 1993) and the Posttraumatic Checklist-Military Version (Weathers, Litz, Herman, Huska, & Keane, 1993) (r = .82 to .90 respectively).

Negative Events Scale. The Negative Events Scale measures daily, interpersonal hassles one may experience (Maybery, 2003). The college student version was used in the current study which addresses a variety of life domains. The current study utilized analyses of the total scores for negative events. Respondents are presented with a variety of events across these domains and asked to respond to each event on a 5-point Likert-type scale that indicates the occurrence of the event and whether the respondent experienced hassle following this event (0=did not occur through 5=event occurred and extreme hassle). Internal consistency for the negative event scales reportedly range from α = .80 to .98 (Maybery, 2003). Construct validity has been supported through extensive factor analysis using a sample of college students (Maybery, 2003).

Results

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients in Table 2 reveal, for Veterans, that all variables in this study were significantly correlated except for emotional personality career decision-making factors and negative daily events. All variables for nonveterans were

significantly correlated. The internal consistency for all variables across Veterans and nonveterans were above $\alpha = .90$.

Table 2. *Means, Correlations, Standard Deviations, and Reliability Coefficients for Variables of Interest*

Variable	CDSE	CDDQ	EPCD	NES	PDRI
CDSE	----	-.476[**]	-.285[*]	-.497[**]	-.544[**]
CDDQ	-.607**	----	.800[**]	.420[**]	.437[**]
EPCD	-.464**	.761[**]	----	.232	.352[**]
NES	-.429[**]	.654[**]	.545[**]	----	.593[**]
PDRI	----	----	----	----	----
M-Veteran	94.10	108.68	90.27	102.67	76.99
SD-Veteran	19.04	45.84	33.93	41.68	28.72
M-Nonveteran	94.44	115.96	90.43	115.96	
SD-Nonveteran	16.93	49.10	36.74	42.56	
Reliability-Veteran	0.96	0.95	0.93	0.97	0.97
Reliability-Nonveteran	0.95	0.96	0.94	0.96	

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

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

Note. Numbers above the diagonal represents correlations for Veterans. Numbers below the diagonal represent correlations for nonveterans. CDSE- Career Decision Self-efficacy. CDDQ - Career Decision-making Difficulties. EPCD- The Emotional and Personality-Related Career Decision-making Difficulties Questionnaire. NES- Negative Events Scale. PDRI- Post-Deployment Readjustment Inventory.

A between-groups multivariate analysis of covariance was conducted to address hypothesis one and determine if Veteran status significantly impacted RIASEC personality profile while accounting for sex. Although there were 73 participants per group reported in the method section, due to randomly missing data the group size for this analysis was 59 Veterans and 70 nonveterans. Wilk's Lambda indicated no significant effect of Veteran status and RIASEC profile while accounting for sex $\Lambda = .92$ $F(6, 122) = 1.57$ $p = .114$. Therefore, when accounting for sex, Veteran status does not significantly predict RIASEC category. Hypothesis 1 was not supported; Realistic types were not significantly different between groups.

The analysis used for hypothesis two was a between-group multivariate analysis of variance to determine if cognitive career decision-making difficulties, emotional decision-making difficulties, and career decision-making self-efficacy scores differed for Veterans and nonveterans. Due to randomly missing data, there were 55 Veterans and 67 nonveterans included in the analysis. There were no violations of assumptions. Wilk's Lambda indicates no significant

effect of Veteran status on EPCD, CDDQ, and CDSE scores $\Lambda = .98$ $F(1, 120) = .06$ $p = .81$ in college students. Therefore, the null was accepted in that there is no difference between the groups with regards to the two types of career decision-making difficulties (i.e., cognitive and emotion-based) or level of career decision-making self-efficacy.

To address hypothesis three, a within-group multiple regression was conducted to determine if cognitive career decision-making difficulties and post-deployment readjustment stress accounted for variance in negative daily life events in college student Veterans. No assumptions were violated and data was entered simultaneously when conducting this analysis. Two cases were excluded from the test due to being outliers based on cut offs of studentized residuals and standardized DFFITs. The model was significant at predicting negative events $F(2, 49) = 25.65$ $p < .001$. Due to the small sample size, the adjusted R^2 was used to interpret the data. Therefore, the amount of variance accounted for by the model was 49.1%. Cognitive career decision-making difficulty was significant in predicting negative events $t(2, 49) = 2.55$ $p = .01$ with a CI ranging from .06 to .51. Post-deployment adjustment stress was also significant in predicting negative events $t(2, 49) = 4.376$ $p < .001$ with a CI ranging from .41 to 1.09. The more impactful predictor variable was post-deployment readjustment stress with a Beta of .51 (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Regression Analysis Depicting Variance in Negative Life Events*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		b	Std. Error	Beta	*t*	Sig.
1	(Constant)	106.16 (97.71, 114.61)	4.21		25.245	.00
	CDDQ	.29 (.06, .51)	.11	.30	2.55	.01
	PDRI	.75 (.41, 1.09)	.17	.51	4.38	.00

a. Dependent Variable: Negative Event Scale
Note. CDDQ is Career Decision-making Difficulties Questionnaire. PDRI is Post-Deployment Readjustment Inventory. Confidence intervals at 95% are reported in parentheses.

Discussion

This study explored three research questions focused on the career development needs of college student Veterans. The notion that college student Veterans would display higher levels of realistic interest than nonveterans while accounting for sex was not supported. College student Veterans and an age-matched sample produced similar interest profile patterns when their career-related interests were assessed. The practical implication of this research is that career interest interventions may be interchangeable across each group. This research does not support the idea that college student Veterans may prefer certain interest categories of majors more than other college students when factors such as age and sex are considered. While interest profiles may not be different, it should be noted that there are resources to aid Veterans transitioning to the civilian world such as the Veterans and Military Occupations Finders (VMOF; Messer, Greene, & Holland, 2013) that translates RIASEC-coded military jobs into congruent civilian options. This can help develop a common language base when discussing career interests and aid in

increasing the cultural competence that is recommended when working with this group (Green, Dawson-Fend, Hayden, Crews, & Painter, 2016).

Hypothesis two explored differences between Veteran and nonveteran college students' cognitive career decision-making difficulties, emotional career decision-making difficulties, and career decision-making self-efficacy. The hypothesis was supported, indicating no significant difference between these two groups across all three areas explored. Overall, the lack of meaningful difference between Veteran and nonveteran students on these important career variables is promising. This provides more confidence in counselors' ability to use their typical interventions and services with college student Veterans when addressing the above factors due to one group not experiencing more career-related distress. Therefore, counselors approaching both groups comparably might be justified when addressing career related issues. Of course, there are a variety of other career development variables worth considering and great diversity in college student and Veteran populations. Further research is needed to assure consistency in career development needs among diverse groups of college students.

Hypothesis three was supported. Post-deployment readjustment and cognitive career decision-making difficulties significantly predicted negative daily events experienced by college student Veterans. Post-deployment scores were the largest significant variable in predicting negative daily events. While the sample size was small, results indicated an area of clinical evaluation when working with student Veterans – the adjustment process. This can be accomplished by connecting Veterans to campus resources specifically geared toward helping in transition from military to civilian life or from deployment to college. As career decision difficulties, such as receiving inconsistent career/educational information, were a significant contribution to Veterans' negative daily experiences, college counselors should be vigilant in providing consistent and structured information about career decision-making strategies and post-deployment adjustment to minimize potentially avoidable difficulties that can lead to negative experiences.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study is an effort to narrow the gap in vocational literature regarding the career development needs of college student Veterans, there are some limitations and avenues for continued research that should be noted. The sample size was smaller and generalizing results should be done with caution. While significant, the confidence interval for career decision-making difficulty predicting negative events was a wide range (i.e., .06 to .51) and should be interpreted with caution. Attempts to replicate this finding and studies with larger sample sizes are encouraged. The nonveteran college students are from one southeastern university, while the college student Veterans were largely sampled from around the country through social media connections. Data collected from the university-based student participants offered class credit points in exchange for study participation. This research looked at college students' isolated career development factors, rather than an intervention on their development. Future research may consider how career intervention effectiveness may differ between student Veterans and nonveteran students. Career interventions for Veterans such as the workshop described by Gati, Ryzhik, and Vertsberger (2013) could be considered as a model. Another area of future research

should be on transition interventions for Veterans on college campuses and reducing post-deployment stress.

This study focused on better understanding the career development status and needs of college student Veterans, largely accomplished by comparing a matched sample of college student Veterans and nonveteran college students. Career-relevant factors impacting Veterans' negative daily events were also explored. In this sample, Holland RIASEC-based interest patterns did not differ between the groups, nor did levels of cognitive or emotional career decision-making difficulties and self-efficacy. These findings provide preliminary evidence that counselors working with college student Veterans can approach their career-relevant work in much the same way as they do with nonveteran students. The study revealed that career decision-making difficulties and post-deployment readjustment stress impact the negative events Veteran students' experience. Enhancing adjustment to college from the military and decreasing career decision-making difficulties could be avenues to experiencing less routine negative events for Veterans and facilitate a more pleasant college experience.

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A Synergistic Treatment Approach for Insomnia and Nightmares in Veterans with PTSD

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Abstract

Sleep disturbances are prevalent among veterans. In particular, insomnia and nightmares are common complaints for this population. Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I) and Imagery Rehearsal Therapy (IRT) are established treatments for insomnia and nightmares respectively. This paper reviews recent literature on insomnia and nightmares in military personnel. The treatment of insomnia with CBT-I and nightmares with IRT are discussed. Finally, the integration of CBT-I and IRT for sleep disturbances in Veterans with PTSD is presented.

KEYWORDS: Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Insomnia, Imagery Rehearsal Therapy, Veteran, PTSD

Sleep problems are largely prevalent among Veterans with PTSD (McLay, Klam, & Volkert, 2010; Lewis, Creamer, & Failla, 2009). As an early indicator of PTSD, sleep difficulties are a particular concern due to their direct effect on the physical and emotional health of Veterans and service members. Virtually every symptom cluster of PTSD found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth edition (DSM-5) has some component of a sleep disorder in it (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). For example, nightmares tend to be a re-experiencing of the trauma, delay of sleep onset may be an effort to keep distressing dreams at bay, and reoccurring hypervigilance may result in insomnia (Wright, Britt, Bliese, & Adler, 2011). Although sleep difficulties are a salient feature of PTSD, in many cases the sleep issues are either overlooked or not diagnosed. Treatment outcome studies targeting insomnia and nightmares among Veterans with PTSD have increased over the past two

decades. Evidenced-based treatments have been developed that are grounded in cognitive behavioral therapy. This paper will illuminate two evidenced-based therapeutic approaches for the treatment of insomnia and nightmares among military personnel with PTSD. An overview of insomnia and nightmares affecting military personnel is first introduced followed by a discussion about treatment options.

Insomnia and the Military

Of late, it has been shown that approximately 90% of Veterans struggle with insomnia of some sort (Plumb, Peachey, & Zelman, 2014). Of those service members only between 23-40% seek treatment (Plumb et al., 2014). Insomnia is characterized by dissatisfaction with sleep quantity and quality. In a longitudinal Millennium Cohort Study, 92% of active duty military personnel, service members who were either deployed or post-deployment, indicated clinically significant insomnia symptoms (Seelig et al., 2010). Insomnia may contribute to decreased quality of life, decreased health, impaired cognitive function, decreased job performance, car accidents, and increased mental health disorders.

Active duty military are a group that is specifically at risk for sleep difficulties. Among the reasons is the fact they work various schedules in high stress. Often these personnel are subject to daytime temperatures of over 120 degrees Fahrenheit, construction noise around the clock, sleeping in tents, and on metal and canvas cots. The tents have no indoor plumbing so individuals have to walk as much as five minutes to reach a toilet or shower and activities of living such as reading and socializing take place among their tents, thus, potentially interfering with an adequate period of sleep (Peterson, Goodie, Satterfield, & Brim, 2008).

Other researchers have found that symptoms of depression have increased insomnia symptoms among Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) Veterans regardless of their experience or trauma history. "Those diagnosed with PTSD reported more established levels of poor sleep quality, worry, fear of losing vigilance and PTSD symptom severity emerged as independent predictors of sleep difficulty" (Plumb et al., 2014, p. 212). It is believed that with the strong association between PTSD and insomnia there is also a strong need for treatment to be one of multicomponent for addressing these two illnesses (Mysliwiec et al., 2013).

Research shows a correlation between insomnia and PTSD is unclear, but does indicate that exposure to traumatic events interfere with sleep as well as showing that PTSD influences the development of insomnia and insomnia influences the development of PTSD symptoms (Phelps, Forbes, & Creamer, 2008). There has been shown a strong correlation between combat exposure and post-deployment development of insomnia severity (Wright et al, 2011). One theory related to why rates of insomnia are higher among OIF/OEF military suggests that modern conflicts have gone from a field of battle that was "front facing" to one where the enemy may strike from anywhere anytime. Today's troops are susceptible to unexpected attacks and this includes while sleeping (Plumb et al., 2014).

There has been no difference identified in quality or amount of sleep based on branch of the military or ethnicity. However, several variables are contributing factors. Those that develop

sleep difficulties tend to be women military members, those with lower ranks, those with less education, and those with greater combat exposure (Plumb et al., 2014). Those with symptoms of PTSD, depression, or anxiety were much more likely to show increased sleep latency, a decrease in the total sleep time and poor sleep quality. Naval school students with insomnia were unlikely to be promoted, were more likely to be hospitalized, and were more likely to leave the Navy. It was also found that those diagnosed with insomnia were predictive of lower performance quality and an increase in injuries (Wright et al., 2011). Those with previous deployments, with a significant amount of combat exposure or displaying symptoms of PTSD, depression, or anxiety generally experienced significantly less sleep (Mysliwiec et al, 2013).

PTSD has been considered to be an experience of unsuccessful fear extinction (van Liempt, van Zuiden, Westenberg, Super, & Vermetten, 2013). Poor or less sleep after a traumatic experience has been considered a contributing factor to the development of PTSD by way of disrupting successful fear extinction. PTSD symptoms experienced by those admitted to a trauma hospital were thought to be connected with lower patterns of Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep within a month of hospital admissions (Wright et al., 2011). Research points toward a bidirectional causal relationship between insomnia and mental health issues (Plumb et al., 2014).

PTSD, depression, anxiety, and mild TBI are the most commonly seen mental health issues among the military. Sleep difficulties, however, are thought to be rising in this population as well. The occurrence of insomnia has increased from 7.2 to 135.8 cases per 10,000 (Mysliwiec et al., 2013) though it isn't clear if these are a rise in the actual number of cases or if it is simply more acceptable to report them. Some research indicates that those who experience sleep difficulties immediately following a traumatic event are at a significantly higher risk for developing PTSD than those who don't experience sleep difficulties (Plumb et al., 2014).

The important factor related to insomnia and the military has to do with those working in technological occupations and in high risk environments that call for clarity of mind and alertness. It is considered that military personnel without adequate sleep could put themselves and the mission at risk. Sleep difficulties prior to a traumatic event puts the individual at risk for developing PTSD and chronic insomnia four months post-deployment (Mysliwiec et al., 2013).

Nightmares and the Military

Nightmares are extremely common in combat Veterans with PTSD (Neylan et al., 1998). Nearly 70% of Vietnam combat Veterans reported recurrent nightmares (DeFazio, Rustin, & Diamond, 1975). The DSM-5 defines nightmares as lengthy, elaborate dreams which are often well-remembered, provoke intense emotions, and focus on attempts to avoid threats or imminent danger (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Those with PTSD often suffer from sleep disturbances with the majority suffering from nightmares (Harb, Thompson, Ross, & Cook, 2012). Such nightmares often persist for a significant amount of time—even a number of years and interfere with daytime functioning. As such they have become a primary marker of PTSD (Phelps et al., 2008). Nightmares experienced by combat Veterans are believed to be distinguished from those by civilians based largely on the content and the distress evoked by the nightmares.

Nightmares experienced by combat veterans are divided into the following categories: replicative/replay, nonreplicative/symbolic, or mixed (Harb et al., 2012). Replicative nightmares are relatively straightforward reviews of traumatic events or parts of those events. Symbolic nightmares are those that refer to some component of that event or a feeling or thought evoked by that event. Both types of these nightmares are commonly seen among posttraumatic populations with estimates of 21-60% of all reported nightmares believed to be replicative in nature (Harb et al., 2012).

The content of typical nightmares that occur in REM levels of sleep are believed to be more distorted and have less resemblance to real life than dreams in non-REM cycles of sleep. Nightmares occurring during this period were found to have more elaborate dream content and an increase in anxiety level. Upon awakening the dreamer after a 20 minute period of time it was found that heart and respiration rates returned to normal (Phelps et al., 2008). On the other hand, non-REM level nightmares, the level that replicative nightmares are believed to occur, resulted in nightmares that were less dreamlike, more thought-like, and resulted in a sudden onset of increased anxiety, body movement, increased heart respiration, perspiration and EKG pattern (Phelps et al., 2008).

Nightmares in Veterans with combat experience differ from those in noncombat Veterans in that they tend to be more commonly accompanied by gross body movements, are more violent and more vivid in nature (Harb et al., 2012). In a sample of Vietnam Veterans with combat-related PTSD, about half of the nightmares contained settings, people, or objects characteristic of combat, whereas 85% featured moderate to high levels of threat. Nightmares also included some degree of reality distortion, which seemed to vary according to how replicative they were of the actual traumatic event.

Treatment for Insomnia and Nightmares in PTSD

Successful treatment of insomnia as well as other characteristics and symptoms of PTSD have been shown when a form of cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) has been used (Plumb et al., 2014). Normalizing sleep problems as adaptive and expected responses to stressful deployment experiences can be validating and a non-stigmatizing intervention in and of itself. Nonpharmacologic behavioral treatments have the best evidence for their use and are becoming the preferred treatment for insomnia (Peterson et al., 2008) and nightmares (Nadorff, Lambdin, & Germain, 2014). Empirically supported, cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I) has become the first-line treatment for primary insomnia (Talbot et al., 2014). CBT-I emphasizes the use of a diverse set of behavioral interventions to improve the quality of sleep. Imagery rehearsal therapy (IRT), a cognitive imagery intervention that involves rescripting nightmares, has garnered support in the literature for being a successful approach for treating chronic nightmares. Individually, these two approaches have demonstrated their usefulness in treating specific sleep problems. Together, CBT-I and IRT utilized for the reduction of nightmares and improvement of sleep among Veterans with PTSD has gained the attention of clinical researchers.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia

Cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia is an established therapeutic approach for chronic or primary and comorbid insomnia (Okajima, Komada, & Inoue, 2011). The professional literature has concluded nonpharmacological CBT-I interventions yield consistent and long-lasting results among patients with chronic insomnia (Morin, Culbert, & Schwartz, 1994; Lancee, van Straten, Morina, Kaldo, & Kamphuis, 2016; Mitchell, Gehrman, Perlis, & Umscheid, 2012; Okajima et al., 2011). A multicomponent psychotherapy, CBT-I includes sleep hygiene, sleep restriction, stimulus control, and cognitive restructuring (Okajima et al., 2011).

The aim of sleep hygiene is to encourage behaviors compatible with good sleep and decrease behaviors that are harmful to good sleep. Sleep hygiene focuses on behavioral and environmental influences that may impact sleep including caffeine, exercise, noise, room temperature, alcohol, and tobacco use. Sleep restriction limits the amount of time spent in bed awake. The goal of sleep restriction is to improve sleep depth. This is accomplished by setting a regular sleep-wake time typically based off of a 2-week sleep diary. Clients are advised to adhere to the prescribed sleep-wake time to improve quality of sleep. The objective of stimulus control is to strengthen the bed or bedroom as a sleep stimulus. Stimulus control focuses on reinforcing the association between sleep and the bed. Clients are encouraged to only use the bed for sleep and sex and avoid engaging in non-related sleep activities while in bed including eating, writing, watching TV, or the use of other electronic screen devices. Finally, cognitive therapy is utilized to identify dysfunctional sleep cognitions and reframe those thoughts and beliefs. Collectively, these CBT-I techniques improve sleep quality and efficiency in individuals with primary or comorbid insomnia

CBT-I has shown favorable outcomes for those suffering from other primary psychiatric conditions who also endorse problems with sleep (Currie, Clark, Hodgins, & Guebaly, 2004; Manber et al., 2008; Taylor & Pruiksma, 2014). Talbot et al. (2014) examined the effectiveness of an 8-week course of CBT-I treatment for 45 Veterans with co-morbid chronic PTSD and insomnia. CBT-I treatment resulted in a reduction in sleep onset latency and wake after sleep onset, and increased sleep efficiency, total sleep time, and energy. In addition, improved sleep quality post-treatment was sustained for six months.

CBT-I has been tested as a remote treatment approach for veterans. Epstein, Babcock-Parziale, Herb, Goren, and Bushnell (2013) recruited 41 Iraq/Afghanistan war Veterans who experienced blast and/or other injuries which resulted in altered level of consciousness to participate in CBT-I treatment that included electronic delivery methods. The Veterans received an initial face-to-face treatment session with a nurse therapist who provided sleep education and hygiene, stimulus control therapy, sleep restriction therapy, and an MP3 player with audio files. After the initial session, participants completed three weekly scheduled telephone calls with the nurse therapist culminating in four treatment sessions. Upon completion of the sessions, OEF/OIF Veterans reported the treatment was successful in not only significantly improving their sleep but also daytime functioning, their relationships with families, as well as energy, memory, alertness, and well-being. Moreover, the benefits of sleep improvement were maintained at the 3-month follow-up assessment (Epstein et al., 2013). Although research studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of CBT-I among Veterans who endorse PTSD and

insomnia, their focus did not include targeting recurrent nightmares, a common sleep disturbance and complaint among this population.

Imagery Rehearsal Therapy for Nightmares

Imagery rehearsal therapy (IRT) is a cognitive behavioral intervention for treating chronic nightmares (Germain & Nielsen, 2003; Phelps & Forbes, 2012) especially those associated with PTSD (Cook et al., 2010). The premise of IRT is to alter or rescript the nightmare during waking so sleep quality improves by making the nightmare less distressing or intense and frequent. Imagery rehearsal therapy is a short-term therapy usually effective within four to six sessions (Sheaves, Onwumere, Keen, & Kuipers, 2015) and includes psychoeducation about sleep and nightmares, relaxation techniques, and a cognitive imagery intervention (Nappi, Drummond, Thorp, & McQuaid, 2010). Research has demonstrated IRT reduces nightmares and PTSD symptoms in civilians (Krakow et al., 2001). It is also beneficial for patients diagnosed with depression and those primarily suffering from nightmares (Thünker & Pietrowsky, 2012) as well as those suffering from psychotic symptoms (Sheaves et al., 2015), and substance use disorders (Arnedt, Conroy, Armitage, & Brower, 2011; Currie et al., 2004). More recently, IRT has emerged as an effective treatment for insomnia and nightmares or terrifying dreams associated with PTSD symptoms in Veterans (Margolies, Rybarczyk, Vrana, Leszczyszyn, & Lynch, 2013) as well as Veterans who endorse combat-related PTSD and nightmares (Lu, Wagner, Van Male, Whitehead, & Boehnlein, 2009).

Nappi et al. (2010) found IRT effective among Veterans with diverse demographic backgrounds and various comorbid medical and psychiatric disorders. Participants who completed a full course of IRT reported a significant decrease in nightmare frequency and intensity and insomnia symptoms. Although traditional IRT does not involve exposure, Long, et. al. (2011) conducted a study utilizing imagery rescripting and exposure therapy (IRET) among Veterans diagnosed with PTSD. The results were statistically significant. Study participants reported decreased PTSD frequency, improved quantity of sleep, and a reduction in frequency of nightmares.

Moore and Krakow (2010) described IRT as a mobile, short-term, evidenced-based treatment approach. These are benefits of using this treatment with military personnel because of the challenges of utilizing long-term therapy with this population due to their training and deployment schedules (Moore & Krakow, 2010). In a randomized controlled trial, it was found that implementation of IRT over three sessions was associated with a significant reduction in number of nightmares per week, improved sleep, and decreased mean PTSD severity from severe to moderate (Margolies et al., 2013). Although empirical support is limited that demonstrates the use of IRT as a stand-alone treatment for PTSD (Casement & Swanson, 2012), IRT has been effective when utilized in individual as well as group therapy among Veterans with PTSD (Long et al., 2011). Long-term effectiveness of IRT for the reduction of nightmare frequency has been validated in the literature (Lancee, Spoormaker, & van den Bout, 2011). Moreover, IRT has been noted as being as good at reducing PTSD symptoms as group treatments for PTSD which focus on daytime thoughts and behaviors (Casement & Germain, 2014).

Imagery rehearsal is a practical treatment for chronic nightmare sufferers since it can be learned in one treatment session and used without further instruction at any time (Krakow & Zadra, 2010). There is also flexibility in how the nightmare is rescripted. In a controlled experiment with 58 volunteers, Krakow and Zadra (2010) employed imagery rehearsal with 39 chronic nightmare sufferers who were told to either "change the nightmare anyway you wish" or "change the ending of the nightmare." Their research findings confirmed the efficacy of imagery rehearsal for the treatment of nightmares in significantly reducing the frequency regardless of the method of instructions.

Despite Casement and Swanson's (2012) meta-analysis which concluded imagery rehearsal improves sleep and decreases PTSD symptoms, judgments about the treatment are controversial especially among Jungian therapists who value dreams as an opportunity to communicate to the individual (Jung, 1974). Regardless of Krakow and Zadra's (2010) inquiry on IRT and instructional methods, some research has suggested that very specific instructions for imagery rehearsal is necessary for some chronic nightmare sufferers (Krakow & Zadra, 2010), while other research recommends combat Veterans may need specific instructions to exclude violent elements from their rescripted dreams since reduction in nightmare frequency is slighter when violent imagery is present in the new dream (Harb et al., 2012).

CBT-I and IRT Combined

The limited research supporting the integration of CBT-I and IRT for the successful treatment of insomnia and nightmares among combat Veterans has been encouraging. Margolies et al. (2013) conducted a study on 40 combat Veterans who served in Afghanistan and/or Iraq and diagnosed with PTSD and symptoms of sleep disturbance. Participants underwent four sessions of CBT-I with IRT. OEF/OIF Veterans who received the treatment reported a significant reduction in PTSD symptom severity and PTSD related nighttime symptoms. Regardless of these results, 60% of the treatment group reported residual nightmares at least once per week after treatment. However, the rate of nightmares was not an eligibility criterion for this study.

Other studies have focused on nightmare frequency as a study criterion and found significant results. Ulmer, Edinger, and Calhoun (2011) treated 10 Veterans diagnosed with PTSD with combined CBT-I and IRT and compared their treatment with a control group who received usual care (treatment by their primary care physician). Those Veterans treated with CBT-I and IRT reported a reduction in insomnia severity and PTSD symptoms as well as a significant lessening in nightmare frequency. In comparison, none of the usual care group remitted from insomnia or PTSD. Both studies support the need for further research on the treatment of insomnia and nightmares in Veterans with PTSD considering the significant impact an integrated therapy has on sleep disturbances and PTSD symptoms (Ulmer et al., 2011).

Treatment utilizing CBT-I and IRT begins with psychoeducation about the basics of sleep and nightmares. Sleep restriction is introduced which includes a specific time to wake each day. In session, the client is provided psychoeducation about imagery exercises and taught how to perform imagery exercises using pleasant scenes and images for practice (Krakow & Zadra, 2010). Clients are asked to choose a nightmare that is the most distressing based on their

tolerance of the emotional reaction. The therapist solicits detailed accounts of the client's recurrent nightmare and instructs the client to write the nightmare down in first person. The client is told to develop a detailed, alternative ending for the recurring nightmare that is nonfrightening and does not elicit negative affect or distressing content. Clients are encouraged by their therapist to provide a detailed description of the rescripted dream without input on what kind of changes to make from the counselor. The client engages in imaginal rehearsal of the new dream in session. IRT does not include imagining the old nightmare; this would involve exposure therapy (Nadorff et al., 2014). For homework, the client rehearses the new set of images from the altered nightmare for several minutes each day (Krakow, Kellner, Pathak, & Lambert, 1995) using imaginal rehearsal. The counselor incorporates stimulus control, cognitive therapy, and sleep hygiene in addition to IRT and assigns homework related to CBT-I interventions. Monitoring the frequency and content of nightmares and sleep by use of nightmare logs and sleep diaries ensures compliance with and the effectiveness of CBT-I and IRT treatment.

Some authors have recommended treating insomnia first, then nightmares, then PTSD symptoms (Krakow et al., 2002). "Addressing nightmares without first targeting behaviors that serve to maintain insomnia is likely to impair the effectiveness of the nightmare intervention since sleep-disruptive behaviors may persist" (Ulmer et al., 2011, p. 66). More clinical studies to support a recommended treatment regimen is warranted.

Conclusion

The vast majority of Veterans endorse insomnia and nightmares associated with PTSD. Both CBT-I and IRT are empirically supported treatment interventions for insomnia and nightmares. Integrating CBT-I and IRT has shown promise for improving sleep and PTSD symptoms in Veterans. However, additional empirical research using this specialized treatment approach with this population is warranted. It is imperative to continue to research evidenced-based treatments to reduce inadequate sleep and improve overall sleep quality for Veterans. Identifying and properly treating sleep problems in Veterans with PTSD may lead to improved quality of life.

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